

# Daily Current Affairs



जनसत्ता



The Indian EXPRESS

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10 MCQ QUIZ



10 MCQ from the session

- What was the Supreme Court's key concern regarding allowing convicted politicians to contest elections?
- सुप्रीम कोर्ट की दोषी राजनेताओं को चुनाव लड़ने की अनुमति देने पर मुख्य चिंता क्या थी?
- A. It would violate the Representation of People Act / यह जन प्रतिनिधित्व अधिनियम का उल्लंघन करेगा
- B. It would lead to increased political corruption / इससे राजनीतिक भ्रष्टाचार बढ़ेगा
- C. It would create a conflict of interest in lawmaking / यह विधायी कार्यों में हितों का टकराव उत्पन्न करेगा
- D. It would weaken democracy / यह लोकतंत्र को कमजोर करेगा

- According to the Representation of People Act, 1951, how long are convicted politicians disqualified from contesting elections after completing their sentence?
- जन प्रतिनिधित्व अधिनियम, 1951 के अनुसार, दोषी राजनेताओं को सजा पूरी होने के बाद कितने वर्षों के लिए चुनाव लड़ने से अयोग्य ठहराया जाता है?
- A. 2 years / 2 वर्ष
- B. 5 years / 5 वर्ष
- C. 6 years / 6 वर्ष
- D. 10 years / 10 वर्ष

- What was the government's argument against imposing a lifetime ban on convicted politicians?
- दोषी राजनेताओं पर आजीवन प्रतिबंध लगाने के खिलाफ सरकार का तर्क क्या था?
- A. It would violate their fundamental rights / यह उनके मौलिक अधिकारों का उल्लंघन होगा
- B. Only Parliament can impose such a ban, not the courts / केवल संसद ऐसा प्रतिबंध लगा सकती है, अदालतें नहीं
- C. It would increase political instability / इससे राजनीतिक अस्थिरता बढ़ेगी
- D. It would discourage people from joining politics / इससे लोग राजनीति में शामिल होने से हतोत्साहित होंगे

- Which military exercise recently took place near the Russian border involving Finland, the U.S., and Canada?
- रूस की सीमा के पास हाल ही में कौन सा सैन्य अभ्यास फिनलैंड, अमेरिका और कनाडा के साथ हुआ?
- A. Exercise Arctic Forge 25 / अभ्यास आर्कटिक फोर्ज 25
- B. Exercise Northern Strike / अभ्यास नॉर्दर्न स्ट्राइक
- C. Exercise Cold Response / अभ्यास कोल्ड रिस्पॉन्स
- D. Exercise Winter Shield / अभ्यास विंटर शील्ड



- What major geopolitical shift occurred in Finland in 2023?
- 2023 में फिनलैंड में कौन सा बड़ा भू-राजनीतिक परिवर्तन हुआ?
- A. Finland signed a defense pact with Russia / फिनलैंड ने रूस के साथ रक्षा संधि पर हस्ताक्षर किए
- B. Finland joined NATO, ending its neutrality / फिनलैंड ने NATO जॉइन किया, अपनी तटस्थता समाप्त की
- C. Finland withdrew from the European Union / फिनलैंड ने यूरोपीय संघ से बाहर होने की घोषणा की
- D. Finland banned all foreign military exercises on its land / फिनलैंड ने अपने क्षेत्र में सभी विदेशी सैन्य अभ्यासों पर प्रतिबंध लगा दिया

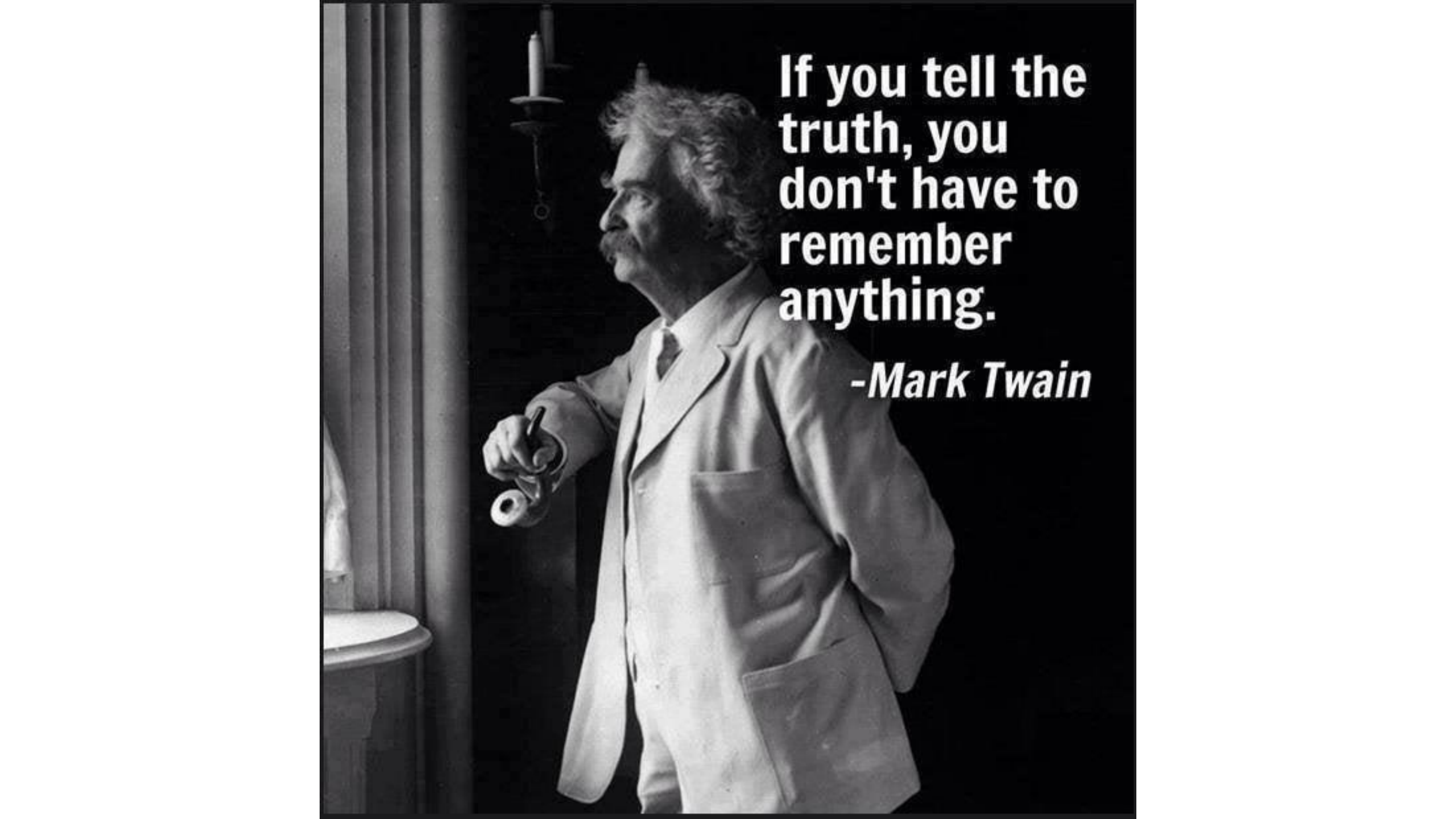
- What is the name of the new U.S. visa program proposed by Donald Trump?
- डोनाल्ड ट्रंप द्वारा प्रस्तावित नए अमेरिकी वीजा कार्यक्रम का नाम क्या है?
- A. Golden Opportunity Visa / गोल्डन ऑपच्युनिटी वीजा
- B. Gold Card Visa / गोल्ड कार्ड वीजा
- C. Presidential Privilege Visa / प्रेसिडेंशियल प्रिविलेज वीजा
- D. Investor Green Pass / इन्वेस्टर ग्रीन पास

- How much does an applicant need to pay for the 'Gold Card Visa'?
- 'गोल्ड कार्ड वीज़ा' के लिए एक आवेदक को कितनी राशि का भुगतान करना होगा?
- A. \$1 million
- B. \$2.5 million
- C. \$5 million
- D. \$10 million

- **What is NASA's new space telescope project named?**
- **नासा की नई अंतरिक्ष दूरबीन परियोजना का नाम क्या है?**
- **A. SPHEREx**
- **B. James Webb II**
- **C. Cosmic Watcher**
- **D. Deep Universe Explorer**

