

# Daily Current Affairs



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Breathe. It's just a bad  
day, not a bad life.

—

**NCPCR AFFIDAVIT**  
**"Madrasas unfit to give proper education"**  
NEWS » PAGE 5

**PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE**  
**Harris puts Trump on the defensive**  
WORLD » PAGE 14

**SEMICONDUCTOR**  
**India reaffirms plans to back chip facilities**  
BUSINESS » PAGE 12

**DATA POINT**  
**India's strong strides at the Chess Olympiad**  
The team is second only to the U.S. in ELO rating  
OPINION » PAGE 9

**RAJ KUMAR DAZZLES**  
**India drubs Malaysia, climbs to the top**  
SPORT » PAGE 16

**INSIDE**



**Uneasy calm in Manipur after clashes**

**CUMABATI**  
An uneasy calm prevailed in Manipur on Wednesday, a day after protesters clashed with security personnel on the streets of Imphal leaving more than 50 students injured. There were no reports of violence either in the Imphal Valley or in the peripheral hills. » PAGE 4

**Cong. promises five guarantees, Statehood in J&K**

**SREINAGAR**  
Announcing "five guarantees" for Jammu and Kashmir at an election rally in Anantnag on Wednesday, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the party "will not only strive for J&K's Statehood but also restore the bicameral House system". » PAGE 5

**Everyone aged 70 and over to get health coverage**

**NEW DELHI**  
The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Wednesday approved health coverage to all senior citizens aged 70 and above irrespective of income under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY). » PAGE 6

**U.K. sanctions Russian 'shadow fleet' of tankers**

**LONDON**  
The U.K. government, on Wednesday, announced sanctions on a "shadow fleet" of 10 Russian oil tankers that it has alleged were circumventing Western oil sanctions. » PAGE 14

**Modi wilted under Chinese pressure, says Rahul**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
**NEW DELHI**  
The Congress's approach is in sync with the Narendra Modi government on major foreign policy issues, including India's relationship with the U.S., no talks with Pakistan unless the flow of terrorism is stopped; and the rise of extremist elements in Bangladesh and Israel, the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said on Tuesday.  
Mr. Gandhi, who concluded his four-day trip to the U.S., made these observations during an interaction with presspersons at the prestigious Brookings Institution Press Club at Washington.  
While Mr. Gandhi talked of continuity in foreign policy issues, he was sharp in his criticism of the Modi government's handling of the border face-off with

**Kolkata doctors set fresh terms, continue stir**

Protesters demand meeting in the presence of CM to be telecast live on news channels; State Health Minister questions if the doctors are being guided by politics, asks them to resume duty; representative for WBJDF says demands are clear and conducive to an open and productive discussion and adds there is no political colour in the demands

**Moyuric Som**  
**Shrabana Chatterjee**  
**KOLKATA**  
The impasse between protesting resident doctors and the West Bengal government over resumption of duty in public medical institutions continued for the second day on Wednesday, with the former setting fresh conditions for holding talks. They included the demand that no fewer than 30 representatives be allowed at the State Secretariat for a meeting to be held in the presence of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and televised live on news channels.  
Chief Secretary Manoj Pant said the government was disheartened with the response of the junior doctors setting conditions for a meeting in a discussion with an open mind.



Firm on stance: Junior doctors on the second day of the sit-in protest at Swasthya Bhawan in Kolkata on Wednesday. PTI

West Bengal Minister of State for Health Chandrima Bhattacharya asked if the doctors were guided by politics, and wondered if they wanted justice for the rape and murder of the resident doctor at the R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital.  
Responding to the Minister's charge, a representative of the West Bengal Junior Doctors' Front (WBJDF), Kinjal Nanda, said, "There is no political colour in this demand. An open mind is a subjective choice. We believe our demands are conducive to an open and productive discussion. Our demands are clear."

**Court appeal to them to return to work by 5 p.m. on Tuesday.**  
"It is important to take a serious note that the common people have been deprived of your vital services... It is expected that

good sense will prevail and you will resume duties immediately in compliance with the Hon'ble Supreme Court's order," he said.  
The demands included a fresh invitation to a delegation of 12-15 junior doctors for a discussion at the Secretariat at 6 p.m. on Wednesday.  
At a press conference later in the evening, Ms. Nanda said that as law-abiding citizens, everyone

**Wet blanket**



Quick action: The police use water cannon to disperse protesters who gathered at Sabai Mandi Dhalli defying prohibitory orders and marched towards Shilpa's Sangli on Wednesday demanding the demolition of an alleged illegal portion of a mosque. (PTI REPORT ON PAGE 2)

**Centre withdraws nod for eye drops over 'false' claims**

**Zubeda Hamid**  
**GUWAHATI**  
**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM**  
The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation has suspended permission given to the Mumbai-based ENTFO Pharmaceuticals to manufacture and market its eye drops which it said can help those with presbyopia do without reading glasses.  
In a notification on Tuesday, the CDSCO said permission was suspended as the company's claim was likely to mislead the public. It had violated provisions of the New Drugs and Clinical Trial Rules, 2019. The permission given on August 6 was "for the treatment of presbyopia in adults", and it said the drug was unethical or false presentation of facts with regard to PresVu Eye Drops. He said that media reports on the product caused "widespread" and "public imagination led to an unusual escalation for the ENTFO Pharmaceuticals" is not responsible.  
He also said the Drugs Controller-General of India (DCGI) was banned on a valid controlled clinical trial in 234 patients.  
The DCGI said, "was successful in showing efficacy and safety of eye drops in patients with presbyopia."  
The pharmaceutical firm had issued a press release about the eye drops, developed to reduce dependence on read-

**Centre withdraws nod for eye drops over 'false' claims**



The pharma firm had claimed the PresVu Eye Drops would help people with presbyopia do away with reading glasses. (PTI IMAGES)

ing glasses for individuals affected by presbyopia, a common age-related vision condition typically seen in those over the age of 40.  
On September 4, it tweeted that "PresVu was the first DCGI-approved proprietary prescription eye drops to eliminate the need for reading glasses".  
Tagging Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the post, it further said the drug was "a proud Indian innovation that could help millions of Indians see better and that too at an affordable price".  
**Alarms sounded**  
Following widespread adverse effects, multiple ophthalmologists began sounding a cautionary alarm and the company was asked for an explanation for its "unethical and false representation of facts". Ophthalmologists pointed out that the active ingredient used in the eye drops, pilocarpine, had been used for decades to treat another eye condition, glaucoma, but had since been replaced with newer, better drugs. They also pointed out that the use of pilocarpine could cause several side effects.  
"We do not use pilocarpine anymore as it is known to cause some distortion typically seen in the eye and also because we have better drugs available in the market for glaucoma. The miosis or constriction of the pupils induced by pilocarpine helps people to see objects close to them better and is, at best, only a temporary solution for presbyopia," said Sreeni Idakkhion, an ophthalmic surgeon based in Thalassery, Kerala. He said that India Ophthalmological Society has now constituted an experts' group to discuss the possible adverse effects of the newly marketed drug and to frame guidelines for the public.  
Babu K.V., an ophthalmologist and public health activist, has written to the Union Health Minister stating that the tweet by ENTFO Pharmaceuticals was a gross violation of Section 10 of the Drugs and Medicines Act, 1930 (Objectionable Advertisement) Act, 1954, which specifically prohibits the advertisement of drugs for the treatment of diseases and disorders of the optical system.

# Kolkata doctors set fresh terms, continue stir

Protesters demand meeting in the presence of CM to be telecast live on news channels; State Health Minister questions if the doctors are being guided by politics, asks them to resume duty; representative for WBJDF says demands are clear and conducive to an open and productive discussion and adds there is no political colour in the demands

**Moyurie Som**  
**Shrabana Chatterjee**  
KOLKATA

The impasse between protesting resident doctors and the West Bengal government over resumption of duty in public medical institutions continued for the second day on Wednesday, with the former setting fresh conditions for holding talks. They included the demand that no fewer than 30 representatives be allowed at the State Secretariat for a meeting to be held in the presence of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and televised live on news channels.

Chief Secretary Manoj Pant said the government was disheartened with the response of the junior doctors setting conditions for talks, which did not result in a discussion with an open mind.

West Bengal Minister of State for Health Chandrima Bhattacharya asked if the doctors were guided by politics, and wondered if they wanted justice for the rape and murder of the resident doctor at the R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital.

Responding to the Minister's charge, a representative of the West Bengal Junior Doctor's Front (WBJDF), Kinjal Nanda, said, "There is no political colour in this demand. An open mind is a subjective choice. We believe our demands are conducive to an open and productive discussion. Our demands are clear."

## Chief Secretary's email

The conditions were set in response to an email by Mr. Pant on Wednesday, urging the doctors to resume duty immediately in adherence to a Supreme



**Firm on stance:** Junior doctors on the second day of the sit-in protest at Swasthya Bhawan in Kolkata on Wednesday. PTI

Court appeal to them to return to work by 5 p.m. on Tuesday.

"It is important to take a serious note that the common people have been deprived of your vital services... It is expected that

good sense will prevail and you will resume duties immediately in compliance with the Hon'ble Supreme Court's order," he said.

The email included a fresh invitation to a delegation of 12-15 junior doctors

for a discussion at the Secretariat at 6 p.m. on Wednesday.

At a press conference later in the evening, Ms. Bhattacharya joined Mr. Pant in saying that as law-abiding citizens, everyone

should adhere to the Supreme Court order. Asked if the State government would take action, the Minister said people would come to know when the government acted.

A three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court led by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud had on Monday said that doctors cannot remain oblivious to the needs of the community they are intended to serve and appealed them to return to work by 5 p.m. on Tuesday.

"But if they [resident doctors] do not start work, we will not be able to restrain the State from taking action, because that is entirely within its jurisdiction," it had said.

Amid the ongoing slugging between the State government and doctors, thousands of junior doctors continued the demonstration outside Swasthya

Bhawan, the headquarters of the Health Department, on Wednesday. Parents of the rape and murder victim had also visited the protest site.

In addition to their earlier demands, they also sought the resignation of the Principal Secretary, Health, as well as the Director of Health Services and Director of Medical Education.

On Tuesday, Ms. Bhattacharya had said Chief Minister Banerjee was waiting for a meeting with the doctors till 7.30 p.m.

"Last evening, we found out from the media that the Chief Minister was waiting to meet us at the State Secretariat. We want to make it clear that in the email we received from the Health Secretary, there was no mention of the Chief Minister waiting for us," Dr. Nanda had clarified.

## Protest and Impasse

The deadlock between protesting resident doctors and the West Bengal government over the resumption of duty in public medical institutions continued for a second day.

Doctors set fresh conditions for talks, including that no fewer than 30 representatives be allowed to meet with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and the meeting be televised live.



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## State Health Minister's Remarks

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State Health Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya questioned if the doctors were guided by politics and reminded them of the need for justice for the rape and murder of a resident doctor at R.G. Kar Medical College.

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The doctors denied any political motivation and insisted their demands were conducive to open and productive discussions.

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## Chief Secretary's Appeal

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Chief Secretary Manoj Pant expressed disappointment with the doctors' refusal to engage in talks with an open mind.

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The Chief Secretary sent an email urging the doctors to resume duty in adherence to the Supreme Court's order, which directed doctors to return to work by 5 p.m.

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## **Demands and Resignations**

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The protesting doctors added demands, including the resignation of the Principal Secretary, Health, and the Director of Medical Services.

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Parents of the deceased doctor also visited the protest site, adding support to the ongoing demonstrations.

IN BRIEF



Delhi HC seeks NADA's stand on Bajrang Punia's plea

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the National Anti-Doping Agency to respond to a petition filed by wrestler Bajrang Punia...

Cabinet gives nod for building 62,000 km of rural roads

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the proposal of the Ministry of Rural Development for implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana-IV (PMGSY-IV) from financial year 2024-25 to 2028-29.

Centre gives clearance for 'Mission Mausam'

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet approved 'Mission Mausam' on Wednesday with an outlay of ₹2,000 crore over two years.

The Ministry of Earth Sciences will be the nodal body implementing the mission. The aim of the programme will be to boost research and development capacity in atmospheric sciences, weather surveillance, modelling, forecasting, and management.

Critical elements of Mission Mausam will include deploying next-generation radars and satellite systems.

Madrasas 'unfit' for proper education, NCPCCR tells SC

Including a few NCERT books in the curriculum is a mere guise in the name of imparting education and does not ensure that children are receiving formal and quality education, it says

Krishnadas Rajagopal NEW DELHI

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCCR), the top child rights protection body in the country, has told the Supreme Court that madrasas are "unsuitable or unfit" places for children to receive "proper education".

The NCPCCR, represented by senior advocate Swapnima Chaturvedi and advocate Abhaid Parikh, made the submission in response to petitions challenging an Allahabad High Court judgment which struck down the Uttar Pradesh Board of Madrasa Education Act, 2004.

The commission said the textbooks in madrasas "profess supremacy of Islam", "entirely neglect" a few NCERT books in the curriculum is a mere guise in the name of imparting education and does not ensure that the children are receiving formal and quality education," it argued.

The NCPCCR cited unredressed issues of curriculum, eligibility of teachers, opaque funding, and others. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA



The NCPCCR highlighted issues of curriculum, eligibility of teachers, opaque funding, and others. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

dependent on the conventional methods used in learning. Madrasas create a hazy system which just stands alone on the conventional ground of religion," it said.

"Majority of madrasas have no idea as to how to plan social events or extracurricular activities, such as field trips, that could provide students with some level of experiential learning... Madrasa education is neither all-encompassing nor thorough. It is not helping children advance since it lacks so many crucial components of learning... Madrasas infringe on children's fundamental right to a good education by failing to provide these basic requirements... The teachers appointed in madrasas are largely up for a detailed hearing soon.

Taking Uttar Pradesh's case, the NCPCCR drew the court's attention to the Darul Uloom Deoband madrasa founded in Deoband in Saharanpur district.

"According to the information available the Deoband Madrasa has six centres across South Asia and has also set up seminaries, or madrasas, teaching an austere version of Islam, particularly along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border... it has also been alleged by Taliban extremists groups to have been influenced by the religious and political ideologies of Ezzat Uloom Deoband Madrasa... the Deoband Madrasa issues fatwas online as well as offline and has a very strict and conservative interpretation of Sharia, as evidenced by its issuance of roughly 2,50,000 fatwas which restrict followers in terms of faith, life, and many other aspects," the NCPCCR submitted.

"Though madrasas dot the country, only States such as Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand have Madrasa Boards. Large number of children attend madrasas that are either unrecognised or unregulated," the commission observed.

The High Court had ordered the transfer of madrasa students to regular schools... The top court stayed the implementation of the High Court decision in April. On Wednesday, a three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud said the petitions would be taken

Cabinet approves health cover for all aged 70 and above

Hindu Shajhan Perappadan NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Wednesday approved health coverage to all senior citizens aged 70 and above irrespective of income under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY).

This will benefit nearly 4.5 crore families with six crore senior citizens by providing ₹5 lakh free health insurance cover on a family basis.

New card This scheme was one of the promises made in the BJP manifesto.

With this approval, persons aged 70 and above, irrespective of their socio-economic status, will be eligible to get the benefits under the AB PM-JAY.

The eligible senior citizens will be issued a new card under the scheme. Senior citizens belonging to families already covered under the AB PM-JAY will get an additional top-up cover up to ₹5 lakh per year for themselves (which they do not have to share with other members of the family who are below the age of 70).

All other senior citizens aged 70 and above will get a cover up to ₹5 lakh per year on a family basis. Senior citizens who are already getting benefits of other



Eligible senior citizens will get a new district card under Ayushman Bharat scheme.

public health insurance schemes such as the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS), Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS), and Ayushman Central Armed Police Force (ACAPF) may either choose their existing scheme or opt for AB PM-JAY.

It has been clarified that senior citizens aged 70 and above who are under private health insurance policies will be eligible to get benefits under the AB PM-JAY.

The world's largest publicly funded health insurance scheme, which provides health cover of ₹5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation to 55 crore individuals corresponding to 12.34 crore families. The Union government said in a release.

The expansion of cover to persons aged 70 and above was announced by Mr. Modi in April.

Centre to nudge banks to fund green energy projects

Jacob Koshy NEW DELHI

To help meet India's ₹30 trillion funding requirements for installing 500 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy is in talks with financial institutions, public and private sector banks, urging them to commit a portion of their loans to renewable energy projects.

At the forthcoming Renewable Energy Summit, scheduled in Gandhinagar next week, all major banks and financial institutions will be given a "shapath patra" (promissory notes) about their proposed loans or funding plans in the renewable energy sector, Union Minister for New and Renewable Energy Pralhad Joshi said at a press briefing on Wednesday.

Such a "shapath patra" would be given by developing manufacturers and private equity investors, he added.

"We have not specified any targets but banks are expected to give firm commitments. Only with the participation of banks and industry can India hope to attract finance to facilitate the renewable energy sector," said Mr. Joshi.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to inaugurate the conference.

Hindu, Muslim groups urge people to send views on Waqf Bill to House panel

Ishita Mishra NEW DELHI

With just two days left for submitting suggestions to Parliament's Joint Committee on Waqf (Amendment) Bill 2024, Muslim and Hindu organisations have intensified campaigns to ensure that people send their feedback.

Organisations such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the All India Muslim Personal Law Board are urging people to submit their views on the objections to the Waqf Bill.

"We made a call to people to use our QR code to send suggestions to the committee through Friday prayers" on September 6 and six lakh people used it within two hours," said Mr. Mishra. He added that 18.1 p.m. on Wednesday,

prayers as a platform to reach out, while Hindu groups are spreading the word through Ganesh puja pandals, evening prayers at temples, and resident welfare associations.

Maulana Khalid Rashid of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board said that a QR code had been provided on the website of the organisation which can be scanned by people to get a pre-drafted message on the objections to the Waqf Bill.

"We made a call to people to use our QR code to send suggestions to the committee through Friday prayers" on September 6 and six lakh people used it within two hours," said Mr. Mishra. He added that 18.1 p.m. on Wednesday,

82,70,231 mails had been sent out, while the Hindu groups are spreading the word through Ganesh puja pandals, evening prayers at temples, and resident welfare associations.

"For and against" The pre-drafted message of the AIMPLB says that the Bill should be "rejected completely". It says the proposed bill provisions indicate that the Bill has been designed to remove Waqf properties from their status as Waqf and to diminish the control of mazarwalis (caretakers), it says the Bill violates the freedom of religion granted by the Constitution.

A similar appeal to reject the Bill was made by Zakir Abdul Karim Naik, a religious leader who is abroad.

Reacting to the call of Mr. Naik, Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju took

to X and said that people should not mislead innocent Muslims.

A pre-drafted letter is also being shared on WhatsApp and social media asking Hindus to send suggestions to the panel in favour of the Bill. The letter has a reference to Tiruchendur village in Tamil Nadu, where a 1.25-acre year-old Hindu temple that was claimed as Waqf property. It points out how a survey of Waqf properties is done using GPS survey money but no civil courts in the country can pass an order on Waqf disputes.

Vinod Bansal, spokesperson of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, said the organisation was discussing the issue at small gatherings and through social media.

Crossword puzzle grid with clues and a QR code to solve online. Clues include: 1. A constant nuisance, one coming from the Rose Garden (9,2-3,5); 2. Objects laid getting rid of Yankee crackmen in the US (4); 3. Stuff intercepted by port ends in Germany breaking coded message (10); 4. Feel at home in London when Mafia boss drops in to play (8); 5. Chess expert acting lame to sacrifices (8); 6. Ready to accommodate adult wanting length adjusted to look stylish (3,1,4); 7. Authority to wield overwhelming power (6); 8. Question to duck before strange people necessary to carry on business (6); 9. Say Magellan's notice delivered to king securing passage cost (8); 10. Customer is one who exploits? (4); 11. 'Senses' from retinopathy intermittently agitates cast (3,1,2,5); 12. Point in time when easily influenced people in tow make merry (6,8); 13. Oracles retreating piously, bishop pinches some (6); 14. Usual practice, insurance covers and settles (8); 15. Sense to check plugs to brand electrical equipment (10); 16. Superior piping above spotted counter (6-2); 17. Spillers conceding runs, sadly including good fielders (3,5); 18. Society joining with a new catchphrase (6); 19. Plucks from religious rites are performed making a base for reforms (6); 20. Chaps taking one look (4).

Sudoku puzzle grid with numbers 6, 3, 7, 4, 5, 2, 9, 8, 4, 5, 9, 4, 4, 7, 9, 6, 2, 3, 2, 7, 9, 5, 6, 1, 3, 2, 7, 9. Includes a solution to the previous puzzle and a difficulty rating of 4 stars.

FAITH Steely resolve of Mahabali. In His avatars like Matsya and Kurma, Lord Vishnu played the rakeshaas who were His foes. But in the Yamata tar, He spared King Mahabali, grandson of Prahlada, because Lord Narasimha assured Prahlada that He would not kill his progeny. Sengaliparam Sri Damodhara Dikshitar said in a discourse that His manifestation of Varaha (as a dwarf) was so handsome. Had the Lord thought, He would have descended as a celibate straightaway, but He chose to be born as the son to sage Kashyapa and his wife Adithi and cherished following religious procedures. The difference between 'dharma' and 'dhana' is that in the former, charity is given without expecting anything in return, while in the latter, it is given with anticipation of the sacrificial performance of king Mahabali, the Lord appeared as a young celibate. The king asked Him what He wanted and the dwarf said He required just three feet of space. The king promised to give the same. Sukracharya, the king's guru, ascertained the true identity of the alm-seeker and tried to prevent the king from executing his promise. The guru said telling lies in times of danger is not a sin, and so he wanted the king to tell God that He told a lie and could not uphold his promise. But the king refused the Acharya's command and said telling lies would plunge a person into danger and fulfilled his promise.

# Cabinet approves health cover for all aged 70 and above

**Bindu Shajan Perappadan**

NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Wednesday approved health coverage to all senior citizens aged 70 and above irrespective of income under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY).

This will benefit nearly 4.5 crore families with six crore senior citizens by providing ₹5 lakh free health insurance cover on a family basis.

## **New card**

This scheme was one of the promises made in the BJP manifesto.

With this approval, persons aged 70 and above, irrespective of their socioeconomic status, will be eligible to get the benefits under the AB PM-JAY.

The eligible senior citizens will be issued a new distinct card under the scheme.

Senior citizens belonging to families already covered under the AB PM-JAY will get an additional top-up cover up to ₹5 lakh per year for themselves (which they do not have to share with other members of the family who are below the age of 70).

All other senior citizens aged 70 and above will get a cover up to ₹5 lakh per year on a family basis. Senior citizens who are already getting benefits of other



Eligible senior citizens will get a new distinct card under Ayushman Bharat scheme.

public health insurance schemes such as the Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS), Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS), and Ayushman Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) may either choose their existing scheme or opt for AB PM-JAY.

It has been clarified that senior citizens aged 70 and above who are under private health insurance policies or Employees' State Insurance scheme will be eligible to get benefits under the AB PM-JAY.

"The AB PM-JAY is the world's largest publicly funded health assurance scheme, which provides health cover of ₹5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation to 55 crore individuals corresponding to 12.34 crore families," the Union government said in a release.


The expansion of cover to persons aged 70 and above was announced by Mr. Modi in April.



- **Cabinet Decision**

- The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved health coverage for all senior citizens aged 70 and above under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY).

- **Beneficiaries**

- This decision will benefit approximately 4.5 crore families, covering six crore senior citizens.
  - The scheme provides ₹5 lakh of free health insurance per family per year.
- 



- **New Card**

- Senior citizens aged 70 and above will receive a new distinct card under the Ayushman Bharat scheme.

- **Additional Benefits**

- Senior citizens already covered under AB PM-JAY will receive an additional ₹5 lakh cover for themselves, not shared with family members below 70.

- Other senior citizens aged 70+ will get ₹5 lakh per year for family-based coverage.

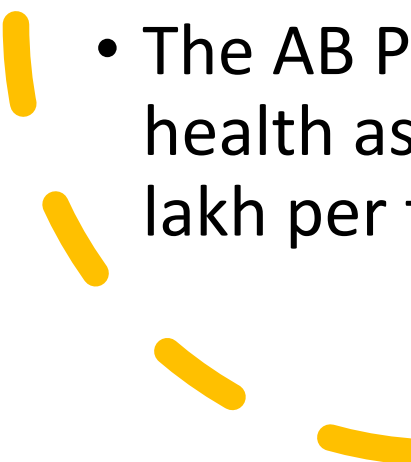





- **Existing Schemes**

- Senior citizens under other health schemes (CGHS, ECHS, CAPF) can choose to either continue with their existing schemes or opt for AB PM-JAY.

- **World's Largest Health Assurance Scheme**

- 
- The AB PM-JAY is recognized as the world's largest publicly funded health assurance scheme, covering 55 crore people and providing ₹5 lakh per family per year.








- **Consider the following statements regarding the recent health cover initiative under Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY):**

1. All senior citizens aged 70 and above are eligible for a ₹5 lakh free health insurance cover irrespective of their socioeconomic status.
2. Senior citizens already covered under AB PM-JAY will get an additional top-up cover of ₹5 lakh per year, separate from the family coverage.
3. The scheme allows senior citizens under other health schemes like CGHS and ECHS to opt for both their existing scheme and AB PM-JAY simultaneously.



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

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

# Centre gives clearance for 'Mission Mausam'

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet approved 'Mission Mausam' on Wednesday with an outlay of ₹2,000 crore over two years.

The Ministry of Earth Sciences will be the nodal body implementing the mission. The aim of the programme will be to bolster research and development, and capacity in atmospheric sciences, weather surveillance, modelling, forecasting, and management.

Critical elements of Mission Mausam will include deploying next-generation radars and satellite systems .

## India's sickle cell challenge

Last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission to eliminate sickle cell disease as a public health problem by 2047, from Shahdol, Madhya Pradesh. Mr. Modi has seen this debilitating condition from close quarters during his term as Chief Minister of Gujarat, where sickle cell disease is a major public health concern. In this article, we highlight the many opportunities to build on this momentum.

### Challenges in India

With over a million people affected with sickle cell disease, India bears the world's second largest burden of this condition. A majority of the patients are concentrated in the tribal belt running across Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra.

Sickle cell disease is caused by a genetic abnormality if both parents carry the sickle cell trait, the child has significant chances of being born with the disease. While healthy individuals carry crescent-shaped red blood cells, those with sickle cell disease have red blood cells that take on a crescent or sickle-like shape. The lifespan of these patients is significantly shortened (to about 40 years) and their quality of life is curtailed due to the range of health complications caused by sickle cell disease including stroke, anaemia, recurrent infections, pain, swelling, and damage to vital organs. In addition to these issues, patients also suffer from the chronic stigma that is attached to this disease. They can sometimes be deemed "genetically inferior" and one common theme is often told that this disease is "God's curse". In some areas, the condition is attributed to "black magic". Due to the hereditary nature of sickle cell disease, patients also face diminished marital and social prospects.

With the launch of the mission in 2023, the Central government's attention to the disease is high.



**Dhananjay Yashwanthan Rohini**  
Partner, Astoria Impact, a global public health consulting firm



**Gautam Dongre**  
Secretary of National Alliance of Sickle Cell Organisations and board member of Global Alliance of Sickle Cell Disease Organisations

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With over a million people affected with sickle cell disease, India bears the world's second largest burden of this condition

Along other efforts, a large-scale screening programme is underway nationwide. Hydroxyurea, a viral medicine for treating sickle cell disease, been included in the essential medicines list; this has increased access to it. While measures such as these will help detect and treat sickle cell disease, there are still many challenges.

Our estimates suggest that only 18% of the people affected by sickle cell disease in India are receiving consistent treatment. This is because patients drop out at all stages of treatment: while getting screened for the disease, while getting diagnosed, while starting treatment, and while trying to adhere to treatment.

The largest drops occur at the diagnosis and treatment adherence stages. Getting a correct diagnosis is a challenge as many people hesitate to seek support due to the stigma associated with the condition. They often consult traditional healers, who frequently misdiagnose the condition. While the public system has a stronger diagnostic capacity for sickle cell disease, there is a historic mistrust of it in tribal areas. As a result, few patients get tested.

The second big drop is around treatment adherence. No permanent cure is available for sickle cell disease. Ongoing research in gene therapy is promising, but will be unaffordable for most of the affected population even when it becomes available. At present, relatively expensive drugs such as hydroxyurea are effective for most patients if administered with the right dosage and frequency. However, there is seldom a regular and consistent supply of medicines, along with adherence support (such as that provided to TB patients). Key medicines sometimes go out of stock.

Patients have also said that they need to travel long distances to pick up their medicines. In a State like central India, a healthcare professional noted that patients travel for more than 200

kilometres to seek treatment. Further, coverage of several vaccinations, which reduce the frequency of infections and improve the quality of life for patients, remains poor.

The Mission can build on its initial successes by tackling some of these challenges. First, it is important to reduce the stigma related to the disease and build trust in public health institutions. Awareness should be raised through targeted media campaigns to bust specific myths (which vary by region and tribe). For this, India could draw from its experience in tackling polio and HIV. With reduced stigma, the chances of sickle cell trait carriers concealing their carrier status may also reduce, which would in turn lead to fewer women giving birth to children with the condition.

Second, given that cases are often missed and diagnosis delayed, there could be increasing screening for newborns. This strategy is low-cost with a high pay-off and requires special expertise. The inspections showed fake medicines as well as the channels through which they are coming into the State. The approvals came thick and fast, and corruption crept in.

Third, drugs as well as adherence support must be available close to patients, in the nearest health and wellness centres. For complications, interdisciplinary centres of excellence at the district/division level should be made operational.

Fourth, ensuring that all known patients receive approved vaccines will be crucial. This may require catch-up vaccination programmes. Fifth, health in tribal areas should be operationally strengthened by factoring in conditions unique to these areas. Healthcare should also be adequately funded.

Finally, research should be conducted to better understand the disease and its pathways in India, and to develop new treatments. Philanthropists and members of civil society must play a catalytic role, and work with the Central and State governments.

## The multi-agency war against corruption

The perception in Telangana is that the government is tackling graft head-on

### STATE OF PLAY

**Serish Nandetti**  
serish.nandetti@thehindu.co.in

There is a perception in Telangana that the Congress government is doing its best to stamp out corruption.

By the aftermath of the 2023 Assembly elections that saw the end of the decade-long rule of the Bharat Rashtra Samiti (BRS), corruption was identified as a source of disenchantment among voters. A CSIS-Lokniti post-poll study indicated that corruption had emerged as a prominent source of dissatisfaction. Recognising this, the Congress government has shown that it is determined to act against it.

First, the Telangana Drugs Control Administration conducted raids on medical stores, manufacturing firms, and practitioners of fake medicine. The inspections showed fake medicines as well as the channels through which they are coming into the State. The approvals came thick and fast, and corruption crept in.

As a result of the Anti-Corruption Bureau's efforts, a bureaucrat who had assets of more than ₹100 crore was nabbed in January. Another was caught with ₹6 crore. An additional collector of Rangareddy district was caught taking a bribe of ₹10 lakh. The impact of the photos of cash on social media has helped shape the positive narrative about the government.

In July, the Revanth Reddy government contacted the Hyderabad Disaster Response and Asses Protection Agency (HYDRDAA). Armed with a broad range of powers from demolition, the government has land to relief and rescue operations, the organisation quick-

### Telangana

created a shift in perception.

The Anti-Corruption Bureau, which is tasked with checking graft in the official machinery, also began nabbing officials who were taking bribes. The previous BRS government had a business-friendly air about it. The TS-PASS (Telangana State Industrial Project Approval and Self-Certification System) assured time-bound clearances for projects, failing which they were deemed corrupt. While the TG-BPASS (Telangana Building Permission Approval and Self-Certification System) provided instant approval for residential plots up to 75 square yards and buildings up to 7 metres in height. The approvals came thick and fast, and corruption crept in.

The government's initiative, which affects people across parties and industries in Telangana, is a welcome change, especially since the fight against graft in India generally looks like a political witch-hunt, orchestrated for a select audience with a stated outcome. The hope is that this will become the norm. There is no agenda. But the question is: will the spectre of corruption go away with the change in government?

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## India's increasing competitiveness at the Chess Olympiad

The current team in the Open event in Budapest is India's strongest ever and second only to the U.S. in ELO ratings

### DATA POINT

**Srinivasan Ramani**  
Srinivas.Ramani@thehindu.co.in

As the 45th Chess Olympiad is being held in Budapest, we look at historical performance in the Open section of the most prestigious event of team chess. India has been participating in the biennial event since 1956 and has played in every Olympiad since 1980. The Olympiad was dominated by the erstwhile Soviet Union, which won 18 gold medals. Russia and the U.S. have won six gold medals each, while India has got two bronze medals, in 2014 and 2022 (Table 1).

In Budapest, India's team comprising Grandmasters Arjun Erigaisi, D. Gukesh, R. Praggnanandhaa, Vidit Gujrathi, and P. Harikrishna is the strongest one ever fielded by the country (Table 2). The average ELO rating for India (2753) is just four points behind the U.S., rated the No. 1 team.

This squad also boasts the highest starting ELO rating for an Indian team. In 2018, the squad had an average of 2724 (Chart 3).

D. Gukesh won an individual gold in 2022, scoring 8 points in 11 games for a points per game (ppg) score of 0.82. Among all players who played a substantive number, the Soviet grand, Mikhail Tal, remains the best performer with 0.81 ppg in 101 games, followed by former world champion Anatoly Karpov (Table 4).

For India, GM Krishnan Sasikiran has been a warhorse, scoring 0.62 points per game in 113 games, while talisman V. Anand played 87 games (0.66 ppg) (Chart 5). Rafiq Khan scored 0.69 ppg in 29 games and won India's first medal, a silver, in the Malta Olympiad in 1980.

In terms of performance ELO rating that captures the level of competition, Vidit Gujrathi leads with 2698.7 ELO points among Indians who played at least 30 games in the Olympiad (Chart 6).

## The gathering Indian storm

Data for Chess Olympiads were sourced from olimpbase.org

Table 1: Historical performance in the Chess Olympiad (Open)

Rank	Medals	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1	Soviet Union	18	3	0	19
2	U.S.	6	6	8	20
3	Russia	6	3	3	12
4	Hungary	3	1	2	6
5	Armenia	3	1	2	6
6	Ukraine	2	2	3	7
7	China	2	1	0	3
20	India	0	0	2	2

Table 2: Average ELO ratings for teams in the Open section in the Budapest Olympiad being held currently

Country	Average ELO
U.S.	2757
India	2753
China	2724
Uzbekistan	2690
Netherlands	2682
Norway	2670
Germany	2667
England	2665
Hungary	2663
Iran	2655

Chart 3: India's performance in Chess Olympiads since 1980 (starting ELO rating in left axis, final position in right axis)

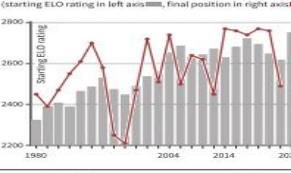


Table 4: Best individual performers across Olympiads (Open)

Rank	Player	USCF	Games	Points per game
1	Mikhail Tal (USSR)	101	101	0.81
2	Anatoly Karpov (Russia)	68	103	0.80
3	Tigran Petrosian (USSR)	129	129	0.80
4	Isaac Kashdan (U.S.)	79	113	0.80
5	Vasily Smyslov (USSR)	113	113	0.80
6	David Bronstein (USSR)	49	89	0.80
7	Garry Kasparov (Russia)	82	82	0.78
8	Alek Khins (France)	72	72	0.78
9	Mattulovic (Yugoslavia)	78	78	0.77
10	Paul Keres (Estonia)	143	143	0.76

Chart 5: Indians who played in the Open section in Chess Olympiads (ppg per game; ppg versus games played)

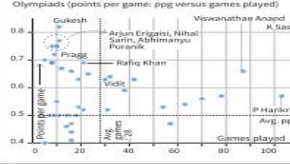
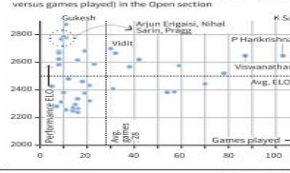


Chart 6: Indians at the Chess Olympiad (performance ELO ratings versus games played) in the Open section



### FROM THE ARCHIVES

## The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO SEPTEMBER 12, 1974

## Bhutto cites Sikkim to get U.S. arms aid

Washington, Sept. 11: Prime Minister Bhutto of Pakistan apparently intends to cite India's "annexation" of Sikkim as yet another argument to persuade the United States to resume arms supply to Pakistan, lifting the existing U.S. ban. In an interview given to the New Delhi correspondent of the Washington Post, Mr. Bhutto has said that by "swallowing up" Sikkim, India has shown its lack of credibility to Pakistan's demands for U.S. military assistance. He has indicated that the arms issue would be raised when the Secretary of State, Dr. Henry Kissinger, visits Islamabad late next month in the course of his tour of capitals in the subcontinent. The Post correspondent writes that though Dr. Kissinger and other senior U.S. officials have disagreed with Mr. Bhutto's contention that the U.S. has a commitment to rearm Pakistan (as a fellow member of CENTO), "knowledgeable sources" have told him that Mr. Bhutto's appeals for U.S. arms are getting "serious consideration" in Washington. (This runs contrary to the assurances reportedly received by the Indian Ambassador here from Dr. Kissinger in recent conversations, to the effect that the U.S. has no intention of getting involved in an arms race in the subcontinent.)