- What does the SWAYATT initiative aim to achieve?
- SWAYATT पहल का उद्देश्य क्या है?
- A. Promoting youth-led startups and women entrepreneurs in public procurement / सार्वजनिक खरीद में युवाओं द्वारा संचालित स्टार्टअप और महिला उद्यमियों को बढ़ावा देना
- B. Providing financial aid for small businesses / छोटे व्यवसायों के लिए वित्तीय सहायता प्रदान करना
- C. Encouraging foreign investment in India's tech sector / भारत के टेक सेक्टर में विदेशी निवेश को प्रोत्साहित करना
- D. Enhancing agricultural exports through digital platforms / डिजिटल प्लेटफार्मों के माध्यम से कृषि निर्यात को बढ़ावा देना

- What major environmental concern was raised regarding black plastic?
- ब्लैक प्लास्टिक को लेकर कौन सी प्रमुख पर्यावरणीय चिंता जताई गई?
- A. It emits harmful radiation / यह हानिकारक विकिरण उत्सर्जित करता है
- B. It contains toxic flame retardants linked to food contamination / इसमें विषैले फ्लेम रिटार्डेंट होते हैं, जो खाद्य प्रदूषण से जुड़े हैं
- C. It cannot be recycled / इसे पुनर्नवीनीकरण नहीं किया जा सकता
- D. It leads to ozone layer depletion / यह ओजोन परत के क्षरण का कारण बनता है



**If you tell the  
truth, you  
don't have to  
remember  
anything.**

***-Mark Twain***

**DELHI COURT**  
Delhi court seeks trial records on 26/11 attack

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**USC TELLS TOP COURT**  
New rules to prevent caste bias in varsities ready

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Centre seeks to cut States' share to 40%

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**PICKING COMMISSIONERS**  
A process where fair elections will be a casualty

The new law to appoint CECs, ECs is flawed

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**FIGHTING BACK**  
Grity Aditya Sarwar leads Kerala's reply

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## INSIDE

### Modi lauds U.P. CM for conduct of Maha Kumbh

**NEW DELHI**  
Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday praised U.P. CM Yogi Adityanath, stating that as an MP from the State, he could proudly say the government and people made the "Maha Kumbh" a success. » PAGE 5

### CM Nitish allots portfolios to new Bihar Ministers

**PATNA**  
A day after Chief Minister Nitish Kumar expanded his Cabinet, the Bihar Chief Secretary's office issued a notification allotting portfolios to the new ministers. Mr. Kumar has also reshuffled some portfolios. » PAGE 2

### EU team begins crucial two-day visit to India

**NEW DELHI**  
The European Union delegation on Thursday began a two-day visit to India. The visit is being watched keenly as it comes against the backdrop of the U.S. and Russia holding peace talks over the war in Ukraine. » PAGE 4

### EU bloc vows to fight back against any Trump tariffs

**BRUSSELS**  
The EU on Thursday pushed back against allegations by U.S. President Donald Trump that the 27-nation bloc was out to get the U.S. and warned that it would vigorously fight any unilateral tariffs of 25% on all EU products. » PAGE 14

## No negotiation over annexed Ukrainian territory: Kremlin

**Agence France-Presse**  
MOSCOW  
The Kremlin on Thursday ruled out any negotiation over the status of five Ukrainian regions it claims to have annexed despite not fully controlling four of them.  
"The territories which have become subjects of the Russian Federation, which are inscribed in our country's Constitution, are an inseparable part of our country," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.  
"This is undeniable and non-negotiable," he said in a phone briefing.  
Russia in 2022 annexed Ukraine's Crimea peninsula following a brief military operation and a referendum that was criticised as illegitimate by Kyiv and Western powers.  
After launching its full-scale offensive, Russia in



Vladimir Putin

September 2022 declared the annexation of four Ukrainian regions - Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson. Russian forces control most of the Donetsk and Luhansk region but only parts of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson.  
Ukraine has seized hundreds of square kilometres of Russia's Kursk region and President Volodymyr Zelensky has raised the possibility of an "exchange" of territory with Moscow - a notion ruled out by Russia.

## Karnataka CM condemns Shah's 'vague' remarks on delimitation

Siddaramaiah calls Home Minister's statement that South will not be disadvantaged vague, asking if delimitation will follow the latest population ratio or the current number of LS seats; previous delimitation was conducted using the 1971 Census

### The Hindu Bureau

BENGALURU



Siddaramaiah

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday said that Union Home Minister Amit Shah's claim that southern States would not be disadvantaged in the delimitation process was not trustworthy and appeared to be aimed at creating confusion.  
The Chief Minister's remarks came a day after Mr. Shah said at a BJP programme in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, that the southern States would not lose a single Lok Sabha seat to delimitation.  
"Going by the Home Minister's vague remarks, it seems that either he lacks proper information or there is a deliberate intent to disadvantage the south-

ern States, including Karnataka, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh," Siddaramaiah said in a statement.  
If the Union government genuinely wished to ensure fairness for southern States, Mr. Shah said, the correct method would be based on the latest population ratio or the current number of Lok Sabha seats, he said. "It is evident that if delimitation is carried out based on the latest population ratio, it will be an injustice."

**Population control**  
Freedom of expression and the right to equality are unfairness, previous delimitation exercises were conducted using the 1971 Census as

### Stalin alleges Hindi swallowed ancient languages

**CHENNAI**  
Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Thursday slammed the push for a monolithic Hindi identity that "swallowed" ancient mother tongues, and gave a list of languages that were "swallowed by Hindi." » PAGE 2

the basic, following Constitutional amendments, he added.  
Over the past 50 years, the southern States have effectively controlled population growth while progressing significantly in economic and social development. Meanwhile, northern States such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya

Pradesh have failed to regulate population growth and continue to lag in development, the CM said.  
As a result, if delimitation is based on the latest Census, southern States may see a reduction or stagnation in their number of Lok Sabha seats, while northern States will gain more seats. In either scenario, the southern States will bear the loss. Is the Home Minister unaware of this?" he asked. "Looking at the extraordinary enthusiasm shown by Modi's Union Government for delimitation, it appears that the real intent is to punish the people of the southern States for resisting his party's dominance," Mr. Siddaramaiah said.

**EDITORIAL**  
» PAGE 8

### Rescue teams battle final leg of tunnel in Telangana

**B. Chandrasekhhar**  
HYDERABAD

Rescue teams on Thursday successfully reached within 50 metres of the site where eight persons were trapped in the Srisaikhani Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel in Nagarkurnool district of Telangana.  
However, rescue was delayed as they found the stretch to be plagued with debris, small stones and other parts of the supporting system of the tunnel-boring machine.  
**FULL REPORT ON**  
» PAGE 3



Call to protest: Boats stay put on Calicut beach in Alappuzha as fishermen responded to the call for a coastal thrall in protest against the Centre's nod for sea mining off the coast of Kerala. Demonstrations were held in 125 villages on Thursday. SURESH ALLEPPEY (REPORT ON PAGE 3)

## Israel will not pull back from key Gaza corridor: official

**Associated Press**  
KHAL YOUNIS

Israel will not withdraw from a strategic corridor in the Gaza Strip as called for by the ceasefire, an official said on Thursday. Israel's refusal could spark a crisis with Hamas and key mediator Egypt at a sensitive moment for the fragile truce.  
The official, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, said Israel forces needed to remain in the so-called Philadelphia corridor, on the Gaza side of the border with Egypt, to prevent weapons smuggling.  
**Hostages released**  
The official spoke hours after Hamas released the remains of four hostages in exchange for over 600 Palestinian prisoners, the last planned exchange of the

ceasefire's first phase, which ends this weekend.  
Israel was supposed to begin withdrawing from the corridor on Saturday, the last day of the first phase, and complete it within eight days.  
The remains released Thursday were confirmed to be those of Ohad Yehonati, Itzhak Elparat, Shimon Muntzur and Tsachi Idan, according to the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, which represents families of the captives.  
Muntzur, 85, was killed in the October 7, 2023, attack and his body was taken into Gaza. The other three were abducted alive and their deaths were surrounded their deaths were not known.  
"Our hearts ache upon receiving the bitter news," French President Emmanuel



A Palestinian prisoner greets his family following his release by Israeli authorities. AFP

Macron said he shared the "immense pain" of the family and loved ones of Yehonati, who had French citizenship.  
Hamas said in a statement that the "only way" for Israel to secure the release of the remaining hostages was through negotiations and adhering to the agreement. It warned that

held without charge on security suspicions.  
Some of the released prisoners fell to their knees in gratitude after disembarking from buses in the southern Gaza city of Khan Yunis. In the West Bank town of Beitunia, dozens of prisoners were welcomed by crowds of relatives and well-wishers.  
Israel delayed the release of the prisoners on Saturday over Hamas's practice of parading hostages before crowds and cameras during their release. Israel, along with the Red Cross and U.N. officials, have called the ceremonies humiliating for the hostages.  
Hamas released the four bodies to the Red Cross in Gaza overnight without a public ceremony.  
The prisoners released Thursday included 445 men, 21 teenagers and one

woman, according to lists shared by Palestinian officials that did not specify their ages. Only around 50 Palestinians were released to the occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem in the round, while dozens sentenced to life over deadly attacks against Israelis were extradited.  
**Netanyahu's goals**  
Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to return all the hostages and destroy the military and governing capabilities of Hamas, which remains in control of Gaza. The Trump administration has endorsed both goals.  
But it's unclear how Israel would destroy Hamas without resuming the war, and Hamas is unlikely to release the remaining hostages - if it were to do so - without a lasting ceasefire.