Mr. Bhutto, who ever since May has been trying to use India's explosion of an underground nuclear device as an excuse to extract arms from the U.S., told his American interviewer: "Kissinger ought to consider Sikkim when he comes here. But this must be something he does on his own. I can't keep telling him what India's intentions are, showing him the maps. We stand vindicated by our analysis. Half of our country is gone. Half of Kashmir is gone. They (India) marched into Goa. They have gone nuclear. And now they have swallowed up Sikkim."

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO SEPT. 12, 1924

## Rains in East Rajputana

Bombay, Sept. 11: A communique from the General Traffic Manager, B.B. and C.I. Railway Bombay, states: "In consequence of the recent heavy rain in East Rajputana, the B.B. and C.I. Railway between Bayana and Pingraon on the Nagda-Munira section and between Bandikui and Bharatpur on the metre gauge section has been considerably ravaged by floods."

# The gathering Indian storm

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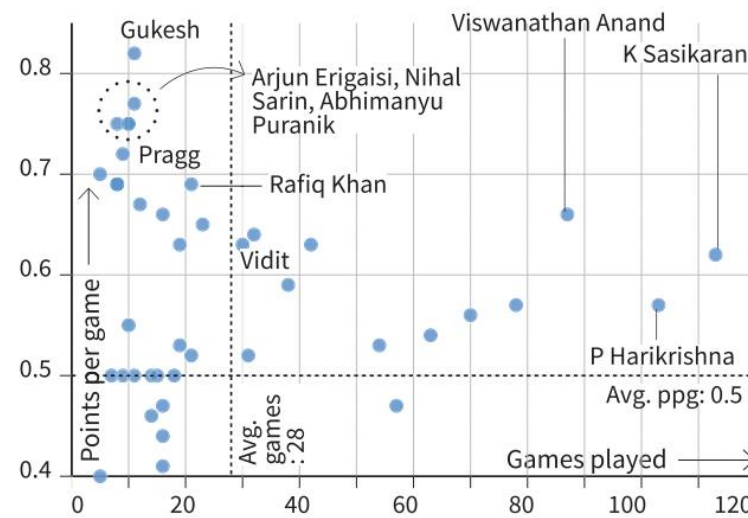


Rafiq Khan won India's first medal, a silver, in the Malta Olympiad in 1980

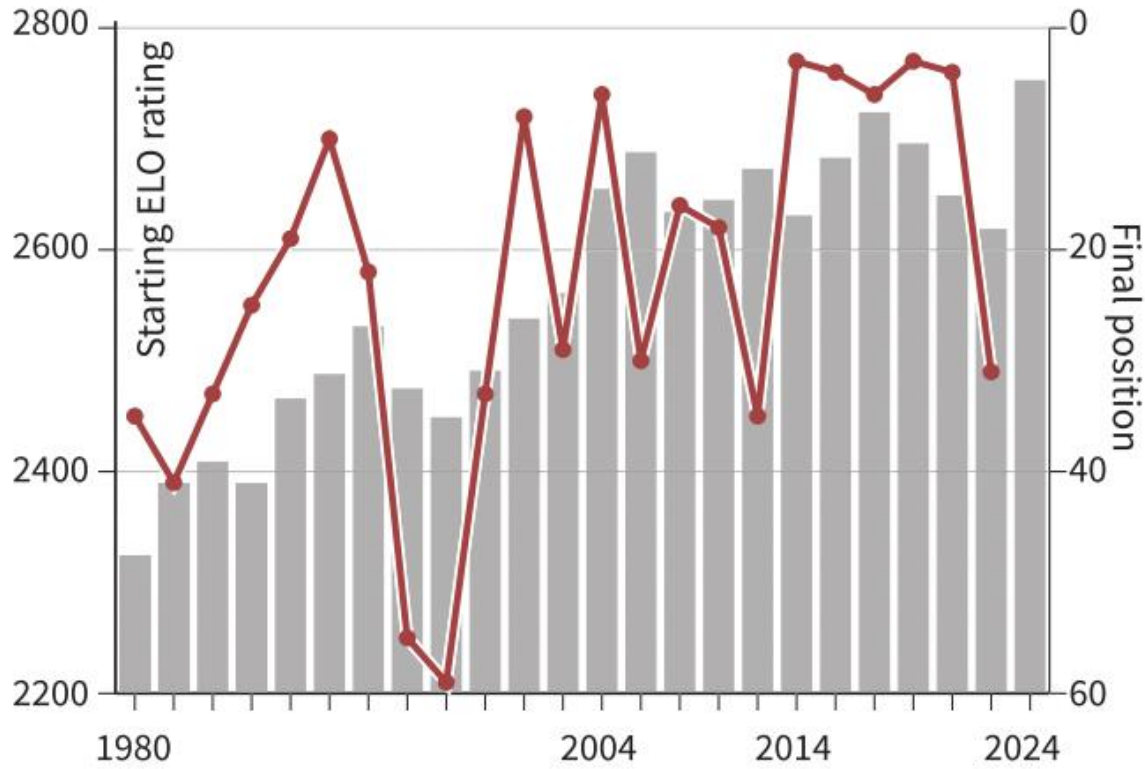
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9	Matulović (Yugoslavia)	78	0.77
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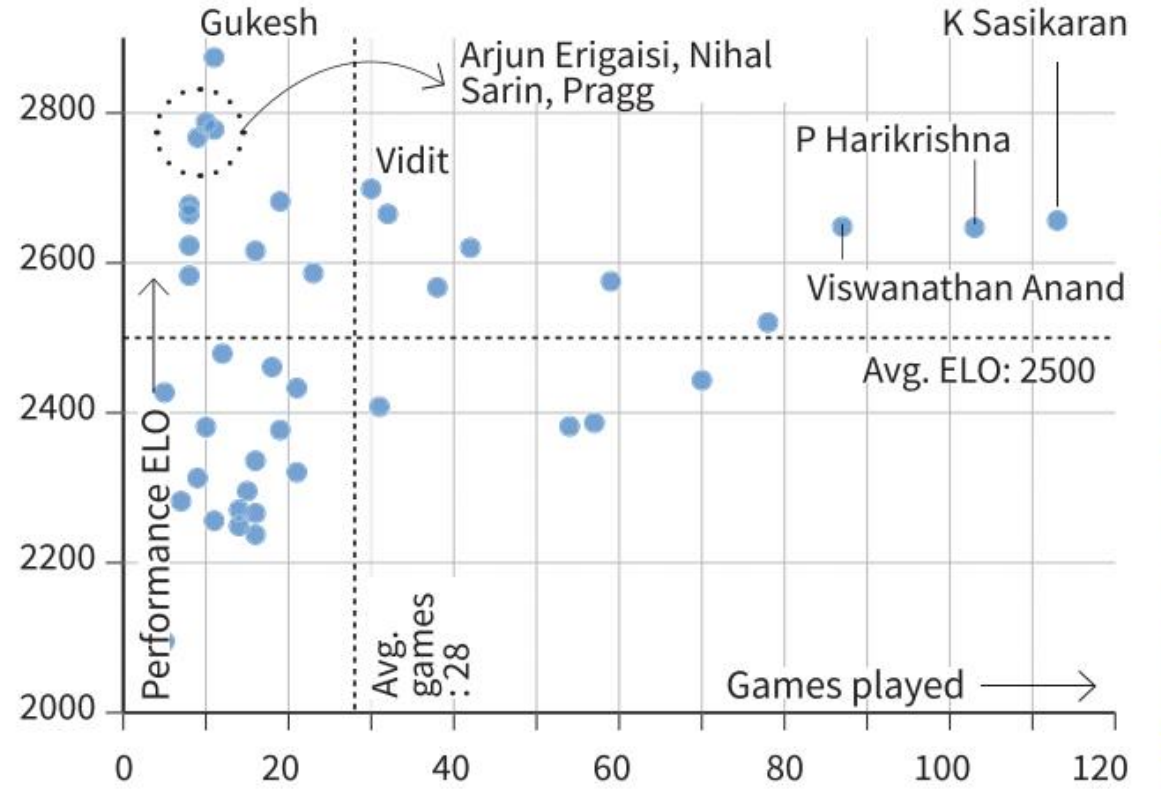
**Chart 5:** Indians who played in the Open section in Chess Olympiads (points per game: ppg versus games played)



**Chart 3:** India's performance in Chess Olympiads since 1980 (starting ELO rating in left axis ■, final position in right axis ■)



**Chart 6:** Indians at the Chess Olympiad (performance ELO ratings versus games played) in the Open section



**BAGHDAD**

**Iranian President Pezeshkian deepens Iraq ties on maiden trip**



Iran and Iraq signed a dozen deals to deepen already strong ties as Masoud Pezeshkian (left, in picture) visited Baghdad on his first foreign trip as President. The three-day trip comes amid crisis in West Asia sparked by the Gaza war, which has drawn in Iran-backed armed groups and complicated Iraq's relations with the U.S. AFP

**AMMAN**

**Islamist Opposition party tops Jordan polls, but shy of majority**



Jordan's leading Islamist opposition party has won 31 out of 138 seats in the kingdom's parliament, tripling its representation in the house. The Islamic Action Front, the political offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, came ahead of other parties after Tuesday's vote, but fell shy of forming a majority, officials results showed. AFP

**MEXICO CITY**

**Mexico becomes first country to approve popular election of judges**



Mexico became the world's first country to allow voters to elect judges at all levels, after protesters invaded the Upper House and suspended debate on the issue. Outgoing President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador had pushed hard for the reform and criticised the current judicial system for serving the interests of the elite. AFP

**NEW YORK**

**Pop singer Taylor Swift endorses Kamala Harris for U.S. President**



Taylor Swift, a self-declared "childless cat lady" and one of the world's most popular and influential stars, has endorsed Kamala Harris for President of the U.S. Swift broke her silence on Tuesday, voicing support for Ms. Harris over Donald Trump, and calling the Democratic candidate a "steady-handed, gifted leader." AFP

**In southern Sri Lanka, a chant for change in this poll season**

Those who seek continuity see President Ranil Wickremesinghe as a preferred choice, while others who demand change are divided between Sajith Premadasa and Anura Dissanayake

**Meera Srinivasan  
KURUNEGALA**

**B**uddhika Dissanayake says she has never had to think so hard before an election. "Earlier, we voted for the party that our family backed for generations, it was an easy choice," says the middle-aged voter in Kurunegala district, in Sri Lanka's North Western Province. With hardly a fortnight left for the island nation's crucial presidential election, she is undecided.

Her dilemma is not uncommon among Sri Lankans gearing up for the September 21 contest. Over the past five years, the country's political landscape and economic path have altered drastically.

In the eight presidential elections preceding this, the country's two major political camps — the centre-right Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and the centre-right United National Party (UNP), or their political offshoots — fielded a candidate each.

But this time, voters are navigating a more complex electoral field with three main contestants.

Incumbent Ranil Wickremesinghe, who replaced ousted President Gotabaya Rajapaksa through a parliamentary vote, is running as an independent candidate. His two foremost challengers, Sajith Premadasa and Anura Dissanayake, are in opposition.

"We must think hard and choose carefully," Ms. Dissanayake says. "Whoever is elected must wipe out corruption, that is rampant, and rebuild our economy."

When Sri Lanka's economy crashed in 2022, it



Here streets: Over the past five years, Sri Lanka's political landscape and economic path have altered drastically. MEERA SRINIVASAN

triggered a mass uprising that not only protested shortages and power cuts, but emphatically rejected the old, "corrupt" political order they despised. The agitating citizens demanded "system change".

**Chant for change**  
It is that chant for change that has now evolved as the chief election logic guiding many Sri Lankan voters.

"In 2022, when people chased away the Rajapakses, they showed they have the power. In this election, we need someone new, someone different. We need change," says homemaker Chula Mihirani.

Local and global economists endlessly debate Sri Lanka's economic recovery and debt treatment policies, but Ms. Mihirani sees the crisis persisting in her home. "The cost of living is unbearable. My son is sitting for his school final exam, we cannot afford private tuition or transport for him."

The last time economic concerns dominated a national election in Sri Lanka was in 1977, before the raging ethnic conflict took centre stage, causing in the voter resentment over then Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike's policies of import substitution and food rationing. I.R. Jayewardene defeated her in a landslide.

Nearly half a century later, President Wickremesinghe, who is Mr. Jayewardene's nephew, is seeking a mandate to take forward his government's ongoing economic reform agenda, shaped by an IMF programme.

While his backers credit him for removing fuel queues from the roads and bringing in some fiscal stability, critics point to the painful austerity measures that especially affect families like Ms. Mihirani's.

Meanwhile, the once formidable Rajapaksa surname barely figures in the context of the coming election. A total of 38 contestants are in the race, but the real contest is limited to three candidates.

Some, particularly in Colombo, see value in continuity if Mr. Wickremesinghe stays, while those decidedly voting for change are divided between Mr. Premadasa and Mr. Dissanayake. "Although Mr. Premadasa comes from an established political party, he has never had the chance to lead the coun-



Here streets: Over the past five years, Sri Lanka's political landscape and economic path have altered drastically. MEERA SRINIVASAN

try," says Fathima Rinoosha, making a case for a known, even if unpopular, leader. Mr. Premadasa is also seen as a preferred candidate in the hill country among Malayala Tamil voters, including on the tea estates. Additionally, southern voters, who have troubling memories of the armed insurrections led by Mr. Dissanayake's party (the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna) in 1971 and 1987-89, seem more comfortable with Mr. Premadasa, observes Kurunegala-based women's rights activist Sumika Perera.

At the same time, some voters say Mr. Premadasa does not represent a clean break from the old political system that they are tired of. He was with the UNP before breaking away to lead the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB). "Ranil and Sajith are two sides of the same coin," says K. Wijerathna, a trader in the neighbouring Matale district.

"We use all our earnings to meet the increased living costs and don't save a penny. We need a complete system overhaul," he says, adding "AKP", (as Mr. Dissanayake is referred to as the only leader who can weed out corruption and bring about change. He is not part of that corrupt political class."

The buoyant endorsement of supporters has made Mr. Dissanayake a frontrunner in the contest, even as Mr. Premadasa steadily acquires support through poll alliances, especially with representatives of ethnic minorities.

However, even voters mocking his catchphrase as a reality TV star, saying that Mr. Trump had been "fired by 81 million people" and calling him "back to democracy."

The former prosecutor pointed out that Mr. Harris' stump speech called him "extreme" and said it is "a tragedy" that while having pushed through his career he had used "race to divide

**Sriram Lakshman  
LONDON**

The U.K. government, on Wednesday, announced sanctions on a "shadow fleet" of 10 Russian oil tankers that it has alleged were circumventing Western oil sanctions.

The announcement coincided with a trip to Kyiv by U.K. Foreign Secretary David Lammy and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is on a trip to the U.K. and continental Europe. The announcement comes on the heels of Tuesday's sanctions announced for Russia's war with Ukraine. The G7 instituted a price cap of \$60 per barrel of Russian oil in December 2022.

The EU and Group of Seven countries, including the U.K., are among those who have participated in



The news coincided with a trip to Kyiv by U.K. Foreign Secretary David Lammy, right, and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken. AFP

U.S.-led sanctions on Russian oil, with petroleum being a critical source of income for Russia's war with Ukraine. The G7 instituted a price cap of \$60 per barrel of Russian oil in December 2022.

The EU and Group of Seven countries, including the U.K., are among those who have participated in

them, transported more than \$5 billion of Russian oil since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

"Russia has been forced to spend over \$8 billion amassing this shadow fleet. But with sanctioned tankers loitering and unable to load oil, we are determined to make Putin's investment an expensive mistake for the Kremlin," Mr. Lammy added.

India is one of the top purchasers of oil from Russia, a move New Delhi has defended on grounds of national interest and market dynamics. The issue was discussed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Mr. Modi's visit to Kyiv in August, when the Ukrainian President had urged India to stop purchases from Moscow.

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**U.K. government imposes sanctions on 10 ships from Russia's 'shadow fleet'**

**Nature's wrath**



A man wades through floodwaters on a street in Hanoi on Wednesday, as heavy rain in the aftermath of Typhoon 'Yagi' brought flooding to northern Vietnam. River levels in the country hit a 20-year high and the death toll from the strongest typhoon in decades passed 150. AFP

**Harris gets under Trump's skin, elicits angry responses in presidential debate**

**Agence France-Presse  
PHILADELPHIA**

Kamala Harris put Donald Trump on the defensive in a fiery televised debate on Tuesday, getting under her rival's skin as they battled for a breakthrough in an agonisingly close U.S. presidential election. The Democrat baited the "extreme" Republican into angry responses on anything ranging from abortion to democracy and foreign policy.

The 59-year-old U.S. Vice-President manager to knock former President Trump off his game in their first, and only scheduled showdown, which featured a series of bitter personal attacks on both sides. Trump said afterwards that the ABC News-

hosted clash in Philadelphia was his "best debate" but snap polls and commentators said Ms. Harris had won, with her campaign quickly challenging him to a second debate on October 10.

With less than two months until election day, Harris was under pressure to deliver in front of an audience of tens of millions after her sudden rise to the top of the Democratic ticket in place of U.S. President Joe Biden.

Ms. Harris started on the front foot by surprising Mr. Trump by approaching her to shake his hand before they took to the stage — and then kept her upper hand.

Mr. Trump repeatedly raised his voice as he hit back at the Vice-President on immigration and the



Kamala Harris speaks during a presidential debate as Donald Trump listens in Philadelphia on Tuesday. REUTERS

economy, branding her a "Marxist" and blaming her for what he said were the failings of President Joe Biden's administration.

Ms. Harris responded by looking on in amusement before declaring that she represents a fresh start after the "mess" of the

Trump presidency — and saying: "We're not going back."

"Bunch of lies"  
Ms. Harris responded by looking on in amusement before declaring that she represents a fresh start after the "mess" of the

right to abortion, he wanted individual States to make their own policy, with Mr. Harris said she was telling a "bunch of lies" and called his policies "insulting to the women of America."

Another jarring clash came as Mr. Trump doubled down on his unprecedented refusal to accept losing to Mr. Biden in the 2020 election, before trying to overturn the result.

Ms. Harris responded by mocking his catchphrase as a reality TV star, saying that Mr. Trump had been "fired by 81 million people" and calling him "back to democracy."

The former prosecutor pointed out that Mr. Harris' stump speech called him "extreme" and said it is "a tragedy" that while having pushed through his career he had used "race to divide

the American people." The rivals also clashed on foreign policy, with Mr. Harris telling Mr. Trump that Russian President Vladimir Putin would "eat you for lunch" when it came to the war in Ukraine and that world leaders were "laughing" at him. Mr. Trump shot back by accusing Ms. Harris of being weak on the war in Gaza, saying she spent five days intensively preparing for the debate, repeatedly managed to needle Mr. Trump into finger-jabbing insults and meandering invectives.

She elicited an angry response when mocked the size of his trademark rallies, one of his favorite topics, saying that attendees were leaving early out of "exhaustion and

boredom." Mr. Trump repeatedly attacked Ms. Harris on migration, but she also managed to make him lose his cool on what should have been a winning topic.

He ended up talking at length about a debunked conspiracy theory that Haitian immigrants have been eating local people's pet cats and dogs in Ohio — before being corrected by the moderator that authorities have said this didn't happen.

Mr. Biden said the Harris-Trump debate "was not even close", in a post on X. The last presidential debate in June had resulted in a crushing victory for Mr. Trump, after Mr. Biden delivered a catastrophic performance that ended up dooming his reelection campaign.

**Gaza rescuers say 10 killed in Israeli strike on school**

**Agence France-Presse  
GAZA STRIP**

An Israeli air strike on Wednesday hit a central Gaza school, with the Hamas-run territory's civil defence agency reporting 10 killed in the facility, including a displaced child and the military saying it had targeted militants.

Israel has struck several such schools in recent months, saying Palestinian militants were hiding among displaced civilians charged by Hamas. The al-Jawhri school in central Gaza's Nuseirat, already hit several times during the war, was struck again on Wednesday.

## **MEXICO CITY**

# Mexico becomes first country to approve popular election of judges



REUTERS

▲ Mexico became the world's first country to allow voters to elect judges at all levels, after protesters invaded the Upper House and suspended debate on the issue. Outgoing President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador had pushed hard for the reform and criticised the current judicial system for serving the interests of the elite. AFP

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Taking stacks Brazilian President Lula on the banks of the Jaquin river in Manaus, Amazonas on Tuesday. AFP

## Brazil's Lula visits Amazon as fire 'pandemic' rages

Agence France-Presse  
BRASILIA

Brazil President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva announced new measures on Tuesday to alleviate drought in the Brazilian Amazon, as his government faces mounting pressure to combat a "pandemic" of fires.

Brazil has been parched by a historic drought that experts link to climate change, sparking fires that have spread more easily and produced clouds of smoke that have reached neighbouring Uruguay and Argentina.

The country's Supreme Court has ordered immediate government action to contain what it has called a "fire pandemic", which is also threatening to destroy the biodiversity-rich wetland sanctuary of Pantanal. "We take the need to combat drought, deforestation, fires, very seriously," Lula said in the northern State of Amazonas.

Accompanied by several Ministers, the President visited riverside communities living in the world's largest rainforest, which are suffering from the worst droughts in 70 years to Brazil. The high temperatures have dried up rivers used for supply. The Brazilian government announced dredging works on the Amazon River and other waterways and the delivery of water purifiers. With more than 5,000 active fire outbreaks on Tuesday, Brazil accounted for 76% of the areas affected by fires in South America, according to data from the National Institute of Space Research (INPE) published by official media. So far this year, some 6.7 million hectares have burned in the Brazilian Amazon, amounting to 1.6% of the rainforest, according to official figures.

## Afghanistan set to begin work on TAPI pipeline

The \$10-billion natural gas pipeline traversing Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India is the most significant development project for Taliban authorities since they seized power in 2021

Agence France-Presse  
ISLAM CHESHMA

Afghanistan said on Wednesday that work would begin on a \$10-billion gas pipeline traversing South Asia as officials celebrated its completion on that side of the border.

Progress on the TAPI pipeline - running through Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India - has been repeatedly delayed because of security issues in conflict-ravaged Afghanistan.

"From today the operations will start on Afghanistan's soil," Taliban government spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid said in comments broadcast by Afghan state television.

The pipeline will see around 33 billion cubic metres of natural gas each year extracted from the Galkynsh gas field in the south-east of Turkmenistan.

It will be pumped through a 1,800-kilometre pipeline traversing Afghanistan, including Herat and Kandahar in the south, before crossing into restive Balochistan province in Pakistan and ending in Fazilka in Punjab in India.

Pakistan and India will each purchase 42% of the gas deliveries, and Afghanistan 16%, while Kabul will



Slow progress: Work on the pipeline has been delayed by security issues in Afghanistan. FILE PHOTO

holiday was declared to mark the occasion, with posters celebrating the project plastered around the capital of the same name.

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Pakistan and India will each purchase 42% of the gas deliveries, and Afghanistan 16%, while Kabul will

also benefit from lucrative transit fees of around \$500 million per year, according to Afghan media.

Work on the Turkmen pipeline began in 2015 and was initially scheduled to start in Afghanistan in 2018, but has been repeatedly delayed.

Stumbling blocks India's commitment to the pipeline has also previously been questioned over its relationship with Pakistan and easy access to equipped natural gas markets, which are seen as potential stumbling blocks.

It is the most significant development project for Taliban authorities since they seized power in 2021, ending their two-decade-long insurgency against the foreign-backed government.

## Blinken, Lammy visit Kyiv as Ukraine seeks to hit deep in Russia

Associated Press  
KYIV

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and British Foreign Secretary David Lammy arrived in Kyiv on a joint visit on Wednesday, as Ukraine presses the West to allow it to use long-range missiles against Russia.

The top diplomats reached the Ukrainian capital by train from Poland hours after the U.S. presidential debate during which Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Trump sparred over the war in Ukraine.

Mr. Blinken traveled from London, where he accused Iran of providing Russia with 360 short-range ballistic missiles, calling the move a "dramatic escalation" of the war.

For months, Ukraine has been requesting approval to use long-range weapons from the U.S. and Western allies to strike targets in Russia, and is expected to press harder given Russia's latest reported "massive escalation" of the war.

"We hope that long-range equipment for strikes on the territory of our enemy will be reached and we will have it," Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal told Mr. Lammy. "We hope for your help and support in this issue."

Mr. Shmyhal described the meeting with Mr. Lammy in Kyiv as "intense" but gave no other details in the post on his Telegram channel.

At a news conference on



Antony Blinken, right, and David Lammy arrive at Kyiv on Wednesday. AFP

Tuesday, Mr. Shmyhal said that "if we are allowed to destroy military targets or weapons prepared by the enemy for attacks on Ukraine, it would certainly bring more safety for our civilians, our people, and our children... We are working towards this and will continue to push for it every day."

"Ensure safety" Referring to the missiles from Iran, he added: "Russia's use of weapons from its terrorist allies to strike at Ukraine continues their genocidal war and terrorism on our territory. We must be able to respond to such terrorism in kind by destroying military targets on their territory to ensure greater safety for our citizens."

The diplomats' visit comes ahead of British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's upcoming trip to Washington, where he will meet with Mr. Lammy on Friday. Ukraine's request for permission to strike Russian targets is due to feature in the discussion.

## HRW urges Latin American countries to boost protection for Haitians, Venezuelans

Associated Press  
BOGOTA

Human Rights Watch (HRW) on Wednesday called on Latin American governments to improve protection schemes, grant legal status and reverse visa requirements for millions of Haitians and Venezuelans who have struggled to find work, access to health care and education in South American host countries, forcing them to increasingly seek asylum in the United States.

In a report describing the situation of Haitian and Venezuelan migrants, HRW said that "limited" integration and regularisation policies in South America are forcing vul-

nerable people to head to the U.S. every month. To reach the U.S. border, many make a long, dangerous journey that includes crossing the Darien Gap, a treacherous swath of jungle between Colombia and Panama. The group urged governments to implement a "region-wide protection regime that would grant all Venezuelans and Haitians legal status for a fixed but renewable term of adequate duration," even if they may not qualify for refugee status under domestic law.

The report also calls for governments to eliminate barriers that hinder the integration of migrants and refugees, including legislation that prevents people from getting work permits, while they seek asylum in other countries.

While some Latin American governments have made commendable efforts to receive migrants and asylum seekers, efforts to regularise migration in the region have often fallen short due to restrictive timelines, complex procedures, onerous document requirements, and administrative delays," said the report, which reviewed asylum policies in countries including Panama, Colombia, Brazil, Peru and Chile.

## Beyond the limelight



Stage faces: Performers of a Taiwanese Opera team prepare backstage before a show in New Taipei City, Taiwan on Monday. REUTERS

## U.S.-Russia battle to influence Africa plays out in Central African Republic

Associated Press  
BANGUI

Hours after late Russian mercenary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin rebelled against his country's top military leaders, his private army, the biggest client in Africa panicked, turning for help to his foe in the West. Officials from Central African Republic, where some 1,500 of Prigozhin's shadowy Wagner Group mercenaries were stationed, mentioned, wrote a letter that day, requesting to "triple up" arrange a meeting with a private U.S. security firm to discuss collaboration.

Dated June 23, 2023, the letter said Prigozhin launched the armed rebellion, the letter said a series of

private meetings, culminating in a deal with the African nation's Ban Croft Global Development. This sparked a backlash from Russian mercenaries, according to a dozen diplomats, local people, and analysts.

The tensions in Central African Republic are a window into a larger battle playing out across the continent as Moscow and Washington vie for influence in the region.

The Russian mercenaries using access in stabilised or rebel in this impoverished nation as a model for expansion - have long been accused by local people and rights groups of stripping natural resources such as minerals and timber and are linked to the torture and death of civilians in the wake of Prigozhin's rebellion and suspicious death in a plane crash, the Russians are recalibrating their Africa operations.

The U.S., which has been largely disengaged from the region for years, is attempting to maintain a presence in the region as it pushes African countries to distance themselves from the mercenaries. "If the U.S. cannot regain a foothold, it could give Russia greater scope for expansion - have long been accused by local people and rights groups of stripping natural resources such as minerals and timber and are linked to the torture and death of civilians in the wake of Prigozhin's rebellion and suspicious death in a plane crash, the Russians are recalibrating their Africa operations."

2017. They are tasked with protecting African leaders and in some cases helping fight rebels and extremists. Human rights concerns They are also plagued by their human rights record. Two years ago in Mali, Wagner and the army were accused of executing about 300 men - some suspected of being Islamist extremists, but most civilians - in what Human Rights Watch called the worst single atrocity reported in the country's decade-long armed conflict.

After Prigozhin's death, Russia moved quickly to take control of Wagner's assets, and the Defence Ministry told countries where Wagner operated that it

would take over. The country and its military intelligence arm have taken more direct role in Africa operations, deploying more official detachments from its army.

Russia is trying to rebrand the mercenaries, creating Africa Corps, a parallel group that could absorb Wagner, said John Lee, a Wagner expert. In Central African Republic, it's still unclear how much sway the Russian state has with the mercenaries, who are beloved by many and embedded in society, brewing beer and visiting markets, still, they largely keep to themselves, walking through streets with faces covered and driving in unmarked cars.

## Australian anti-war activists clash with police

Associated Press  
MELBOURNE

Anti-war protesters in Australia clashed with police on Wednesday outside a military arms convention in the city of Melbourne. Protesters hurled bottles, rocks and hoses against police officers, who used tear gas and pepper spray, flash distraction devices and rubber bullets. At least 24 officers required medical treatment. Police arrested 39 protesters for offences such as assault, arson and blocking roads.

Around 1,800 police officers have been deployed to a Melbourne convention centre where the Land Forces International Land Defence Exposition is taking place through Friday. Students for Palestine national co-convenor Jasmine Duff blamed police for the protest violence.

"They used serious weapons on peace activists that should be banned for their safety," Duff said in a statement. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese called on protesters to show respect for the law. "People have a right to protest peacefully, but you don't say yes" to the opposition to defence equipment by throwing through streets with faces covered and driving in unmarked cars.

+



# Afghanistan set to begin work on TAPI pipeline

The \$10-billion natural gas pipeline traversing Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India is the most significant development project for Taliban authorities since they seized power in 2021

**Agence France-Presse**  
ISLIM CHESHMA

Afghanistan said on Wednesday that work would begin on a \$10-billion gas pipeline traversing South Asia as officials joined dignitaries in neighbouring Turkmenistan to celebrate its completion on that side of the border.

Progress on the TAPI pipeline – running through Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India – has been repeatedly delayed because of security issues in conflict-ravaged Afghanistan.

“From today the operations will start on Afghanistan’s soil,” Taliban government spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid said in comments broadcast by Afghan state television.

At the border ceremony in Islim Cheshma in Turkmenistan, officials on both sides, including Afghan Prime Minister Hassan Akhund, hailed the project.

“This project will benefit not only the economies of the countries participating but also the countries of the whole region,” the President of Turkmenistan Serdar Berdimuhamedow said in a video broadcast live at the ceremony.

However, experts warned that the project – which is still not fully funded – is unlikely to be operational for another decade.

In the Afghan border province of Herat, a public



**Slow progress:** Work on the pipeline has been delayed by security issues in Afghanistan. FILE PHOTO

holiday was declared to mark the occasion, with posters celebrating the project plastered around the capital of the same name.

The pipeline will see around 33 billion cubic metres of natural gas each year extracted from the Galkynysh gas field in the south-east of Turkmenistan.

It will be pumped through a 1,800-kilometre pipeline traversing Afghanistan, including Herat and Kandahar in the south, before crossing into restive Balochistan province in Pakistan and ending in Fazilka in Punjab of India.

Pakistan and India will each purchase 42% of the gas deliveries, and Afghanistan 16%, while Kabul will

also benefit from lucrative transit fees of around \$500 million per year, according to Afghan media.

Work on the Turkmen side began in 2015 and was initially scheduled to start in Afghanistan in 2018, but has been repeatedly delayed.

## Stumbling blocks

India’s commitment to the pipeline has also previously been questioned over its relationship with Pakistan and easy access to liquified natural gas markets, which are seen as potential stumbling blocks.

It is the most significant development project for Taliban authorities since they seized power in 2021, ending their two decade-long insurgency against

the foreign-backed government.

The pipeline gives the government, which is not officially recognised by any nation, a strategic role in regional cooperation between Central Asia and South Asia, which is facing huge energy deficits.


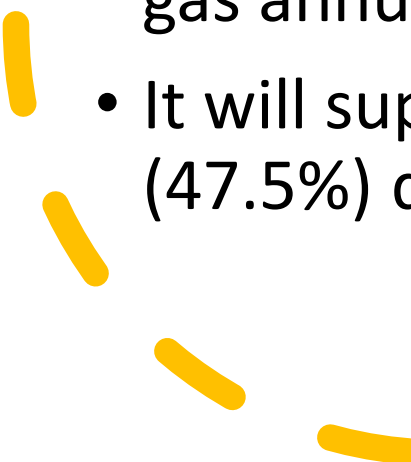
Afghanistan, although still under economic and financial sanctions from the West, is currently trying to relaunch ambitious projects, particularly in energy, mines and infrastructure.



At the end of July, Afghanistan and China officially relaunched a major copper-extraction project in the world’s second-largest known deposit, near Kabul, which had been bogged down since 2008.