## Vikatan will resist 'order that seeks to censor' PM cartoon

**Aroon Deep**  
NEW DELHI

The Ananda Vikatan group on Thursday vowed to take action "to both defend freedom of expression and restore access to the Vikatan magazine's website," hinting at legal recourse.  
The magazine has resisted an order from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) to remove a web-only cartoon featuring Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which drew criticism from Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Tamil Nadu chief K. Annamalai.  
The cartoon - featuring Mr. Modi in chains seated beside U.S. President Donald Trump, a reference to undocumented Indians in chains being deported from the United States - remains online at the time of this article going to press.  
The magazine's primary domain, vikatan.com, has remained inaccessible for some users since February 15. The magazine made a second domain name, anandavikatan.com, available for access.

**Website inaccessible**  
While the website was rendered inaccessible by some internet service providers without a formal announcement from the Union government, *The Hindu* learned from four people in the know that the MIB Ministry issued a blocking order to telecom operators and internet providers via the Department of Telecommunications on Wednesday.  
After this, the Ministry issued a notice to Vikatan's publishers under the IT Rules, 2021, seeking remo-

**The magazine's primary domain has been inaccessible for some users since Feb. 15, prompting the creation of a second domain for access**

val of the cartoon, while making no mention of the website blocking order issued.  
The magazine made its case on February 20 in a virtual hearing with the Ministry.  
**'Freedom of speech'**  
*Vikatan* provided a detailed explanation that the specific cartoon was an expression of freedom of speech," the magazine said in its statement.  
"Subsequently, on the night of February 25, the final order from the (MIB Ministry) regarding this matter was sent to *Vikatan*. In response, *Vikatan* is now consulting legal experts to determine appropriate next steps," a statement from the magazine said.  
A source with knowledge of the order and the hearing with the inter-departmental committee that heard *Vikatan's* arguments against taking down the cartoon told *The Hindu* that the Ministry has now specifically demanded that the cartoon featuring the Prime Minister be taken down.  
A legal executive at *Vikatan* declined to provide details on the order and the hearing as the order and the proceedings are confidential.

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The MIB Ministry did not respond to a request for comment.



## Court seeks trial records on Mumbai 26/11 attack

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court has sought records of the trial in the 26/11 terror attack case from a local court in Mumbai. The development comes ahead of the expected extradition of Tahawwur Hussain Rana, the alleged mastermind behind the attacks that killed over 166 people.

District Judge Vimal Kumar Yadav of Patiala House Court, on January 28, directed the officials of a Mumbai court to supply the records. These records had been earlier sent to Mumbai as proceedings of this case were simultaneously going on in two cities.

The order came on a plea of the National Investigation Agency (NIA), which investigated the matter.

A court in the U.S. had previously ruled that Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman Rana could be extradited to India where he is wanted in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack carried out by Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

U.S. President Donald Trump, earlier this month, announced that his administration had approved the extradition of "very evil" Tahawwur Rana, wanted by Indian probe agencies for his role in the attacks "to face justice in India".

## EU team begins crucial visit; activist points to rights issues

Leading the delegation, European Commission chief says India is a trusted friend, strategic ally; sources indicate that Indian side is ready with its arguments in case Manipur situation is raised

Kaljit Bhattacharjee  
NEW DELHI

Europe needs "trusted friends" to deal with the era of conflicts, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on Thursday as she led a European Union delegation for a two-day visit to India. During the day, she met External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar for talks.

The visit is being watched keenly as it comes against the backdrop of the U.S. and Russia holding peace talks over the war in Ukraine and the unfolding situation in neighbouring Bangladesh where the EU has been playing a crucial role in ensuring democracy.

In an era of conflicts and intense competition, you need trusted friends. For Europe, India is such a friend and a strategic ally. I'll discuss with Prime Minister Narendra Modi how we can take our strategic partnership to the next level," said Ms. von der Leyen. The visit also marks the 75th anniversary of the 1950 Indo-Pakistani trade agreement, which she said is a landmark in human rights activism from Europe.

Soon after Ms. von der Leyen's arrival in India, Claudio Francavilla, Asso-



Key dialogue: European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen offers tributes to Gandhi in New Delhi on Thursday. The high-level European Union delegation is on a two-day visit to the country. AP

ciate EU Director at the Human Rights Watch, produced the visit agenda. For Europe, India is such a friend and a strategic ally. I'll discuss with Prime Minister Narendra Modi how we can take our strategic partnership to the next level," said Ms. von der Leyen. The visit also marks the 75th anniversary of the 1950 Indo-Pakistani trade agreement, which she said is a landmark in human rights activism from Europe.

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marks of the EU regarding the situation in Manipur, where ethnic conflict has been raging for 17 months. In July 2023, the European Parliament had called upon India to end the clashes in Manipur, which often took sectarian and communal dimensions involving Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities of the State. India had hit back strongly at that time and condemned the EU's remarks as interference in India's domestic affairs. Sources hinted that the

Indian side has its arguments ready in case the EU team raises the situation in Manipur during the discussion. "We have already said that Manipur is not an internal matter and that is going to be our position this time too in case they bring it up," said a source. However, environmentalists have raised concerns over the impact of oil and gas exploration on marine life and local fishing. The Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve is home

## Deep sea region identified in T.N. for oil, gas exploration

The Hindu Bureau  
CHENNAI

An area of 9,990.96 sq km in southern Tamil Nadu's deep sea region of the Gulf of Mannar has been identified in a recent tender for hydrocarbon exploration issued by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

This is a part of the Ministry's 10th round of the Open Acreage Licensing Policy, which invites companies to submit bids for its exploration rights. The tender covers 25 offshore areas across the country, totalling 191,986 sq km of marine space.

Environmentalists and fishermen have pointed out that the Union government's push for hydrocarbon exploration could result in irreversible damage to environment and threaten the livelihoods of local communities.

Sartheesh Lakshmanan of Poovulgni Nambargal, a non-governmental organisation dealing with environmental issues, fears that the blast sound from these surveys, essential for mapping oil and gas reserves, could disturb marine species.

An official from the Tamil Nadu Forest Department said that the impact of exploration depended on the distance from the Biosphere Reserve. The Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve is home



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## Law trying to protect children born of live-in relationships: Uttarakhand govt.

Tabita Mishra  
NEW DELHI

The Uttarakhand High Court on Thursday orally observed that live-in relationships were on the rise and the law (Uniform Civil Code) was merely trying to accommodate the rights of women and the rights of children born out of such relationships.

The observations were made by the Bench of Justices Manoj Kumar Tiwari and Ashish Naithani while hearing two petitions challenging different provisions of the UCC that was rolled out by the State on January 26, 2025.

One of the petitions was filed by social activists Uma Bhatt, Kamla Pant and Munish Kumar, and the other by a couple in a live-in relationship. Under the UCC, couples in such relationships have been asked to register with the government.

The Bench asked the couples to approach the court in case any punitive

action is taken against them in case of non-registration of their relationship.

"State surveillance" During the hearing, advocate Vrinda Grover highlighted before the court that the UCC Act and Rules allow untrammelled state surveillance and policing of choices that fall within the protected zone of right to privacy.