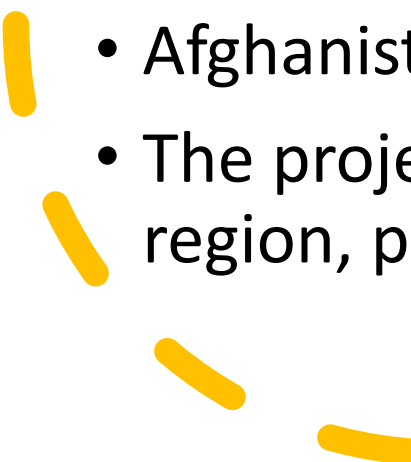
# Trans-Afghanistan pipeline

Route of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) natural gas pipeline




- 
- The TAPI pipeline is a major infrastructure project designed to transport natural gas from the Galkynysh gas field in Turkmenistan through Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India.
  - The pipeline will span approximately 1,814-kilometres and is expected to deliver around 33 billion cubic metres (BCM) of natural gas annually.
  - It will supply gas to Afghanistan (5%), Pakistan (47.5%), and India (47.5%) during its 30-year operational period.
- 

- 
- The pipeline is also known as the 'Peace Pipeline' due to its potential to foster regional cooperation and stability.
  - The project's origins trace back to the 1990s, with significant progress made in 2003, supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).
  - India joined the initiative in 2008, marking a major milestone in its development.
- 

- 
- The pipeline is expected to transport 33 billion cubic meters of gas annually from the Galkynysh gas field in Turkmenistan.
  - **Significance of the Project:**
  - The pipeline is crucial for regional cooperation between Central Asia and South Asia.
  - Afghanistan will benefit from \$500 million per year in transit fees.
  - The project has the potential to support economic growth in the region, particularly for Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India.
- 




- **Security and Operational Challenges:**

- Progress on the pipeline has been delayed due to security issues in Afghanistan and the region's political instability.
  - Experts warn that the project may not become operational for another decade due to these delays and lack of funding.
  - The Taliban government is not recognized internationally, complicating foreign-backed projects like TAPI.
- 



- **Pipeline Route and Distribution:**

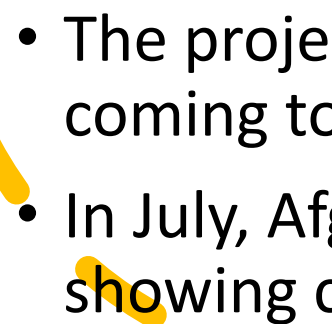
- The 1,800-kilometer pipeline will pass through Afghanistan's Herat and Kandahar provinces, cross into Pakistan's Balochistan province, and end in Fazilka, Punjab (India).
  - Pakistan and India will each purchase 42% of the gas delivered, while Afghanistan will take 16%.
- 



- **Strategic Importance:**

- Afghanistan, struggling under economic sanctions, views TAPI as a key project for infrastructure and energy sector growth.
- India's commitment to the pipeline has faced challenges due to its relationship with Pakistan and access to natural gas markets.

- **International Relations:**

- The project marks a significant development effort by the Taliban since coming to power in 2021.
  - In July, Afghanistan and China also relaunched a copper-extraction project, showing continued efforts to boost economic ties and energy projects.
- 

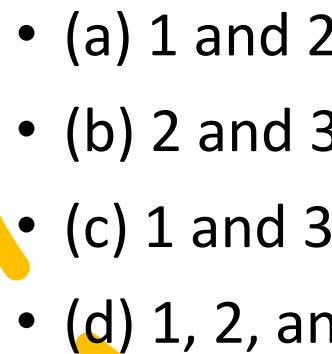




- **With reference to the TAPI pipeline project, consider the following statements:**

1. The pipeline will transport natural gas from Pakistan to Turkmenistan.
2. Afghanistan will earn significant transit fees from the TAPI pipeline.
3. The project has been delayed due to security and financial issues in Afghanistan.

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

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

**IN THE NEWS**

**CABINET NOD TO A HOST OF SCHEMES AND PROJECTS**

- PM-E Drive, PM-E Bus approved in boost to EVs
- PMIAY: ₹5-lakh coverage to all senior citizens above 70
- ₹12,461-crore outlay for hydel power capacity
- ₹2,000-crore 'Mission Mausam' to boost forecasts
- Fourth leg of rural road scheme with ₹70K-cr outlay

REPORTS ON PAGE 2

**TO CREATE 6 MILLION JOBS**

# Electronics sector to touch \$500 bn by 2030, says PM

**Right time to invest in India, Modi tells semicon companies**

**JATIN GROVER**  
New Delhi, September 11

**PRESENTING A BULLISH** outlook of the country's electronics sector on the back of several initiatives rolled out to promote domestic manufacturing, Narendra Modi on Wednesday said the sector will grow to touch \$500 billion by the end of the decade, creating 6 million jobs. He further said the government's goal is to make that 100% electronics manufacturing happens in the country. Currently, India's electronics sector is valued at around \$155 billion. Delivering the inaugural address at the three-day Semicon India event, Modi said, "You are in the right place at the right time. The chips are never down in 21st century India. Our country today gives the world the affirmation that when the chips are down, you can bet on India." The Prime Minister's observations come at a time when the smartphone FPI scheme has emerged as the most successful one, attracting global majors such as Apple, which is manufacturing iPhones in India through its contract manufacturers.

Continued on Page 7

**BAJAJ HOUSING FINANCE BREAKS IPO RECORDS**

WITH STRONG DEMAND from both institutional and non-institutional HNFI investors, Bajaj Housing Finance's IPO has broken all records after getting bids of over ₹3.0 lakh crore, reports Kishor Kadam. ■ PAGE 4

**BANGLADESH GOVT TO SCRUTINISE ADANI POWER DEAL**

THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT of Bangladesh, led by Muhammad Yunus, is set to scrutinise Indian businesses, including the Adani Group which exports power from its Bhushanhard unit under a 2017 agreement, reports Shubhajit Roy. ■ PAGE 3

**FE SPECIALS**

**'Today's CFO needs to be a strategist & a tech specialist'**

Interview with Vijay Padmanabhan, CEO, UST ■ PAGE 99

**Will Apple's big bet on AI pay off?**

The iPhone 16 series will go on sale from September 20, but the AI features will be available only in October ■ EXPLAINER, PAGE 99

# Tata Steel inks £500-mn grant deal with UK govt

**Funding support for £1.25-bn Port Talbot green steel project**

**FE BUREAU**  
Mumbai, September 11

**TATA STEEL HAS** signed a £500-million grant funding agreement with the UK government to help speed up the £1.25-billion green steel project at the Port Talbot steelworks factory. The project involves replacing the blast furnaces with electric arc furnaces and is expected to help reduce the UK's industrial carbon emissions by 8% and Port Talbot's by 90%. With the UK government's financial support, this complex and ambitious transformation of Port Talbot has the potential to make the plant one of Europe's premier centres for green steelmaking. TV Narendran, CEO and managing director of Tata Steel, said in a statement on Wednesday. Narendran added that the company will continue to work with the transition board and the UK and Welsh governments to enable economic regeneration and job creation in South Wales through the project. The announcement of the transition to a

Continued on Page 7

# LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT: SUSHIL AGARWAL

**When numbers become a passion**

**SHOBHANA SUBRAMANIAN**  
New Delhi, September 11

**THREE-AND-A-HALF** decades of managing money for the \$66-billion Aditya Birla Group can be a tough job, but Sushil Agarwal says he has enjoyed every moment of it. The group chief financial officer (CFO) of the \$66-billion group says half in jest that he is looking for some "calm" and would love to be in Uttarakhand when he's done with his family. A Jodhpur, decided to work in the field of finance, unlike his sister who studied medicine in a hurry. Although he believes he has a flair for "selling", and made lots of pocket money working at his grandfather's general store and spent it on cream and coke, he's happiest

Continued on Page 7

# No plan to delist MTNL, says govt

**PRASANTA SAHU**  
New Delhi, September 11

**THE GOVERNMENT HAS** no plans to delist the ailing Mahanagar Telephone Nigam (MTNL), a senior government official told FE on Wednesday, adding that reports to the contrary are incorrect. The comment came in the wake of a fourfold surge in MTNL's share price in less than a year, presumably because investors bet on the stock, in anticipation of delisting. The allowed reports of an earlier plan of the government to merge the telecom-making company with Bharat Sanchar Nigam (BSNL). After the merger plan was dropped, the MTNL board recently approved a service agreement with BSNL for a period of 10 years, under which the latter will function as a management agency for the former. "Probably, some people want to keep that share price high in anticipation that they can make a gain from the company's renouveau," he said. However, there is no chance of MTNL being delisted, he said. The decision to make BSNL the management agency for MTNL was taken, given the complexities of a merger of the two state-run entities, which was earlier being considered as one of the options to salvage MTNL. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) allows companies to delist under a special mechanism and the stock's weighted average price is a determinant in the process.

Continued on Page 7

# Samsung to lay off 10% of workforce in India

**Job cuts across businesses as slowdown hits Korean major**

**JATIN GROVER**  
New Delhi, September 11

**SOUTH KOREAN CONSUMER** electronics and appliances major Samsung is laying off around 200 employees at its India unit, which constitute nearly 10% of its workforce in the country, industry sources said. The layoffs are happening across sales, marketing and support staff in smart-phones, home appliances, and consumer electronics divisions as part of the global restructuring plans and contain costs, sources said. In India, Samsung has about 2,000 people across managerial positions. Sources said the layoffs are not only happening in India but across Samsung's operations globally. The layoffs can be attributed to a slowdown in its chip business, increased competition in the smartphone business in India, as well as a possible slowdown in the economy globally. The layoffs have come at a time when hundreds of workers at Samsung India's

# MFs turn to large-cap heavy NFOs again

**IT SEEMS THAT** mutual fund (MF) managers are going back to the basics, that is, invest in large-cap companies with solid management. Many new fund offers (NFOs) in recent months have been equity-heavy, with reasonable valuations since the broader market stocks are in a dip for their multiples, reports Vivek Kumar M. ■ PAGE 16

# Corporate India's top 6 go long on profit, short on jobs

**India Inc's biggest companies have shown a steady growth in profit and revenue, but that cheer is missing in employee addition. A four-part series looks at the reasons for this jobless growth**

**SHRINKING HEADCOUNT PART-I**

**JOYDEEP GHOSH**  
Mumbai, September 11

**LISTED ENTITIES OF** India Inc's top six groups are closing in fast on a significant milestone — ₹100 lakh crore in market capitalisation (₹97 lakh crore as of September 10). They have been growing steadily in key metrics like revenues and profits as well. In FY24, the revenues of these groups grew 3.8%, profit by an impressive 2.3%, and market capitalisation by an astounding 43.8%. In FY23, their headcount grew, at -0.2%, in flat. India Inc's top six groups that constitute 69 listed companies employed 1.74

HEADCOUNTS AND FINANCIALS		₹ lakh crore		Mcaps	
No. of firms	Employees (nos.)	Revenue	Profit	Mcaps	YoY %
Tata	23	824,389	9.86	0.67	20.58
Reliance	40	826,344	11.00	0.66	19.96
Adani	41	412,130	8.99	0.70	16.16
Bajaj	10	367,507	9.30	0.66	20.52
AV Birla	7	156,946	3.33	0.21	9.16
Mahindra	8	155,991	3.09	0.41	15.93
		126,259	2.21	0.31	7.30
		156,834	2.21	0.38	10.86
		133,808	4.45	0.25	4.85
		212,436	1.97	0.17	6.40
		207,667	2.16	0.16	2.96
					4.19

million people in FY23, which marginally dipped to 1.73 million in FY24, according to data collected from annual reports, Capitaline and Bloomberg. The Tata Group's 23 listed entities are the biggest employers at 824,000, but their headcount growth is flat. The Reliance Group added 1,000 employees (total 412,000) in FY23 but it fell by 4,000 in FY24 (367,000), whereas the Adani Group's 11 listed firms have added just 1,047 employees in FY24. In fact, the Reliance Group's employee numbers are quite interesting. With a total headcount of just 36,000, it employs the

# HEADCOUNTS AND FINANCIALS

₹ lakh crore

No. of firms		Employees (nos.)	Revenue	Profit	Mcap
Tata	23	824,389	9.86	0.67	20.58
		824,344	11.07	0.90	29.96
Reliance	10	412,130	8.99	0.66	16.16
		367,507	9.30	0.70	20.52
Adani	11	34,944	3.33	0.27	9.16
		35,991	3.09	0.41	15.93
Bajaj	10	124,259	1.69	0.30	7.39
		156,834	2.21	0.38	10.86
AV Birla	7	133,808	4.45	0.25	4.85
		146,477	4.68	0.27	6.40
Mahindra	8	212,436	1.97	0.17	2.96
		207,667	2.16	0.16	4.19

FY23

FY24



# Communist veteran Sitaram Yechury passes away at 72

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

Communist Party of India (Marxist) general secretary Sitaram Yechury passed away at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here on Thursday. He was 72.

Mr. Yechury was admitted to the hospital on August 19 with “pneumonia-like” symptoms and had been on respiratory support for the past few days.

Mr. Yechury was serving his third term as CPI(M) general secretary, a post to which he was elected in 2015.

In one of his last video messages from the hospital room, Mr. Yechury paid tribute to former West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee on August 22. In an emotional farewell message to the former CM who had passed away a few days before, Mr. Yechury said: “It’s most unfortunate that I had to connect from AIIMS to convey my feelings, emotions and revolutionary *Lal Salaam* to *Buddho Da*.”

**Big blow, says CPI(M)**

Tributes poured from across the political spec-



Sitaram Yechury

trum for Mr. Yechury, a two-term Rajya Sabha MP. The CPI(M) Polit Bureau in a statement said that his untimely demise at “this crucial juncture in our national politics is a big blow for the CPI(M) and a grievous loss for the Left, democratic and secular forces”.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi too echoed the sentiment and said Mr. Yechury was known for his ability to “connect across the political spectrum.”

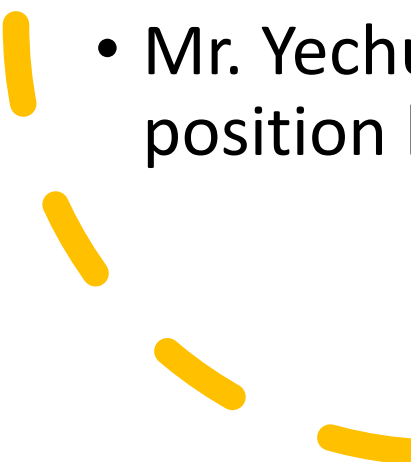
The body will be kept at the CPI(M) headquarters in Delhi between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. on September 14 for the public to pay homage. The body will then be donated to the AIIMS for research as per his wishes.

**RELATED REPORTS**

» PAGE 5




- **Sitaram Yechury's Passing:**

- Communist Party of India (Marxist) general secretary, Sitaram Yechury, passed away at AIIMS, New Delhi, at the age of 72.
  - He was admitted to the hospital on August 19, with pneumonia-like symptoms and had been on respiratory support.
  - Mr. Yechury was serving his third term as CPI(M) general secretary, a position he held since 2015.
- 



- **Tributes to Yechury:**





- In one of his last video messages from the hospital, Yechury paid tribute to former West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, who had recently passed away.
  - Yechury expressed his sorrow in an emotional farewell message, using the revolutionary greeting "Lal Salaam."
- 



- **With reference to Sitaram Yechury, consider the following statements:**

- 1.He was serving his first term as CPI(M) general secretary at the time of his death.
- 2.Yechury's body will be donated to AIIMS for research as per his wishes.
- 3.He served as a two-term Rajya Sabha MP.

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

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





# Satellite-based toll system likely from 2025: official

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

A satellite-based toll system for highways will be rolled out in the first quarter of 2025, said a senior official of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

The Indian Highways Management Company Limited is preparing bids for toll chargers, said Anurag Jain, Secretary, MoRTH.

The government envisages a hybrid toll mechanism so that toll booths can track vehicles fitted with an onboard unit for receiving signals from the Global Navigation Satellite System and radio frequency identification-based Fastags.

## Businesses warn Yellen on US Steel sale



Steel's opposition: US Steel said it will shut Pennsylvania headquarters and factories if the deal is blocked. REUTERS

### Agence France-Presse TOKYO

Major Japanese and American business groups have urged U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen not to succumb to political pressure when reviewing Nippon Steel's proposed acquisition of United States Steel. The \$14.5 billion takeover, agreed by the firms in December, has met with opposition from both Presidential candidates Kamala Harris and Donald Trump.

US Steel warned last week it could shut its Pennsylvania headquarters and factories if the deal is blocked, after reports said incumbent Joe Biden plans to stop the sale.

Ms. Yellen is chair of the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), which is reviewing the transaction.

The Japan Business Federation — the country's largest business group — wrote to Ms. Yellen along with the United States Council for International Business, the Washington-based Global Business Alliance and others.

"There have been persistent attempts recently to politicise the committee's work from across the political spectrum, allowing politics to undermine the clear and narrow statutory mandate of national security," they said.

"We fear this politicisation may be unduly influencing the outcome of the CFIUS review," which is "putting the US economy and workers at risk," warned the letter dated Wednesday and released to journalists on Thursday.

"America's investment climate will be severely tarnished if such political interference prevails."

## + Growth concerns



Battle hardened: European Central Bank (ECB) President Christine Lagarde addresses a press conference on the Eurozone's monetary policy, at the central bank's headquarters in Frankfurt. The ECB lowered its deposit rate by 25 basis points to 3.50% as inflation is now within striking distance of 2%. TOGETHER

## Russia facing stagflation threat as war effort slows growth

### Agence France-Presse MOSCOW

Prices for bread have jumped so much over the last few years that Russian pensioner Oleg Ivanovich sometimes has to go without.

But the 67-year-old says he doesn't mind having to make sacrifices for the sake of Russia's military offensive on Ukraine.

"We'll bear with it. When the special military operation ends, prices will return to normal," he told AFP in Moscow, using the official Russian term for the offensive.

Surging prices — annual inflation came in at a little over 9% in August — is just one of the economic headaches Russia is grappling with as it has increasingly militarised its economy since ordering troops into Ukraine in February 2022.

Moscow has funnelled billions of dollars to its army, soldiers, their families and weapons makers to sustain its military campaign — a spending spree that helped it defy Western hopes that sanctions would push it into economic collapse.

But after warning for months that the economy was overheating, the country's Central Bank has lately started mentioning the possibility of another, possibly more serious, challenge: stagflation.

"The shortage of (dollar) resources may lead to a situation where economic growth slows down, despite all the efforts to stimulate demand, with all

## Dark patterns pose a growing concern in India's digital landscape

In India's rapidly expanding e-commerce landscape, the practices undermine consumer trust and pose significant risks to the sector, globally, regulatory bodies are acting against such practices; India's initiatives are crucial steps in protecting consumers from unfair practices

**COMMENT**  
**Dharmender Jhambh**

In recent years, as the digital landscape continues to expand, websites and apps have become integral to daily lives. However, a troubling trend has emerged alongside this growth: Dark patterns. The deceptive design practices are used to manipulate users into making decisions they might not otherwise make, such as signing up for unwanted services or sharing personal information. By exploiting human psychology and clever design, dark patterns benefit companies at the expense of consumers.

This issue is particularly pressing within India's rapidly-growing e-commerce sector, expected to reach a market size of \$50 billion by 2030. The growth is driven by increased Internet and smartphone penetration, with about 936.16 million Internet subscribers and 350 million mature online users actively engaging in transactions.