"UCC establishes a draconian statutory mechanism of inquiry, authorisation and penalisation of choice of partner," she said. Justice Tiwari asked Ms. Grover whether the mere fact of registration of relationships can be challenged as unconstitutional. He stated that live-in relationships were on the rise even if not fully accepted by society and the law was merely trying to accommodate the changing times and ensure the rights of women and the rights of children born of such relationships.

Ms. Grover replied that a "critical" reading of the UCC revealed that it could beighnt harassment and violence against women and couples who don't go by majoritarian views. She also added that the law could lead to vigilantism by those against live-in relationships.

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No privacy rights are violated in the UCC. It is only a regulatory mechanism to protect the interest of women and children

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"UCC establishes a draconian statutory mechanism of inquiry, authorisation and penalisation of choice of partner," she said. Justice Tiwari asked Ms. Grover whether the mere fact of registration of relationships can be challenged as unconstitutional. He stated that live-in relationships were on the rise even if not fully accepted by society and the law was merely trying to accommodate the changing times and ensure the rights of women and the rights of children born of such relationships.

Ms. Grover replied that a "critical" reading of the UCC revealed that it could beighnt harassment and violence against women and couples who don't go by majoritarian views. She also added that the law could lead to vigilantism by those against live-in relationships.

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"It also allows any person to file a complaint to question the validity of a live-in relationship. Social morality must not be allowed to subvert constitutional morality," Ms. Grover said.

She also objected to the mandatory requirement of submission of confidential documents like Aadhaar as part of the registration process.

The court asked Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, who was appearing for the State government, if the Uttarakhand government had invited any suggestions from the public before introducing the UCC and if those suggestions were incorporated or not.

Mr. Mehta submitted in court that no privacy rights were violated in the UCC and that it was only a regulatory mechanism to protect the interest of women who may suffer injustice. He also pointed out that the statutory scheme is the result of wide consultations with all stakeholders.

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## 'India, China militaries are implementing resolutions to end the Ladakh conflict'

Press Trust of India  
SHIMLA

The Chinese Defence Ministry on Thursday said the militaries of India and China are implementing the resolutions to end the stand-off in eastern Ladakh in a "comprehensive and effective manner."

"At present, the Chinese and Indian militaries are implementing the resolutions related to the border areas in a comprehensive and effective manner," Chinese Defence Ministry spokesperson Sr. Col. Wu Qian told a media briefing here, replying to a question on the status of the normalisation of the situation in eastern Ladakh sector.

After finalisation of the peace talks, Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping held talks in Beijing on October 23. In the meeting, the two sides decided to revive the various dialogue mechanisms.

After that, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held the 23rd Special Representative (SR) dialogue in Beijing on December 18 last year. On January 26, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misra travelled to the Chinese capital and held talks with his Chinese counterpart Sun Weidong under the framework of 'Foreign Secretary-Vice Mi-



Indian and Chinese troops exchange greetings on the occasion of Deepavali in October 2024. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

process late last year after firming up a military pact for withdrawal of troops from Depsang and Demchok, the last two friction points in eastern Ladakh, ending over four years of freeze in ties.

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## India slams Pakistan at UNHRC meet on J&K issue

Press Trust of India  
GENEVA

India has hit out at Pakistan for raising up the issue of Jammu and Kashmir in the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), saying the "falsified State" spreads falsehoods handed down by its military-terrorist complex.

India exercised its Right of Reply at the high-level segment of the 81st Regular Session of the UNHRC in Geneva on Wednesday to Pakistan after it raised the issue of J&K at the multilateral global organisation.

"It is regrettable, yet unsurprising to see Pakistan's so-called leaders and delegates continuing to dutifully spread falsehoods handed down by its military-terrorist complex," Counsellor at India's Permanent Mission to the U.N. Geneva Kohli Tyagi said.

Delivering India's pointed response, Mr. Tyagi said it is unfortunate that the council's time continues to be "wasted by a failed State, which thrives on instability and survives on international handouts".

"Instead of its unhealthy obsession with India, Pakistan should focus on providing actual governance and justice to its own people," he added.

## Pune Police step up search for rape accused

The Hindu Bureau  
MUMBAI

The outrage over the sexual assault on a 26-year-old woman continues to grow with students, party workers and activists staging a protest at the Swargate bus depot in Pune on Thursday.

The Pune City Police deployed 13 teams, put into service a drone and a dog squad, released a poster and announced a ₹ lakh reward to nab the suspect in the rape of the woman who hailed from Phaltan, 100 km from Pune.

A Shriur-based man raped the woman inside a parked bus at the depot on February 25.

The protesters led by the Stree Mukti League raised slogans of "nary daya, suraksha daya [give justice, give safety]"; while social activist Trupti Desai criticised the government for the delay in making arrests.

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## Focus will be on accelerating disposal of cases: CBI Director

The Hindu Bureau  
NEW DELHI

Central Bureau of Investigation Director Praveen Sood on Thursday said 2024 witnessed high disposal of about 1,400 cases. Investigation cases in the agency, while about 900 fresh cases were registered during the year.

The CBI's focus in 2025 would be on accelerating disposal of cases, he said. Speaking at a valedictory ceremony at CBI Academy (Ghaziabad) in which 10 newly recruited law officers of the agency were

formally inducted into service on completion of training, he chief urged the officers to endeavour towards making their best contribution.

Referring to the imperative of working under the Sood advised the officers to work in the pursuit of organisational goals in line with the CBI's motto of integrity, said the agency's release.

During the ceremony, the CBI chief presented trophies, medals, and certificates to the winners of various categories.

## Customs, GS officers cannot make arrests arbitrarily on a whim: SC

Krishnadas Rajagopal  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court declared in a judgment on Thursday that Customs officers and Goods and Services Tax (GST) officers, like their Enforcement Directorate (ED) counterparts under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, do not arrest people arbitrarily on a whim.

"High threshold" A Special Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Sanjay Khanna held that both Customs and GST officers were

not police officers and had to follow a "higher threshold" before effecting arrest. This measure, they should have a "reason to believe" that the person has actually committed the offence.

Police officers, on the other hand, can arrest a person without warrant on suspicion. "A person is said to have a 'reason to believe' only if they have sufficient cause to believe that thing, but not merely on the basis of reports or information," the bench said.

The bench referred to recent judgments of the Supreme Court, including

[power of police officers to arrest without a warrant under the Code of Criminal Procedure]. Chief Justice Khanna observed.

"Extreme power" The Chief Justice, accompanied by Justices Sanjay Khanna and Bela Trivedi, who authored a separate dissenting opinion, reminded the Union government that it cannot arrest without a warrant or instituting a criminal case against a suspect.

The bench referred to recent judgments of the Supreme Court, including

the one related to former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's arrest in the liquor policy case in this regard.

Chief Justice Khanna noted that figures are arrested under the GST laws have a duty, like their Enforcement Directorate (ED) counterparts under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, do not arrest people arbitrarily on a whim.

The bench referred to recent judgments of the Supreme Court, including

# Deep sea region identified in T.N. for oil, gas exploration

**The Hindu Bureau**

CHENNAI

An area of 9,990.96 sq km in southern Tamil Nadu's deep sea region of the Gulf of Mannar has been included in a recent tender for hydrocarbon exploration issued by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

This is a part of the Ministry's 10<sup>th</sup> round of the Open Acreage Licensing Policy, which invites companies to submit bids for its exploration rights. The tender covers 25 offshore areas across the country, totalling 191,986 sq km of marine space.

This marks the largest acreage offered in a single bid round under the Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy regime. Companies can submit applications for their preferred sites until July 31, 2025.

## **Environmental damage**

The Ministry has identified potential hydrocarbon reserves in deep sea areas off the coasts of Tamil Nadu in the Gulf of Mannar, covering Ramanathapuram and Thoothukudi districts.

However, environmentalists have raised concerns over the impact of oil and gas exploration on marine life and local fishing activities.

The Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve is home



Potential hydrocarbon reserves have been identified off T.N. coasts in the Gulf of Mannar.

to rare and endangered species such as dugongs, turtles, and marine mammals.

Environmentalists and fishermen have pointed out that the Union government's push for hydrocarbon exploration could result in an irreversible damage to environment and threaten the livelihoods of local communities.

Satheesh Lakshmanan of Poovulagin Nanbargal, a non-governmental organisation dealing with environmental issues, fears that the blast sounds from these surveys, essential for mapping oil and gas reserves, could disturb marine species.

An official from the Tamil Nadu Forest Department said that the impact of exploration depended on the distance from the Biosphere Reserve.

- **Oil and Gas Exploration in Tamil Nadu (तमिलनाडु में तेल और गैस अन्वेषण)**
- The **Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas** has included a **9,990.96 sq km** deep-sea region in the **Gulf of Mannar** for **hydrocarbon exploration**.
- This is part of the **10th round of the Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP)**, inviting companies to **bid for exploration rights**.

- The tender covers **191,986 sq km** of offshore area, marking the **largest bid round** under the **Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP)**. Bidding deadline: **July 31, 2025**

- (पेट्रोलियम और प्राकृतिक गैस मंत्रालय ने गल्प ऑफ मन्नार के **9,990.96** वर्ग किमी गहरे समुद्री क्षेत्र को हाइड्रोकार्बन अन्वेषण के लिए शामिल किया है। यह ओपन एंक्रिएज लाइसेंसिंग पॉलिसी (OALP) के 10वें दौर का हिस्सा है, जो कंपनियों को अन्वेषण अधिकारों के लिए बोली लगाने के लिए आमंत्रित करता है। टेंडर **191,986** वर्ग किमी अपतटीय क्षेत्र को कवर करता है, जो HELP योजना के तहत अब तक का सबसे बड़ा बोली दौर है। बोली लगाने की अंतिम तिथि: **31 जुलाई 2025**)

- **Environmental Concerns (पर्यावरणीय चिंताएँ)**
- The Ministry has identified **hydrocarbon reserves** in **Ramanathapuram and Thoothukudi districts**.
- Environmentalists warn that **oil and gas exploration can harm marine life and local fishing communities**.
- The **Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve** is home to rare and endangered species like **dugongs, turtles, and marine mammals**.

- **Seismic blasting** used for mapping **oil and gas reserves** may **disturb marine species**.
- The **Tamil Nadu Forest Department** stated that **exploration impact will depend on Biosphere Reserve regulations**.

- **Social Aspects (सामाजिक पहलू)**
- **Impact on Local Communities (स्थानीय समुदायों पर प्रभाव)**
  - Fishermen depend on marine biodiversity, and exploration could impact their livelihood.
  - Potential health hazards due to pollution from oil spills.  
(मछुआरे समुद्री जैव विविधता पर निर्भर हैं, और अन्वेषण उनके रोजगार को प्रभावित कर सकता है।)
  - तेल रिसाव से प्रदूषण के कारण संभावित स्वास्थ्य खतरे।)

- **Employment Generation (रोज़गार सृजन)**

- **New jobs in oil and gas sector** will be created in Tamil Nadu.
- **Skill development opportunities** for local workers in petroleum industries.  
(\***\*\*तमिलनाडु में तेल और गैस क्षेत्र में नए रोजगार सृजित होंगे।**
- **स्थानीय श्रमिकों के लिए पेट्रोलियम उद्योगों में कौशल विकास के अवसर।)**



- **Government Policies (सरकारी नीतियाँ)**
- **The Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP) encourages foreign and domestic investment.**
- **Tamil Nadu state government has expressed concerns about the environmental impact.**  
(हाइड्रोकार्बन अन्वेषण और लाइसेंसिंग नीति (HELP) विदेशी और घरेलू निवेश को बढ़ावा देती है।)
- **तमिलनाडु सरकार ने पर्यावरणीय प्रभाव को लेकर चिंताएँ जताई हैं।)**

- **Opposition from Activists (कार्यकर्ताओं का विरोध)**

- Environmentalists and fishermen **oppose exploration in the Gulf of Mannar.**
- **NGOs and conservation groups** are demanding an **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)** before proceeding.

(\*पर्यावरणविदों और मछुआरों ने गल्प ऑफ मन्नार में अन्वेषण का विरोध किया।

- गैर सरकारी संगठन (NGO) और संरक्षण समूह पहले पर्यावरणीय प्रभाव मूल्यांकन (EIA) की मांग कर रहे हैं।





# Revenue Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey appointed SEBI chief

**Press Trust of India**

NEW DELHI

The government on Thursday appointed Finance and Revenue Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey as the new chairman of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

Mr. Pandey would replace Madhabi Puri Buch, who completes her three-year tenure on Friday.

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the appointment of Mr. Pandey.

According to a government order issued late in



Tuhin Kanta Pandey

the evening, his appointment is initially for a period of three years from the day he assumes charge, the order said.

## BISHKEK

## Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan finalise border deal, end years-long spat



Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have finalised a border agreement on Thursday, exchanging territories to end a decades-long dispute. Kyrgyzstan gains 25 sq. km from Tajikistan in exchange for land and better water access. The deal includes neutral roads and eased access to resources, marking a significant step towards peace.

## VIENNA

## Conservative-led coalition to form govt. in Austria without far right



Austria's conservative People's Party (ÖVP), Social Democrats, and liberals formed a three-party government excluding the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ). This follows months of negotiations after the FPÖ failed to form a government. Led by Christian Stocker, it seeks to strengthen integration and impose stricter asylum policies.

## TOKYO

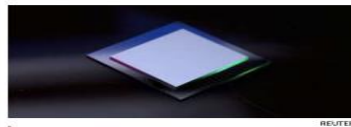
## Japan births fall to historic low, a decline for ninth consecutive year



Japan's births fell to a record low of 720,988 in 2024, a decline for the ninth consecutive year. The number of deaths more than doubled, highlighting Japan's demographic crisis and economic challenges amid a shrinking workforce and rising elderly population. Japan's births peaked at 2.1 million in 1973.

## SAN FRANCISCO

## Amazon unveils Ocelot, its first quantum computing chip



Amazon Web Services (AWS) on Thursday has unveiled Ocelot, its first quantum computing chip, designed to reduce quantum error correction costs by up to 90%. Ocelot uses "cat qubits" to suppress errors, potentially accelerating the development of practical quantum computers by up to five years.

## Trump to slap EU with 25% tariffs, bloc vows to 'vigorously' fight back

The EU will react 'firmly and immediately' against unjustified barriers to free and fair trade, said the European Commission. U.S. President says the bloc can retaliate, but 'it can't be a successful retaliation, because we just win'.

Associated Press  
BRUSSELS

The European Union on Thursday pushed back hard against allegations by U.S. President Donald Trump that the 27-nation bloc was out to get the U.S., and warned that it would vigorously fight any wholesale tariff of 25% on all EU products.

The fit-for-tat dispute following the vitriolic comments of Mr. Trump aimed at an age-old ally and its main post-war economic partner further deepened the trans-Atlantic rift that was already widened by Mr. Trump's warnings that



From steamed: French President Emmanuel Macron with Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk in Paris earlier this month, sketches

Washington would drop security guarantees for its European allies.

Thursday's EU push-back came after Mr. Trump told reporters that "the Eu-

ropean Union was formed in order to screw the United States. That's the purpose of it, and they've done a good job of it," adding that it would stop im-

mediately under his presidency. Prime Minister Donald Tusk of Poland, which holds the EU's rotating presidency, went on a counteroffensive.

"The EU wasn't formed to screw anyone," Mr. Tusk said in an X post. "Quite the opposite. It was formed to maintain peace, to build respect among our nations, to create free and fair trade, and to strengthen our transatlantic friendship. As simple as that."

The EU also warned that the moment the tariffs would be announced, it would trigger tough countermeasures, like bourbon,

jeans and motorcycles.

"The EU will react firmly and immediately against unjustified barriers to free and fair trade," European Commission trade spokesman Olof Gull said in a statement. "We will also protect our consumers and businesses at every turn. They expect no less from us."

Mr. Trump said in comments late Wednesday that the U.S. stood ready.

"We are the pot of gold. We're the one that everybody wants. And they can retaliate. But it cannot be a successful retaliation, because we just go cold turkey. We don't buy any more. And if that happens, we win."

## U.S. President set to impose an extra 10% tariff on China

Agence France-Presse  
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Thursday that he would impose an added 10% tariff, in addition to the 10% tariff announced earlier, on Chinese imports while moving ahead with levies on Canada and Mexico next week, citing "unacceptable" drug smuggling.

Mr. Trump had announced — then halted — sweeping 25% levies on Canadian and Mexican imports this month over illegal immigration and deadlyentanyl. But the month-long pause ends on March 4.