As online shopping becomes more prevalent, dark patterns are increasingly used to manipulate user decisions, exploiting the surge in digital activity. Common dark patterns include creating a false sense of urgency to rush users into making purchases, hiding subscription



Digital danger: Dark patterns are increasingly used to manipulate user decision. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

cancellations deep within websites, and using confusing language to mislead users. The tactics are unethical and undermine the integrity of the design process, leading to practices that prioritise manipulation over genuine long-term user engagement. The practices fall under 'unfair trade practices' category under Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

Recognising the gravity of the issue, the Department of Consumer Affairs, on November 30, 2023, issued 'Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns, 2023' under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, identifying 13 common dark patterns prevalent in e-com applications and websites.

Beyond specific guidelines, there have been significant developments in the international space to regulate dark patterns. In the European Union, regulations such as the Digital Services Act (DSA), General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive (UCPD) address the concerns. In the United States, various states have introduced legislation to

combat dark patterns, including the California Privacy Rights Act, the Connecticut Data Privacy Act, and Colorado Privacy Act.

**Ethical challenges**  
 Dark patterns pose a significant ethical challenge by manipulating consumer behaviour, undermining transparency and user autonomy. The tactics exploit psychological tendencies, leading users to actions that benefit firms rather than fostering fairness. By using misleading information, hidden fees, or confusing navigation, dark patterns break the expectation of honest interactions, making it hard for users to make informed choices. This not only harms users but also risks

damaging the reputation of businesses, leading to lower customer loyalty, higher turnover, and negative word-of-mouth, ultimately hurting the firm's brand and competitiveness.

Moreover, regulatory bodies are increasingly focusing on dark patterns under consumer protection laws. Companies that continue to use these practices could face fines, legal actions, and damage to reputation, which could threaten market position.

**Ethical design**  
 Addressing this needs collective effort from stakeholders. Businesses need to adopt a user-first approach by regularly reviewing and improving interfaces to remove these dark patterns.

Educating designers and developers on ethical design practices is essential for responsible innovation. By incorporating ethics into design training and professional development, creating navigation designers consider the impact of the work. This approach encourages the creation of interfaces that are both functional and ethical. Regulators are essential

in safeguarding consumers by establishing and enforcing guidelines that promote ethical design such as mandatory disclosures, penalties for non-compliance, and regular audits. User advocacy groups complement the efforts by educating consumers about their rights, helping identify and report dark patterns and collaborating with businesses to uphold best practices. Technological solutions like browser extensions and plug-ins further empower users by detecting and warning against potential dark patterns, thereby increasing consumer awareness and confidence in safely navigating digital platforms.

**Conclusion**  
 In India's rapidly expanding e-commerce landscape, the practices undermine consumer trust and pose significant risks to the sector. Globally, regulatory bodies are acting against such practices.

India's initiatives, including the Consumer Protection (E-commerce) Rules, 2020, and new guidelines are crucial steps in protecting consumers from unfair practices.

By enforcing strict regulations and promoting ethical design, India is positioning itself as a global leader in fostering fair digital practices.

(The writer is Partner, Grant Thornton Bharat)

## Brazil's hydropower faces risk from drying river basins, spur inflation

### NEWS ANALYSIS

#### Reuters SAO PAULO

Soil moisture in Brazil's main river basins used for hydropower generation has fallen to nearly two-decade lows, data collected by the London Stock Exchange Group shows, threatening a prolonged impact from a serious drought even after rains return.

Tropical rains feeding Brazil's vast network of rivers typically allow hydropower plants to generate around two-thirds of Brazil's electricity but years of weak rainfall have hurt the sector, pushing up energy

costs and stoking inflation across southeast, center-west and north Brazil, make up a large part of the sector's capacity. LSEG data shows they hit the lowest level of soil moisture for September since 2005.

Daucho Vallejos, an LSEG analyst, said the parched soil is a troubling result of a decade with just one year bringing rainfall that has led economists to forecast a fresh round of interest rate hikes.

Analysts worry that even if seasonal rains arrive next month as expected, hydroelectric reserves will be slow to fill because so much moisture will be absorbed by the soil.

The Paranaba, Grande and Tocantins hydroelectric basins, stretching across southeast, center-west and north Brazil, make up a large part of the sector's capacity. LSEG data shows they hit the lowest level of soil moisture for September since 2005.

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times, leading to the activation of expensive thermoelectric plants in recent months.

Growing wind and solar capacity in the north and northeast has offered even relief as transmission bottlenecks led ONS to cap how much power it takes from those generators.

Sergio Romani, chief executive officer at Genial Energy, a power trading and generator, said electricity prices will remain high until abundant rains arrive.

Banco Daycoval has also forecast 12-month inflation could end the year around 30 basis points higher if power rates remain at 'red flag' levels instead of falling to the cheapest 'green flag' tariffs by December.

Brazilian grid operator ONS has struggled to operate the system at peak load

puts at "above 8% of GDP" as a great resource that can drive growth.

But many have doubts about whether the potential spillovers are enough to offset the costs.

"The economy is degrading, it is de-modernising," said Vladislav Inozemtsev, co-founder of the Center for Analysis and Strategies in Europe, a Russia-focused think tank.

"They are switching to Soviet models, Soviet standards, Soviet approaches. Technologies are not-existent ... and de-technologisation is progressing," he added.

Many experts say the system is unsustainable over the long term but see no short-term economic pressure that could hamper Russia's military capacity.



Expensive war: Some analysts expect interest rates could reach 20% before the end of the year. AFP

that stimulus accelerating inflation," Central Bank Governor Klavira Nabullina said. "In essence, this is a stagflation scenario, which can only be stopped at the cost of a deep recession," she warned.

Kremlin, which has until now navigated the economic fallout from the conflict in Ukraine better than most believed possible.

Moscow has increased government spending by almost 50% since sending troops into Ukraine, pushing up growth and wages.

Unemployment is at a record low and consumer confidence is its highest in 15 years. But an exodus of skilled and unskilled workers — who fled mobilisation or joined the army — has created millions of unfilled vacancies. Sanctions on Western technology have also hit productivity and damaged supply chains.

In the long term, these demographic factors and technological isolation will result in very low economic growth," Ruben Enkikolo, a Russian professor at Barcelona School of Economics, told AFP.

"There is a high probability of a stagflation scenario in 2025 and the years after. It's not a certainty, but high likelihood," he added.

That could leave the central bank — which said it would resist further slowing economic activity, and that inflation had exceeded its 4% target — with few options.

It has already raised interest rates to 16%. Some analysts expect they could reach 20% before the end of the year — the same as at the start of the conflict, when rates were hiked rates in an emergency session to avert a financial crisis and bank run after the West imposed

# Russia facing stagflation threat as war effort slows growth

**Agence France-Presse**  
MOSCOW

Prices for bread have jumped so much over the last few years that Russian pensioner Oleg Ivanovich sometimes has to go without.

But the 67-year-old says he doesn't mind having to make sacrifices for the sake of Russia's military offensive on Ukraine.

"We'll bear with it. When the special military operation ends, prices will return to normal," he told AFP in Moscow, using the official Russian term for the offensive.

Surging prices – annual inflation came in at a little over 9% in August – is just one of the economic headaches Russia is grappling with as it has increasingly

militarised its economy since ordering troops into Ukraine in February 2022.

Moscow has funnelled billions of dollars to its army, soldiers, their families and weapons makers to sustain its military campaign – a spending splurge that helped it defy Western hopes that sanctions would push it into economic collapse.

But after warning for months that the economy was overheating, the country's Central Bank has lately started mentioning the possibility of another, possibly more challenging development: stagflation.

"The shortage of (labour) resources may lead to a situation where economic growth slows down, despite all the efforts to stimulate demand, with all



**Expensive war:** Some analysts expect interest rates could reach 20% before the end of the year. AFP

that stimulus accelerating inflation," Central Bank Governor Elvira Nabiullina said over the summer.

"In essence, this is a stagflation scenario, which can only be stopped at the cost of a deep recession,"

she warned.

## 'De-modernising'

Stagflation – a period of low or stagnant growth accompanied by high inflation – would present a fresh headache for the

Kremlin, which has until now navigated the economic fallout from the conflict in Ukraine better than most believed possible.

Moscow has increased government spending by almost 50% since sending troops into Ukraine, pushing up growth and wages.

Unemployment is at a record low and consumer confidence is its highest in 15 years. But an exodus of skilled and unskilled workers – who fled mobilisation or joined the army – has created millions of unfilled vacancies. Sanctions on Western technology have also hit productivity and damaged supply chains.

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pov, a Russian professor at the Barcelona School of Economics, told AFP.

"There is a high probability of a stagflation scenario in 2025 and the years after. It's not a certainty, but high likelihood," he added.

That could leave the central bank – which said last week it saw "signs of slowing economic activity," and that inflation had "reached its peak" – with few options.

It has already raised interest rates to 18%.

Some analysts expect they could reach 20% before the end of the year – the same as at the start of the conflict, when rates were hiked in an emergency session to avert a financial crisis and bank run after the West imposed

sanctions.

That cost of borrowing hamstrings many private businesses, further thwarting growth in parts of the economy not connected to the army.

A rate-setting meeting on Friday will be closely watched for signs of whether the regulator thinks further tightening is needed.

## 'Vicious Circle'

Maxim Bouev, a professor at Moscow's New Economic School, said Russia is trapped in a "vicious circle of inflation and military Keynesianism. The stimulus goes to war, the rest of the economy gets rising prices".

Russian President Vladimir Putin has hailed military spending – which he

puts at "above 8% of GDP" – as a great resource that can drive growth.

But many have doubts about whether the positive spillovers are enough to offset the costs.



"The economy is degrading, it is de-modernising," said Vladislav Inozemtsev, co-founder of the Center for Analysis and Strategies in Europe, a Russia-focused think tank.

"They are switching to Soviet models, Soviet standards, Soviet approaches. Technological advances are non-existent ... and development is very restrained," he added.

Many experts say the system is unsustainable over the long-term but see no short-term economic pressure that could hamper Russia's military capacity.

- **Stagflation Threat in Russia:**
- Russia faces a looming risk of stagflation due to surging prices and slowing growth, linked to its ongoing war effort in Ukraine.
- Stagflation is a scenario where the economy experiences stagnant growth coupled with high inflation, a serious economic concern.



- 
- **Rising Inflation and Economic Challenges:**
  - Prices, especially for basic goods like bread, have skyrocketed.
  - Annual inflation reached over 9% in August, creating economic strain for citizens like pensioners.
- 




- **Government Military Spending:**

- The Russian government increased military spending by 50% since the conflict in Ukraine began, which has fueled growth but also caused inflation.
- The spending spree has helped sustain Russia's military campaign but may have long-term economic consequences.



- **Labour Shortages and Economic Strain:**

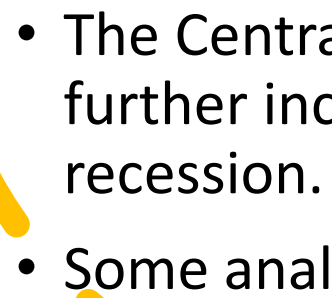
- Russia is facing labour shortages due to mobilisation and the exodus of skilled workers.
  - This shortage hampers productivity and economic growth.
- 



- **Economic De-modernisation:**

- Experts warn that Russia's economy is degrading, reverting to Soviet models and standards, which limits technological advancement and economic development.
- Technological sanctions imposed by Western countries have further exacerbated supply chain issues.

- **Interest Rates and Monetary Policy:**

- 
- The Central Bank of Russia has raised interest rates to 18%, with the possibility of further increases to control inflation, but at the risk of deepening economic recession.
  - Some analysts expect interest rates to reach 20% before the end of the year.



## **1. Long-Term Impact:**

1. Despite these economic challenges, experts see no short-term economic pressure that would impact Russia's military capability, though the long-term sustainability of this economic model remains in doubt.



# Types of Inflation



Different types of inflation

**Demand-pull inflation**  
Rising demand in economy

**Cost-push inflation**  
Increase in cost, e.g. rising oil prices

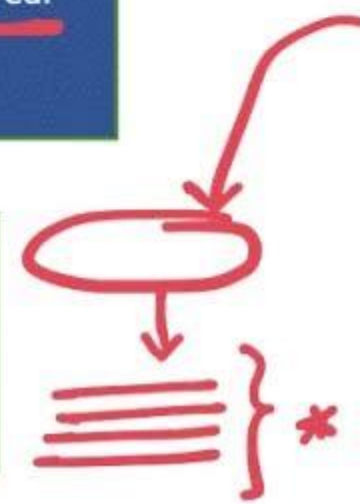
**Core Inflation**  
Inflation rate excluding temporary factors

**Wage-inflation**  
Inflation caused by rising real wage

**Hyperinflation**  
Inflation of over 1,000% a year.

**Imported inflation**  
Inflation caused by rising price of imports, e.g. due to devaluation

Overall Inflation  
(Food + Fuel)  
Temporary









- **With reference to the current economic situation in Russia, consider the following statements:**

1. Stagflation is a condition marked by both high inflation and high economic growth.
2. The Russian government increased military spending by 50% since the conflict with Ukraine started.
3. The Russian Central Bank has raised interest rates to 18% to control inflation.

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

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

**IN BRIEF**



**Head and Zampa star as Australia downs England**

Travis Head scored a valuable 59 and leg-spinner Adam Zampa took two cheap wickets as Australia defeated England by 26 runs in the first T20 International at Southampton on Wednesday.

The scores: Australia 179 in 19.3 overs (Head 59, Livingstone 3/22) vs England 153 in 19.2 overs (Abbott 3/28).



**Rashid returns to Afghanistan squad for SA ODI series**

Rashid Khan has been included in the Afghanistan squad for the three-match one-day series against South Africa. The matches will be played on September 18, 20 and 22 at the Sharjah Stadium, which will become the first ground in the world to host 250 ODIs.

The squad: Hashmatullah Shahidi (capt), Rahmat Shah, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Iqram Alikh, Abdul Malik, Riaz Hassan, Danish Rassool, Kamrulhasan Omar, Mohammad Nabi, Gulbadin Naib, Rashid Khan, Nangrayala Khorozi, Allah Mohammad Ghazafar, Faqarhag Farooq, Bilal Sami, Naveed Zadran, and Fareed Ahmad.

**Google is the title sponsor for World chess championship**

Google is the title sponsor of the World chess championship match between Ding Liren and D. Gukesh, beginning in Singapore on November 23. FIDE's CEO Emil Sutovsky said the game's governing body was thrilled to partner with Google. "It is a milestone for our sport," he said. "This collaboration brings a new dimension to the competition, blending the tradition of chess with the innovation of AI. The partnership is set to elevate the visibility of the World Chess Championship, taking the broadcast of the event to the next level and attracting new audiences globally."

**Indian challenge ends in Hong Kong Open badminton**

Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand fought hard before going down 11-21, 20-22 to Liu Sheng and Tan Ning of China in a women's doubles pre-quarterfinals match of the Hong Kong Open badminton on Thursday. Later, Malaysia's Goh Soon Huat and Lai Shweon Jemie of Malaysia got the better of Sumeeth Reddy and Sibki Reddy 21-11, 22-20 in mixed doubles pre-quarterfinals.

**Tharun in the last eight of Vietnam Super 100**

Tharun Mannepalli defeated Finland's Jookim Oldorf 21-7, 23-21 to enter the quarterfinals at the Vietnam Super 100 tournament in Ho Chi Minh City on Thursday. In mixed doubles, top-seeded Sathish Kumar Karunakaran and Aadya Varthiy outwitted Taiwan's Chen Cheng Kuan and Hsiang Yu-En 21-18, 21-11, while sixth-seeded Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto scored a 21-9, 21-7 win over compatriots Bokka Navaneeth and Rishika Thaker. The other Indians in the fray made their exit.



**Arsenal manager Arteta signs new contract till 2027**

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta signed a new contract till 2027 on Thursday. "I feel very inspired, I feel challenged, I feel supported and I want to do much more than what we have done and we're already done together," Arteta said. The 42-year-old Spanish coach has been at Arsenal since December 2019 and transformed the team into Manchester City's main Premier League title rival by finishing runner-up in the last two seasons. His previous deal was expiring at the end of this season.



Livey interactions: Prime Minister Modi shares a light moment with the para-athletes. (Right): The medal-winners proudly show their medals at the felicitation function hosted by Indian Oil along with PCI, ANI & PTI

**Paralympians meet PM, Indian Oil announces scholarships at felicitation**

Javelin thrower Sumit dedicates his gold to Modi; IOC to introduce medical insurance and sports kits for para-athletes as part of its commitment

**PARALYMPICS**

Sports Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with para-athletes at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Thursday. The PM congratulated them for their achievements and announced that the government will provide medical insurance and sports kits for para-athletes. He also announced that the government will provide scholarships to para-athletes. The PM also announced that the government will provide medical insurance and sports kits for para-athletes. He also announced that the government will provide scholarships to para-athletes.

IOC has signed an MoU with the PCI in October last year as part of its Road to Paralympics 2024 programme that included support for para-athletes at the Asian Para Games and the World Para Shooting Championships, besides Paris. The MoU also includes support for para-athletes at the Asian Para Games and the World Para Shooting Championships, besides Paris.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi earlier in the day and interacted with him, thanking him for constant encouragement and support. The PM also announced that the government will provide medical insurance and sports kits for para-athletes. He also announced that the government will provide scholarships to para-athletes.

**Blockbuster MBSG-MCFC duel to kick off a new season**

**ISL-11**

Sports Bureau  
KOLKATA



The 11th season of Indian Super League will premier with a contest featuring two of the league's most proficient sides - Mohun Bagan Super Giant (MBSG) and Mumbai City FC (MCFC).

MCFC bagged a double (League Shield and Cup) in the 2020-21 season featuring league debutant MBSG (formerly ATK Mohun Bagan) as their opponent.

Both sides have undergone a lot of transformation in the pre-season transfers, with each having a number of new names joining the squad. The ownership order was reversed in the last season. In head-to-head, MCFC has dominated the duel, winning seven out of 10 meetings.