Mr. Trump also plans to implement "reciprocal tariffs" on April 2, tailored to each trading partner.

## Bangladeshi students who led protests launch a new party



New chapter: Students address a press conference as they unveil a political party at Dhaka University on Wednesday. AP

Agence France-Presse  
DHAKA

Bangladeshi students who played a key role in overthrowing the government last year have announced a new political party, the latest grouping in heated political jostling ahead of expected elections.

The new Ganantrik Chhatra Sangsad, or Democratic Student Council,

includes key organisers from the powerful Students Against Discrimination (SAD) group that spearheaded the uprising that overthrew iron-fisted former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in August.

"We are dedicated to protecting student rights," said Zahid Ahsan, a leader of the group, adding they wanted to "uphold the spirit" of the mass movement.

## Thailand deports 48 Uyghurs to China, raising concerns

Agence France-Presse  
BANGKOK

Thailand deported dozens of Uyghurs to China on Thursday despite warnings from human rights groups that they would face persecution on their return, drawing swift condemnation from the United Nations.

Beijing is accused of committing human rights abuses in its northwestern Xinjiang region, including the incarceration of around one million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities. It denies the allegations.

Constant fear: Rights groups had warned in recent weeks that Bangkok was preparing to deport a group of 48 Uyghurs being held in immigration centres around Thailand. They said the Uyghurs fled

Rights groups said the Uyghurs fled China more than a decade ago and lived in constant fear of being sent back.

The national police chief Kirat Phanbhat confirmed the deportations on Thursday, saying Beijing had requested the return of 40 Uyghurs.

"The Chinese government wrote to the Thai government expressing sincerity and their intention to take care of Uyghurs, promising in the letter that they will be looked after, and guaranteed their accommodation and their safety," Mr. Kirat told reporters.

He added that the handover went smoothly and the Uyghurs did not resist. Thailand forcibly deported 109 Uyghurs to China in 2015, drawing a stern rebuke from Washington and the United Nations, but had repeatedly denied the existence of plans for a new round of deportations.

Global outrage: International condemnation was swift on Thursday. "There is a complete prohibition in cases where there is a real risk of torture, ill-treatment, or other irreparable harm upon their return," UN rights chief Volker Turk said in a statement.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio slammed Thailand, an ally.

On Thursday, China's Foreign Ministry accused "some political forces" of spreading lies about Xinjiang.

## Reverse flow



Failed attempt: Migrants spend the night in a shelter in Palenque, Panama on Wednesday, as they return from southern Mexico after giving up on reaching the U.S. a reverse flow triggered by the Trump administration's immigration crackdown. AP

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio slammed Thailand, an ally.

On Thursday, China's Foreign Ministry accused "some political forces" of spreading lies about Xinjiang.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio slammed Thailand, an ally.

On Thursday, China's Foreign Ministry accused "some political forces" of spreading lies about Xinjiang.

## King Charles invites Trump for a second U.K. state visit

Reuters  
WASHINGTON

Donald Trump accepted an invitation from King Charles on Thursday to visit Britain, making the U.S. President the first elected political leader in modern times to be hosted for two state visits by a British monarch.

British Prime Minister Keo Starmer handed Mr. Trump a letter from King Charles during a press conference with reporters at the White House. Mr. Trump immediately accepted the invitation.

"The answer is yes," Mr. Trump responded, telling Mr. Starmer that he would attend his first state visit to Britain. "We look forward to being there and honouring the king, honouring the country."

## 10 injured as vehicle rams pedestrians in 'terror hit' in Israel

Agence France-Presse  
JERUSALEM

A vehicle rammed into pedestrians in northern Israel on Thursday in what police described as a "suicidal terror attack", leaving at least 10 people wounded, according to medics.

"There is suspicion that this is a terror attack. Police forces successfully intercepted a suspicious vehicle, apprehending a person suspected to be responsible for the ramming at the Karkur junction south of the city of Haifa, police said.

The suspect was a "53-year-old Palestinian from the Jordan area, [who] was in Israel unlawfully and married to an Israeli citizen", police said.

"Preliminary findings indicate that he deliberately targeted civilians waiting at a bus stop," it added. Dubbed "Iron Wall" by the Israeli military, the operation came days after a ceasefire took effect in Gaza and spans multiple refugee camps near of Jenin, Tulikarem and Tubas.

## Gene Hackman, Oscar-winning actor, and his wife found dead at New Mexico home

Associated Press  
SANTA FE

Oscar-winning actor Gene Hackman, his wife and their dog were found dead in their New Mexico home, authorities said on Thursday.

Foul play was not suspected, but authorities did not disclose how they died and said an investigation was ongoing. Hackman, 95, Betsy Arakawa, 63, and their dog were all dead when deputies entered their home to check on their welfare around 1.45 p.m. on Wednesday, Santa Fe County

Sheriff's Office spokesperson Denise Avila said. The gruff-but-beloved Hackman was among the finest actors of his generation, appearing as villains, heroes and anti-heroes in dozens of dramas, comedies and action films from the 1960s until his retirement in the early 2000s.

He was a five-time Oscar nominee who won for *The French Connection* in 1972 and *Unforgiven* two decades later. His death comes just four days before this year's ceremony. Hackman co-wrote three novels starting with the swashbuckler, *Wake of*

far less visible in public, though even the most mundane outings caught the attention of the press. *The Independent* wrote about him attending a show at the Loebic Performing Arts Center in 2018. *The New York Post* reported on him pumping gas, doing yard work and getting a chicken sandwich at Wendy's in 2023.

Aside from appearances at awards shows, he was rarely seen in the Hollywood social circuit and retired from acting about 20 years ago. He was the rare Hollywood retiree that actually lasted.

## Jailed PKK founder calls for dissolution of his militant group

Agence France-Presse  
ISTANBUL

Jailed PKK founder Abdullah Gulalan on Thursday called for his Kurdish militant group to lay down its weapons and dissolve itself in a landmark declaration read out in Istanbul.

"All groups must lay down their arms and PKK must dissolve itself," he said in a declaration drawn up in his cell on Inirali prison island where he has been held in solitary confinement since 1999. His words were read out



Abdullah Gulalan

by a delegation from the pro-Kurdish DPK party who visited him on Thursday, the declaration sparking spontaneous protests inside the packed hall.

**SAN FRANCISCO**

## Amazon unveils Ocelot, its first quantum computing chip



REUTERS

Amazon Web Services (AWS) on Thursday has unveiled Ocelot, its first quantum computing chip, designed to reduce quantum error correction costs by up to 90%. Ocelot uses “cat qubits” to suppress errors, potentially accelerating the development of practical quantum computers by up to five years. AFP

01

### Ocelot (Amazon Web Services - AWS)

- A prototype quantum chip that improves error correction using "cat" qubits.
- Reduces hardware requirements by requiring only nine physical qubits per logical qubit.

03

### Majorana 1 (Microsoft Azure Quantum)

- Uses a new topological quantum state, neither solid, liquid, nor gas.
- Enhances qubit reliability through Majorana-based qubits, improving stability.

02

### Willow (Google Quantum AI)

- Breakthrough in quantum error correction, enabling scalable quantum computing.
- Reduces errors exponentially as it scales, moving closer to practical quantum machines.
- Google's Sycamore 2 – Achieved quantum supremacy by solving problems in seconds that classical computers would take thousands of years to compute.



## TOKYO

# Japan births fall to historic low, a decline for ninth consecutive year



AP

Japan's births fell to a record low of 7,20,988 in 2024, a decline for the ninth consecutive year. The number of deaths more than doubled births, highlighting Japan's demographic crisis and economic challenges amid a shrinking workforce and rising elderly population. Japan's births peaked at 2.1 million in 1973. AFP

# India hunts for critical minerals in Congo, Zambia, Australia

NEHA ARORA  
New Delhi, February 27

**INDIA IS EXPLORING** mining of critical minerals in Zambia, Congo and Australia, mines secretary VL Kantha Rao said on Thursday, as the world's fastest-growing major economy aims to secure raw materials such as lithium.

Companies like Coal India, NMDC and ONGC Videsh are exploring critical minerals in Australia, Rao said.

The move comes as the country is taking efforts to reduce its reliance on imports of minerals such as lithium, key to energy transition technologies.

India is still in the process of developing lithium processing technology, a sector predominantly led by China.