On top: Railways' Bikram won the men's 200m butterfly. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

**Tamil Nadu men set 4x100m National meet medley relay record**

**NATIONAL AQUATICS**

Sports Bureau  
MANGALURU

Nithik Nathella, Damush Suresh, Benedict Kohit and Adithya Dinesh created a National meet record for Tamil Nadu by clocking 3:45.66 in the men's 4x100m medley relay in the 77th Senior National aquatic championships on Thursday. Railways' Bikram Chhangmai (2:02.76s) won the men's 200m butterfly. The results: **Winners: Men: 1,500m freestyle:** Anesh

**200m butterfly:** Bikram Chhangmai (Railways) 2:02.76. **4x100m medley:** Tamil Nadu (Nithik Nathella, Damush Suresh, Benedict Kohit, Adithya Dinesh) 3:45.66. **Men: 200m butterfly:** Bikram Chhangmai (Railways) 2:02.76. **Women: 800m freestyle:** Vritti Agrawal (Tel) 2:16.14. **50m freestyle:** Mani Saveri (BIS) 26.85. **50m backstroke:** Soumya Mondal (BIS) 30.14. **200m butterfly:** Hashika Ramachandra (Ker) 2:23.16. **4x100m medley:** Odisha (Pratyasa Ray, Mannata Mishra, Shresh Upadhyay, Sonu Patel) 4:27.90.

**Unnathi bags the gold in 100m hurdles with a new meet mark**

**ATHLETICS**

Sports Bureau  
CHENNAI



Unnathi Athiyappa won the women's 100m hurdles quite comfortably in a record time of 13.93s in the South Asian junior athletes meet here on Thursday. She finished with a time of 13.96s, which is a new meet mark. She had a personal best of 13.66s set in Dubai this year and she wasn't happy with it.

It was a memorable experience for two other Indians, who created new meet records with their personal best. Rishika came first in men's discus, while the sphere to a distance of 55.64m while Anisha finished on top in women's discus with a throw of 49.51m. India bagged nine gold medals out of 10 on offer. "I am very frustrated (with my performance), just pushed at the last minute. I am not at my peak due to travelling. I had come directly from the

World juniors in Peru," Unnathi said. **The results (indians, unless otherwise mentioned):** **Men: 200m hurdles:** 1. W.P. Saravanan (Kerala) 2:14.2, Nayan Pradip Sarda 14.24, 3. E. Vishva Tharuka Harharan 34.27, 4.00m: 1. Jay Kumar 46.86, 2. J. Omel Shashmitha (SI) 47.17, 3. P. Anand 47.45. **Long jump:** 1. R.C. Jithin Arjunan 7.63m, 2. Mohd. Aza Saad 7.43, 3. Divyanshu Thevindu (SI) 7.22, 3000m: 1. Prashant Kumar 9:26.06, 2. Nishu Choudhary 8:27.61, 3. R.K. Ajaya Choppi 8:06.01. **Discus:** 2. Nishu Choudhary 54.44, Ramesh 51.22, 3. W. C. Disha, Dabbara (SI) 39.24. **Women: 100m:** 1. Unnathi Athiyappa 13.93 (NH), CR: 13.66, 2. Anisha 14.16, Colombo 2018, 2. Sabita Toppe 13.96, 3. P.G. Myravan Sathya (SI) 15.32, 400m: 1. Neeru Parthak 54.50, 2. Sindura Mol Saba 54.42, 3. K. T. Anishma Nubanna (SI) 55.27, 3000m: 1. Prashika Yemana 9:27.02, 2. Nishu Choudhary 8:27.61, 3. R.K. Ajaya Choppi 8:06.01. **Shot put:** 1. Lakshanya S. 7.5, 3. M.R. Dharmapala (SI) 5.75. **Discus:** 1. Anisha 49.51m (NH), CR: A. Bajwa, 48.60m, Colombo, 2018, 2. Anesha Karthi 48.38, 3. J.K. Gaurangani (SI) 37.95.

**Neeraj and Sable to spearhead the Indian challenge in season finale**

**DIAMOND LEAGUE**

Sports Bureau  
BRUSSELS

Javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra will have lofty expectations to live up to, while for steeplespinner Avinash Sable, it would be an opportunity to make up for a disappointing show at the Paris Olympics, when he was the star-studded Diamond League season finale begins in Brussels on Friday. The showpiece will be held over two days for the first time and the field features top athletes from all continents, including an unprecedented number of Olympic medallists, who will light it out in 32 disciplines. Pole vault world record holder Armand Duplantis, American sprint queen Sha'Carri Richardson, and superstar hurdler Sydney McLaughlin-Levyne are among the big names who will light up the King Baudouin Stadium. National record-holding 3,000m steeplespinner Sable, after finishing 11th in Paris, will be in action on Friday in his maiden appearance in the DL season finale. Neeraj will aim to end his season on a high on Saturday. It is for the first time that a DL finale features two Indians. Even Diamond League season finale champion is awarded a Diamond Trophy, \$30,000 prize money and a wildcard for the World Athletics Championships. The runner-up gets \$12,000.



## Google is the title sponsor for World chess championship

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Union Home Minister Amit  
Shah Re-elected as Chairperson  
of the Parliamentary  
Committee on Official Language  
(PCOL)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has been unanimously re-elected as Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on Official Language.



He emphasized the need for Hindi to complement rather than compete with regional languages, aiming to enhance its acceptance across India. The goal is to have all government systems operate in Indian languages by 2047.





The Eighth Schedule of the Constitution includes 22 languages: Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Bodo, Santhali, Maithili, and Dogri.



Initially, 14 languages were included. Sindhi was added by the 21st Amendment Act (1967), Konkani, Manipuri, and Nepali by the 71st Amendment Act (1992), and Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, and Santhali by the 92nd Amendment Act (2003), effective from 2004.

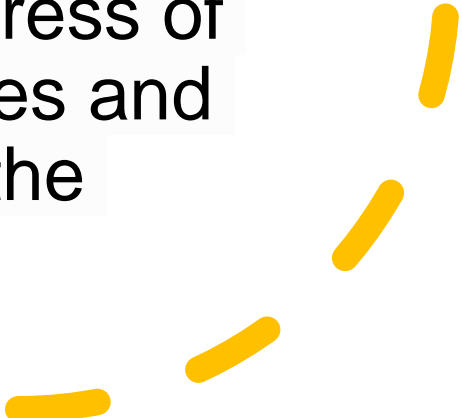


- **About PCOL**

1. **Constitution:** Established in 1976 under Section 4 of the Official Languages Act, 1963, to oversee the adoption of Hindi for official purposes.

2. **Membership:** Comprises 30 members (20 from Lok Sabha and 10 from Rajya Sabha), elected via proportional representation by single transferable vote.

3. **Functions:** Reviews the progress of Hindi usage for official purposes and submits recommendations to the President.



**Indigenous Mpox  
Detection RT-PCR kit  
Developed**



Recently, India has developed an indigenous Reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) testing kit for detecting Mpox (previously known as monkeypox).

These kits are developed by Siemens Healthcare, Transasia Diagnostics, and JITM C Genes which are approved by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO).

The new RT-PCR kits provide results in 40 minutes, compared to traditional methods, which take one to two hours.

These RT-PCR kits ensure detection across both clade I and clade II variants.

Mpox: Mpox is a viral illness caused by the monkeypox virus. It has two distinct variants namely clade I and clade II.

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It was first discovered in humans in 1970 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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Mpox spreads through close contact like skin-to-skin, mouth-to-mouth, or mouth-to-skin interactions, as well as face-to-face contact (talking).

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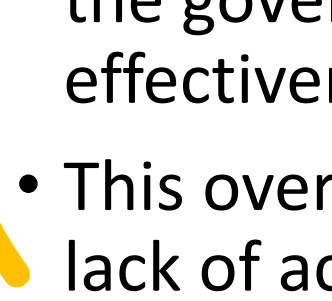
WHO declared Mpox, a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) twice, the first time in May 2022 and the second time in August 2024.

---

The first Mpox cases were reported in India in 2022.

# Analysis of Public Accounts Committee (PAC)



- 
- The newly constituted Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has taken a proactive step by selecting 161 subjects for review, including five key areas like banking reforms and energy transition, mainly based on CAG reports.
  - Headed by Congress MP K.C. Venugopal, the PAC aims to scrutinize the government's expenditure beyond formalities, focusing on its effectiveness and integrity.
  - This oversight is crucial given the allegations of crony capitalism and lack of accountability in recent years.
- 



<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Details</b>
<b>Role</b>	Audits government revenue and expenditure, examining C&AG audit reports after being presented in Parliament.
<b>Assistance</b>	Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) assists in investigations.
<b>Function</b>	Ensures government spending is within the scope of Parliament's grants.
<b>Genesis</b>	Established in 1921, became a Parliamentary Committee under the Speaker's control in 1950.
<b>Membership</b>	22 members (15 from Lok Sabha, 7 from Rajya Sabha), elected annually.
<b>Chairperson</b>	Appointed from Lok Sabha, traditionally from the Opposition since 1967-68.
<b>Exclusions</b>	Ministers are not members; if a member is appointed a Minister, they must vacate their seat.
<b>Key Functions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Scrutinizes government accounts and C&amp;AG reports.</li> <li>2. Reviews legality, authority, and prudence of expenditure.</li> </ol>

1. With reference to the Parliament of India, which of the following Parliamentary Committees scrutinizes and reports to the House whether the powers to make regulations, rules, sub-rules, by-laws, etc., conferred by the Constitution or delegated by the Parliament are being properly exercised by the Executive within the scope of such delegation? (UPSC 2018)
- (a) Committee on Government Assurances
  - (b) Committee on Subordinate Legislation
  - (c) Rules Committee
  - (d) Business Advisory Committee



National Florence  
Nightingale Awards 2024



- 
- The President of India has conferred the National Florence Nightingale Awards 2024 to Nurses at Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi.
  - **National Florence Nightingale Awards**
  - The Award was instituted by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** in the year **1973**.
  - This award is given as a mark of recognition for the meritorious services rendered by the **nurses and nursing professionals** to society.
  - Each **award consists** of a Certificate of Merit, Cash Award of Rs.1,00,000/- and a medal.



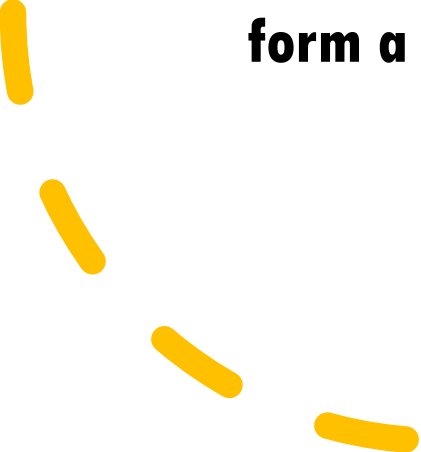
# Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month

- 
- **The American Association for Cancer Research, the world's oldest and largest professional organization dedicated to cancer research, has recognized September as Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month.**
  - **This month is dedicated to raising awareness about this deadly gynecological cancer.**
  - **National Cancer Awareness Day is celebrated in India on 7th November every year to raise awareness about cancer and encourage early detection**
- 

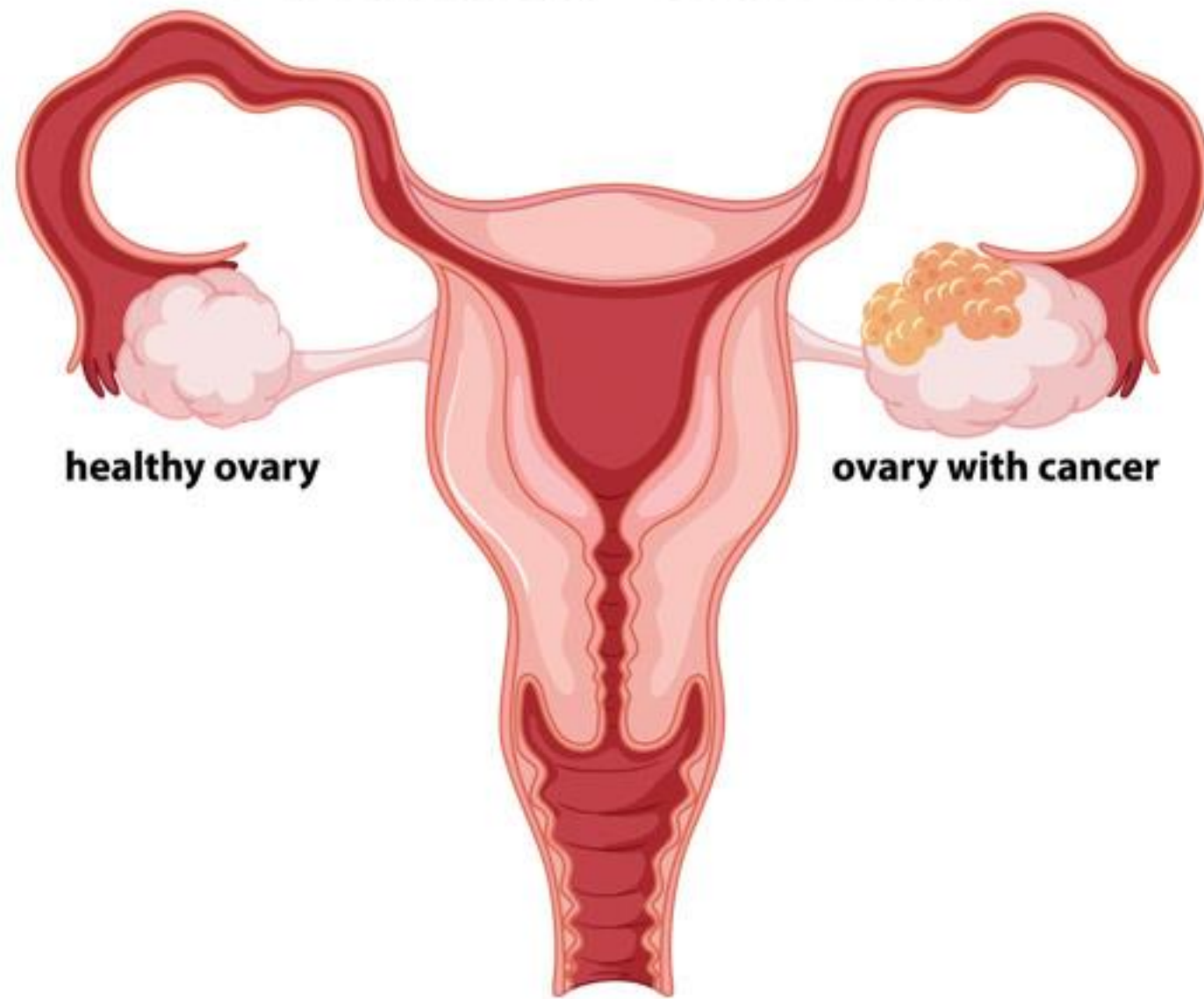


- What are the Key Facts Related to Ovarian Cancer?

- **About:**

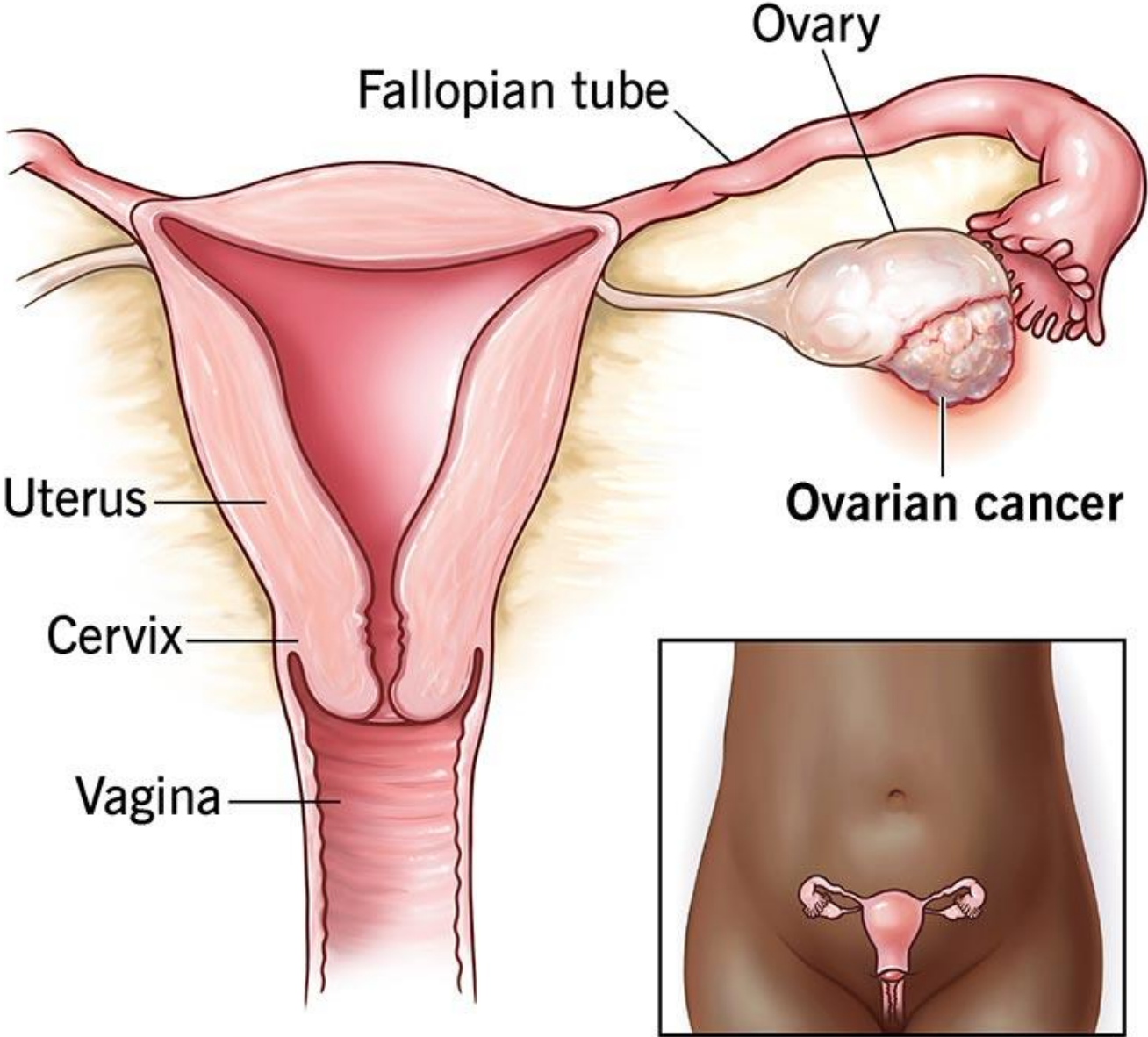
- **Ovarian cancer is a cancerous tumor that forms in the tissues of an ovary. The ovaries are a pair of female reproductive glands that make eggs and female hormones.**
  - **Cancer is a disease in which abnormal cells in the body grow out of control and form a tumor.**
- 