The Zambian government has recently agreed to give 9,000 sq kilometres to India for exploration of cobalt and copper, Rao said in a media conference, adding that India is also looking at Congo, Tanzania for mining critical minerals.

Meanwhile, mines minister G Kishan Reddy said the coun-

## GROWTH AREA

■ The move comes as India is taking efforts to reduce its reliance on imports of minerals

■ Zambia has recently agreed to give 9,000 sq km for exploration of cobalt and coppers

■ India is still in the process of developing lithium processing technology



■ This sector is predominantly led by China

try has decided to explore lithium reserves in Jammu and Kashmir and clarity on this is expected by May 2025.

The government in February 2023 found its first lithium deposits in Jammu and Kashmir with estimated reserves of 5.9 million metric tonne, but has failed to get any bids to auction mining rights in the state. In 2023,

India identified over 20 minerals, including lithium, as "critical" for its energy transition efforts and to meet the growing demand from indus-

tries and the infrastructure sector.

## Govt extends deadline for offshore mineral blocks'

India has extended the deadline for bidding for offshore mineral blocks by one month, an official with the country's mines ministry said on Thursday. India in November launched the auction of 13 offshore mineral blocks worth more than ₹1.5 trillion. **REUTERS**

- **India's Search for Critical Minerals (भारत का महत्वपूर्ण खनिजों की खोज में प्रयास)**
- **India is exploring mining of lithium, cobalt, and copper in Zambia, Congo, and Australia.**
- **Coal India, NMDC, and ONGC Videsh** are leading these exploration efforts.
- The move aims to **reduce India's dependence on mineral imports**, especially from China.  
(\***भारत ज़ाम्बिया, कांगो और ऑस्ट्रेलिया में लिथियम, कोबाल्ट और तांबे के खनन की खोज कर रहा है।**
- **कोल इंडिया, एनएमडीसी और ओएनजीसी विदेश** इस खोज का नेतृत्व कर रहे हैं।
- इस पहल का उद्देश्य **खनिज आयात पर भारत की निर्भरता को कम करना है**, विशेष रूप से चीन से।)

- **Importance of Lithium (लिथियम का महत्व)**
- **Lithium is crucial for energy transition technologies, including electric vehicles (EVs) and battery storage.**
- **India discovered lithium reserves of 5.9 million metric tonnes in Jammu & Kashmir (2023), but mining has not started yet.**
- **India lacks lithium processing technology, which is currently dominated by China.**

- **Zambia and Africa's Role (ज़ाम्बिया और अफ्रीका की भूमिका)**
- **Zambia has offered 9,000 sq km for cobalt and copper exploration to India.**
- **Congo and Tanzania are also under consideration for mining partnerships.**
- **Africa has rich reserves of critical minerals, making it a strategic region for India's raw material security.**

- . **Social Aspects (सामाजिक पहलू)**
- **Employment Generation:** Large-scale mining in Africa and India could create **job opportunities** in both regions.
- **Environmental Concerns:** Mining operations can **affect local communities**, leading to displacement and ecological damage.
- **Energy Transition Benefits:** Lithium mining will help in **reducing carbon emissions** by promoting **EVs and renewable energy storage**.

- **Political Aspects (राजनीतिक पहलू)**
- **Reducing Dependence on China:** India's mining push is **strategically aimed at countering China's dominance in critical minerals.**
- **International Collaboration:** Strengthening **India-Africa partnerships** and global outreach in **mineral diplomacy.**
- **National Security Considerations:** Ensuring a steady supply of **critical minerals is crucial for defense and technology sectors**

- . **Geographical Aspects (भौगोलिक पहलू)**
- **Mining in Africa: Zambia, Congo, and Tanzania** have abundant reserves of lithium, cobalt, and copper.
- **Australia as an Alternative:** India is also **collaborating with Australia** for lithium mining, reducing dependency on China.
- **Jammu & Kashmir Reserves:** The discovery of lithium in **J&K** is a **game-changer**, but operational challenges remain.



- **Economic Aspects (आर्थिक पहलू)**
- **Boost to Electric Vehicle Industry:** Domestic lithium mining will **reduce EV battery costs**, making EVs more affordable.
- **Foreign Exchange Savings:** India **spends billions on lithium imports**, and local mining will **cut import bills significantly**.
- **Offshore Mineral Auctions:** India has **extended bidding for offshore mineral blocks worth ₹1.5 trillion**, ensuring global investor participation.

**NEW IMAGE ALERT**  
**Aditya-L1 unlocks solar flare secrets**  
NEWS » PAGE 3

**UGC RULES ON CASTE BIAS**  
**'Universities can lose recognition over violations'**  
NEWS » PAGE 5

**SEEKING SOLUTION**  
**Talks with farmers to be held on March 19**  
NEWS » PAGE 3

**WORKDAY TURNED NIGHTMARE**  
**Looking for workers at the end of the tunnel**  
**A week since, the men still await rescue**  
GROUND ZERO » PAGE 7

**CHAMPIONS TROPHY**  
**Australia in semifinal after a washout**  
SPORT » PAGE 14

# 22 missing after avalanche hits BRO project site

Of 55 civilians at the site in Uttarakhand, 10 have been rescued, says Army; 23 believed to be safe

**Usha Mishra**  
NEW DELHI

In a life-or-death race against time, teams from the Indian Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police are working to save 22 workers who are feared to be trapped beneath the ice after a devastating glacier avalanche hit a Border Roads Organisation (BRO) project site at Mana village in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district. According to the Uttarakhand government, there were 57 civilian workers present at the affected site where BRO construction work has been ongoing for the past two years.

Chamoli district's Disaster Response Officer Nandkishore Joshi said that the workers had been sleeping inside a couple of containers when the avalanche hit their sheds. The victims include the construction workers as well as earth mover drivers and other machine operators. "There has been continuous snowfall in the area for the past 48 hours," he said, adding that while many of the workers managed to run out of the sheds, many others are trapped under the mountain of ice that has covered the site around 5 a.m. on Friday. Army Brigade Commander Manjesh Dhillon said that a dedicated rescue team — comprising seven officers, 17 Junior Commissioned Officers (JCO), and other personnel of the IBEX brigade, which is trained for rescue operations in the Himalayas, has been deployed in Mana village since 8 a.m. They



**Heroic tasks:** Army personnel engaged in rescue work following an avalanche that struck a camp near Mana village in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand, on Friday. (PTI)

are equipped with a specialised medical team and engineering equipment. "Ten people have been rescued so far, who are under treatment by Army doctors. The operation re-

mains ongoing, with all resources focused on saving lives," Brigadier Dhillon said. He added that 22 other workers were reported to be safe. Later, the State government said that they

had managed to trace the whereabouts of one more worker and clarified that two other workers had been on leave. Injured workers have been admitted to the army

hospital in Mana, according to a statement from the State Disaster Response Force. The doctors have stitched up a couple of the rescued workers who suffered grievous injuries on their heads and other parts of the body. "Bad news was received about many workers being buried under an avalanche during the construction work being carried out by the BRO near Mana village in Chamoli district. Rescues and rescue operations are being carried out by ITBP, BRO and other rescue teams," Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said.

Describing it as a tragic incident, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said that he has spoken to the Chief Minister and taken stock of the situation. "The State government also issued two helpline numbers that can be contacted by the kin of the trapped workers seeking information about the rescue, as the communication channels at the site remained non-functional due to the bad weather. "Sad news was received about many workers being buried under an avalanche during the construction work being carried out by the BRO near Mana village in Chamoli district. Rescues and rescue operations are being carried out by ITBP, BRO and other rescue teams," Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said.