# Ovarian Cancer






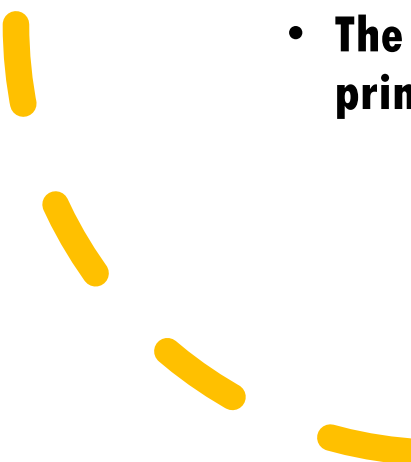
# Ovarian Cancer






- 
- **Epidemiology: Ovarian cancer contributes to 6.6% of all women's cancers in India. The disease is particularly problematic due to late diagnosis, which significantly impacts survival rates.**
    - **In India, ovarian cancer ranks among the top 3 cancers (after breast and cervix cancer) affecting women.**
    - **In 2022, India reported 47,333 new ovarian cancer cases and 32,978 deaths.**



-

- 
- **Screening Challenges: Unlike breast or cervical cancer, there are no effective screening tests for ovarian cancer.**
    - **The CA125 blood test, while useful for monitoring diagnosed cases, is not recommended for routine screening due to its limited specificity and potential for false positives.**
      - **The CA 125 test measures a blood protein to diagnose or monitor ovarian, fallopian tube, or primary peritoneal cancer.**
- 

- 
- **Reducing Risk:** Genetic counseling is crucial for women with a family history or genetic mutation (BRCA1/BRCA2) linked to ovarian or breast cancer, providing tailored guidance on risk management and preventive measures.
  - **A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and antioxidants may help reduce ovarian cancer risk.**
- 

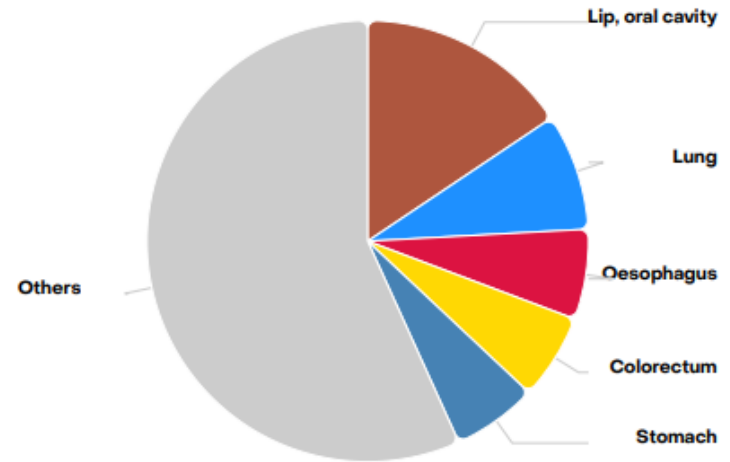
- 
- **Maintaining a healthy weight through diet and exercise may lower the risk.**
  - **Regular gynecological check-ups can help monitor reproductive health and detect potential issues early.**

- 



# Top 5 most frequent cancers\*\*

## Males

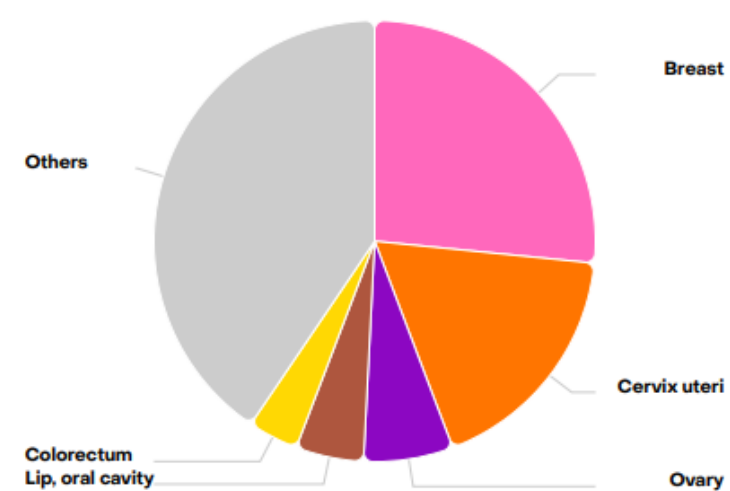


Total: 691 178

Rank	Cancer site	Number of cases	Percent
1st	Lip, oral cavity	107 812	15.6%
2nd	Lung	58 970	8.5%
3rd	Oesophagus	45 608	6.6%
4th	Colorectum	43 360	6.3%
5th	Stomach	43 060	6.2%
-	Others	392 368	56.8%

Number of new cases in 2022, males, all ages

## Females

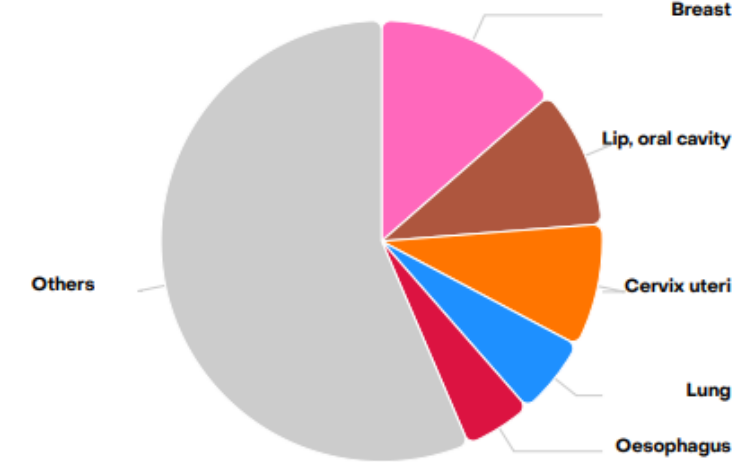


Total: 722 138

Rank	Cancer site	Number of cases	Percent
1st	Breast	192 020	26.6%
2nd	Cervix uteri	127 526	17.7%
3rd	Ovary	47 333	6.6%
4th	Lip, oral cavity	35 947	5.0%
5th	Colorectum	26 678	3.7%
-	Others	292 634	40.5%

Number of new cases in 2022, females, all ages


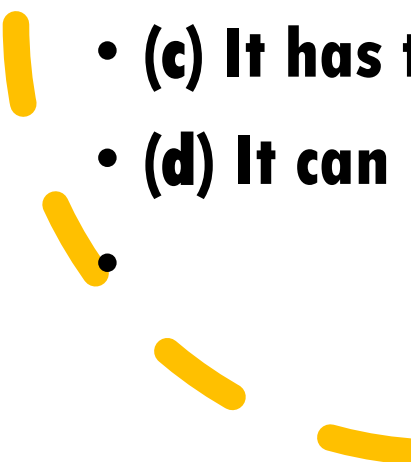
## Both sexes



Total: 1 413 316

Rank	Cancer site	Number of cases	Percent
1st	Breast	192 020	13.6%
2nd	Lip, oral cavity	143 759	10.2%
3rd	Cervix uteri	127 526	9.0%
4th	Lung	81 748	5.8%
5th	Oesophagus	70 637	5.0%
-	Others	797 626	56.4%

Number of new cases in 2022, both sexes, all ages

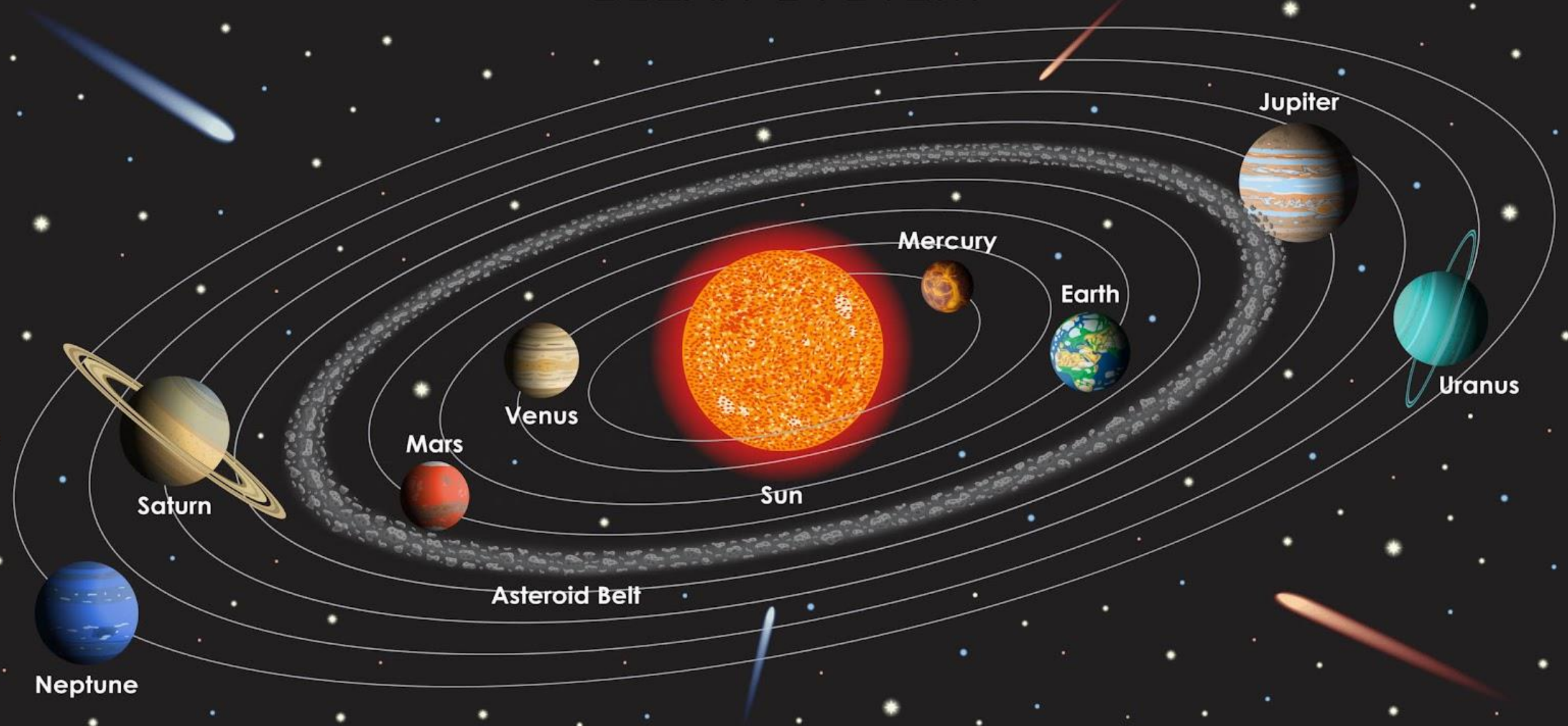
- 
- **With reference to the treatment of cancerous tumours, a tool called cyberknife has been making the news. In this context, which one of the following statements is not correct? (2010)**
  - **(a) It is a robotic image guided system**
  - **(b) It delivers an extremely precise dose of radiation**
  - **(c) It has the capability of achieving sub-millimetre accuracy**
  - **(d) It can map the spread of tumour in the body**
- 

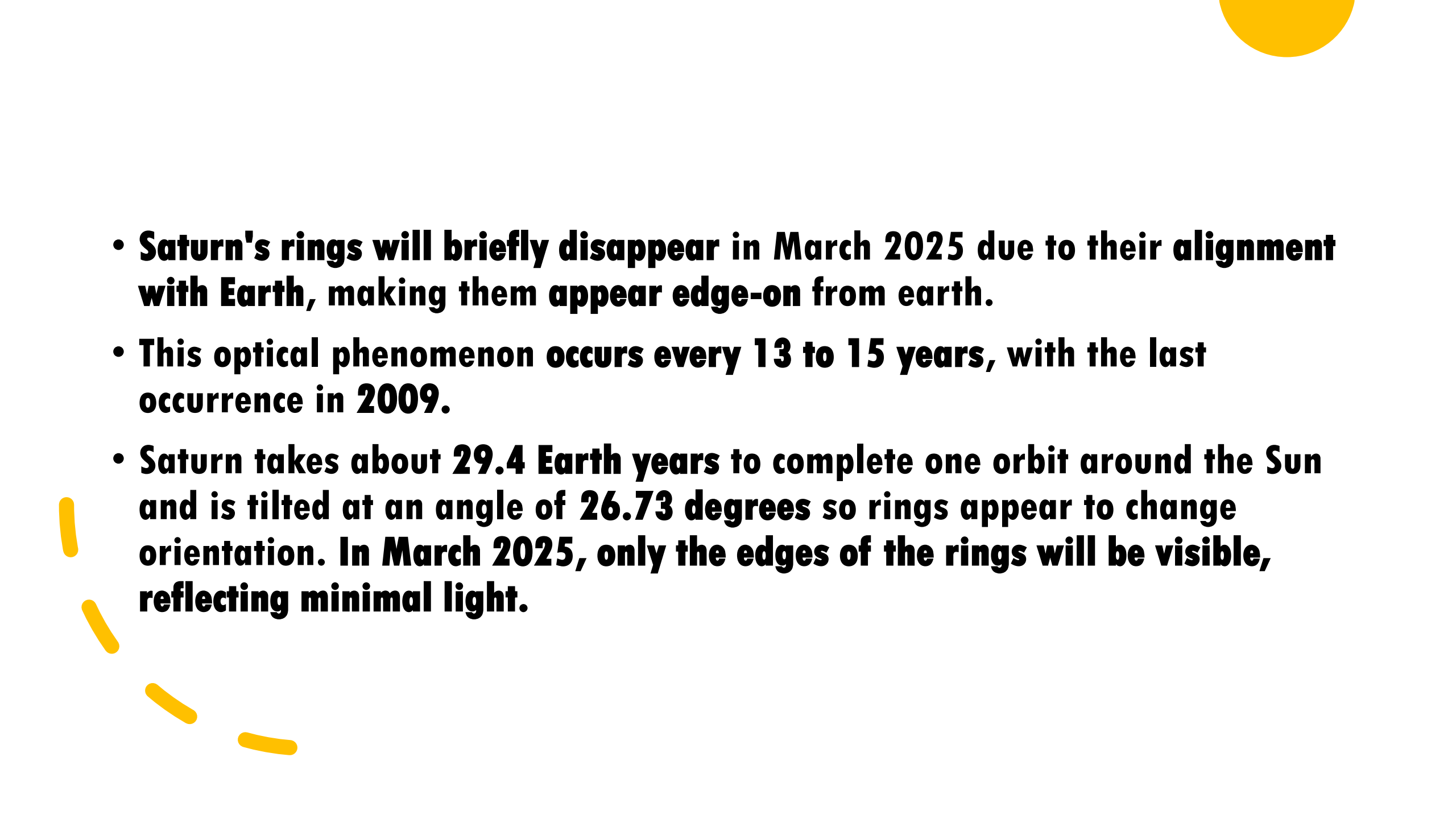
# Saturn's Rings Will Briefly Disappear in 2025


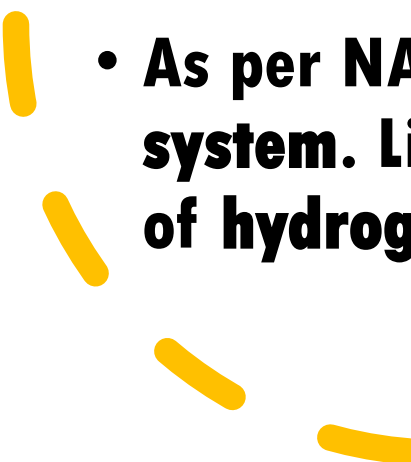






# SOLAR SYSTEM



- 
- **Saturn's rings will briefly disappear in March 2025 due to their alignment with Earth, making them appear edge-on from earth.**
  - **This optical phenomenon occurs every 13 to 15 years, with the last occurrence in 2009.**
  - **Saturn takes about 29.4 Earth years to complete one orbit around the Sun and is tilted at an angle of 26.73 degrees so rings appear to change orientation. In March 2025, only the edges of the rings will be visible, reflecting minimal light.**

- 
- **Saturn's rings span about 282,000 kilometers in width but are incredibly thin, measuring just 10 to 30 meters thick.**
  - **The planet has 7 primary rings. Each ring orbits Saturn at different speeds.**
  - **If laid edge-to-edge, Saturn's ring system could stretch the distance between Earth and the Moon.**
- 
- **As per NASA, Saturn has the highest number of moons (146) in the solar system. Like Jupiter, Saturn is a gaseous planet primarily composed of hydrogen and helium.**
- 

- 
- Missions to Saturn: Pioneer 11, Voyager 1, and Voyager 2, Cassini spacecraft.
  - NASA estimates that Saturn's rings will permanently disappear in the coming 300 million years due to "ring rain," a process that drains water from the rings at a rapid rate.
- 



# Vocab of the day

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## Word of the day

### **Piffle:**

trivial nonsense; speak (about unimportant matters) rapidly and incessantly

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**Synonyms:** balderdash, fiddle-faddle, chatter, clack, gabble, gibber, blabber, tattle, twaddle, prattle

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**Usage:** *His story is complete piffle.*

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**Pronunciation:** [bit.ly/pifflepro](https://bit.ly/pifflepro)

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**International Phonetic Alphabet:** /ˈpɪf.əl/

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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.

Thank you  
guys.

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