## INSIDE

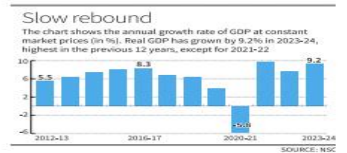
**Accused in Pune rape case held after three days**  
MUMBAI  
After an intense hunt for three days, the police tracked down the man accused of raping a woman in Pune, Dattatray Gade, who was arrested from Gunat village in Shirur Taluk of Pune district around 1 a.m. on Friday, has been sent to police custody for 12 days. » PAGE 8

**Delhi used less than 75% COVID funds: CAG report**  
NEW DELHI  
The Delhi government used less than 75% of the funds released by the Centre to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic in the capital, according to a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report in the Assembly on Friday. » PAGE 4

**Interest on PF deposits to be retained at 8.25%**  
NEW DELHI  
The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has recommended that the current annual interest rate of 8.25% be retained on provident fund deposits for 2024-25 too. Trade unions had sought an increase in the interest rate. » PAGE 5

**Suicide bomb blast in Pak kills cleric, five others**  
PESHAWAR  
A suicide bomber blew himself up after walking into a mosque within a pro-Taliban seminary in northwestern Pakistan on Friday, killing a top cleric and five others ahead of the fasting month of Ramadan, according to local police. » PAGE 12

## GDP grows 6.2% on rising government, consumer spending



**Ashokamithran T.**  
MUMBAI

India's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew 6.2% in the October to December 2024 period, the third quarter of the fiscal year, picking up pace from the 5.6% growth recorded in the previous quarter, according to data released by the National Statistics Office (NSO) on Friday. However, this was considerably slower than the 9.2% growth over the slow period in 2023. Third quarter growth trailed the Reserve Bank of India's estimates by 0.2 percentage points. "Rebound in growth momentum in Q3 was largely anticipated, as indicated by several high-frequency macroeconomic indicators, including improved GST collections, public spending, electricity generation, and a recovery in export performance," said Rajani Sinha, Chief Economist at Care Edge Ratings. "On demand side, recovery in consumption growth, government expenditure and export growth look encouraging."

The growth was nudged by a significant uptick of 8.1% in government spending and 6.9% growth in private final consumption expenditure in the third quarter, compared to just 2.3% and 5.7%, respectively, in the same period last year. Exports too rose 10.4% in the third quarter of 2024-25, significantly higher than 3% growth the previous year. Imports slid 1.1%, entering negative territory. Experts say this can partly be attributed to the depreciation of the rupee. The increase in government and private consumption over the slow-down in investment rate, fuelled by the growth of Gross Fixed Capital Formation, which fell to 5.7% in Q3, from 0.3% in the year ago period. **Ambitious projection** The economy grew at 6.5% and 6.6% in the first two quarters of the current fiscal. Achieving a GDP estimate of 6.5% for the full year would require a 7.6% growth rate in the fourth quarter, said Chief Economic Adviser V. Anantha Nageswaran in a media briefing. Although this could be doable if three factors fall in place: a spike in exports, higher government pickup, and huge private investment, innovation,

## Make a deal or we're out, Trump tells Zelenskyy

**Agence France-Presse**  
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump and Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy clashed in an extraordinary shouting match in the Oval Office on Friday, leaving efforts to end the war with Russia hanging in the balance. "You're either going to make a deal or we're out," a furious Trump told Mr. Zelenskyy as a meeting that was meant to ease tensions over the sudden U.S. outreach to Russia ended up inflaming them. "You're gambling with lives of millions of people. You're gambling with World War Three, and what you're doing is very disrespectful to this country," Mr. Trump added.



**Heart to heart:** U.S. President Donald Trump and Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the White House Oval Office on Friday. (AP)

**FULL REPORT ON**  
» PAGE 12

## India, European Union set year-end deadline for trade deal

**Subhasini Halder**  
NEW DELHI

India and the European Union are working towards concluding their long-pending bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) by the end of 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday after meeting with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen here. They are also discussing a new strategic security and defence partnership agreement, to replace the current Strategic Roadmap for 2020-2025, ahead of the next EU-India summit expected later this year. Ms. von der Leyen was in Delhi to lead the College of Commissioners, the biggest such visit by the EU cabinet thus far. "We have prepared a blueprint for cooperation in the areas of trade, technology, investment, innovation,

green growth, security, skills, and mobility. We have directed our teams to conclude a mutually beneficial bilateral Free Trade Agreement by the end of this year," Mr. Modi announced on Friday. Progress in the FTA talks — which began first in 2007 and were relaunched in 2022 — has eluded both teams of negotiators thus far. The new directive to complete the negotiations by the end of the year is intended to give them a "political push" ahead of the next round of talks to be held from March 10 to 14 in Brussels. If concluded, the deal, which includes an Investment Protection Agreement and Geographical Indications Agreement, would be the "largest in the world", Ms. von der Leyen said. However, questions remain over whether the two sides can bridge



Ursula von der Leyen with Narendra Modi ahead of their meeting at Hyderabad House in Delhi on Friday. (SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA)

their differences in a matter of months, particularly over tariff issues which have held them up for years. "We would even go as far as saying that without a substantial commitment on cars, there will not be a trade agreement between European [India] and India," the official said. When asked about the statement, Ministry of External Affairs Secretary (West) Tannay Lal said that there are different concerns for both sides as "tariff violators" like India, the shifts in U.S. policy

would even go as far as saying that without a substantial commitment on cars, there will not be a trade agreement between European [India] and India," the official said. When asked about the statement, Ministry of External Affairs Secretary (West) Tannay Lal said that there are different concerns for both sides as "tariff violators" like India, the shifts in U.S. policy

on the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and Europe's desire to "de-risk" its ties with China. "We have seen how supply chains and dependencies are used to gain influence or drive wedges between nations and regions. We have seen a more aggressive posture by major powers, and of course, the conflicts that have destabilised entire regions," she said, delivering a keynote address on EU-India ties at an event organised by the Centre for Strategic and Defence Research. "India-EU ties have the potential to be one of the defining partnerships of this century and relations with India will be a cornerstone of Europe's foreign policy. It is therefore time to take these ties to the next level," Ms. von der Leyen added. (With inputs from Kallol Bhattacharjee)

➤ Mana, which is located 3km from Badrinath, is the last village on India-Tibet border at a height of **3,200m** (10,000 feet)

➤ Temperature is hovering around **-6 to -10°C**

➤ Army rescue teams are working amidst snowfall of **6 to 7 feet**

➤ 174 Army personnel carrying on rescue mission along with ITBP, BRO and disaster response forces



➤ DRDO lab DGRE issues yellow alert for avalanche risk in five hill districts, including Chamoli, for next **24 hrs**



# India, European Union set year-end deadline for trade deal

**Suhasini Haidar**

NEW DELHI

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Ursula von der Leyen with Narendra Modi ahead of their meeting at Hyderabad House in Delhi on Friday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

their differences in a matter of months, particularly over tariff issues which have held them up for years.

## Key tariffs

Briefing the media about the talks, an EU official said the FTA plan is ambitious but conceded that unless there is a breakthrough on India cutting tariffs on European cars and alcohol, it would not be realised. “I

would even go as far as saying that without a substantive commitment on cars, there will not be a trade agreement between European [Union] and India,” the official said.

When asked about the statement, Ministry of External Affairs Secretary (West) Tanmay Lal said that there are different concerns for both sides. “But now, the decisive, clear mandate has been gi-

ven by the leaders to their teams,” he added, when asked about how realistic the year-end deadline was. India has sped up trade negotiations with a number of countries in the past few years, but FTAs have repeatedly missed such deadlines, including those with the United Kingdom, Australia, and others.

## Geopolitical context

Dividing the issues discussed into the different baskets of economic issues, technology cooperation, and security and defence, Ms. von der Leyen said that “now more than ever, the geopolitical context asks for decisive action.”

She was believed to be indicating the “context” of U.S. President Donald Trump’s threats of trade tariffs against Europe as well as “tariff violators” like India, the shifts in U.S. policy

on the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and Europe’s desire to ‘de-risk’ its ties with China.

“We have seen how supply chains and dependencies are used to gain influence or drive wedges between nations and regions. We have seen a more aggressive posture from major powers, and of course, the conflicts that have destabilised entire regions,” she said, delivering a keynote address on EU-India ties at an event organised by the Council for Strategic and Defence Research

“India-EU ties have the potential to be one of the defining partnerships of this century and relations with India will be a cornerstone of Europe’s foreign policy. It is therefore time to take these ties to the next level,” Ms. von der Leyen added  
*(With inputs from Kallol Bhattacharjee)*

01

### Trade & Investments:

- Bilateral trade in goods (FY 2023-24): \$135 billion
  - Indian exports to the EU: \$76 billion
  - Indian imports from the EU: \$59 billion
- Bilateral trade in services (2023): \$53 billion
  - Indian service exports to the EU: \$30 billion
  - Indian service imports from the EU: \$23 billion

02

### People-to-People Ties:

- Indians received over 20% of EU Blue Cards (2023-24).
- More than 6,000 Erasmus scholarships awarded to Indian students in the last 20 years.

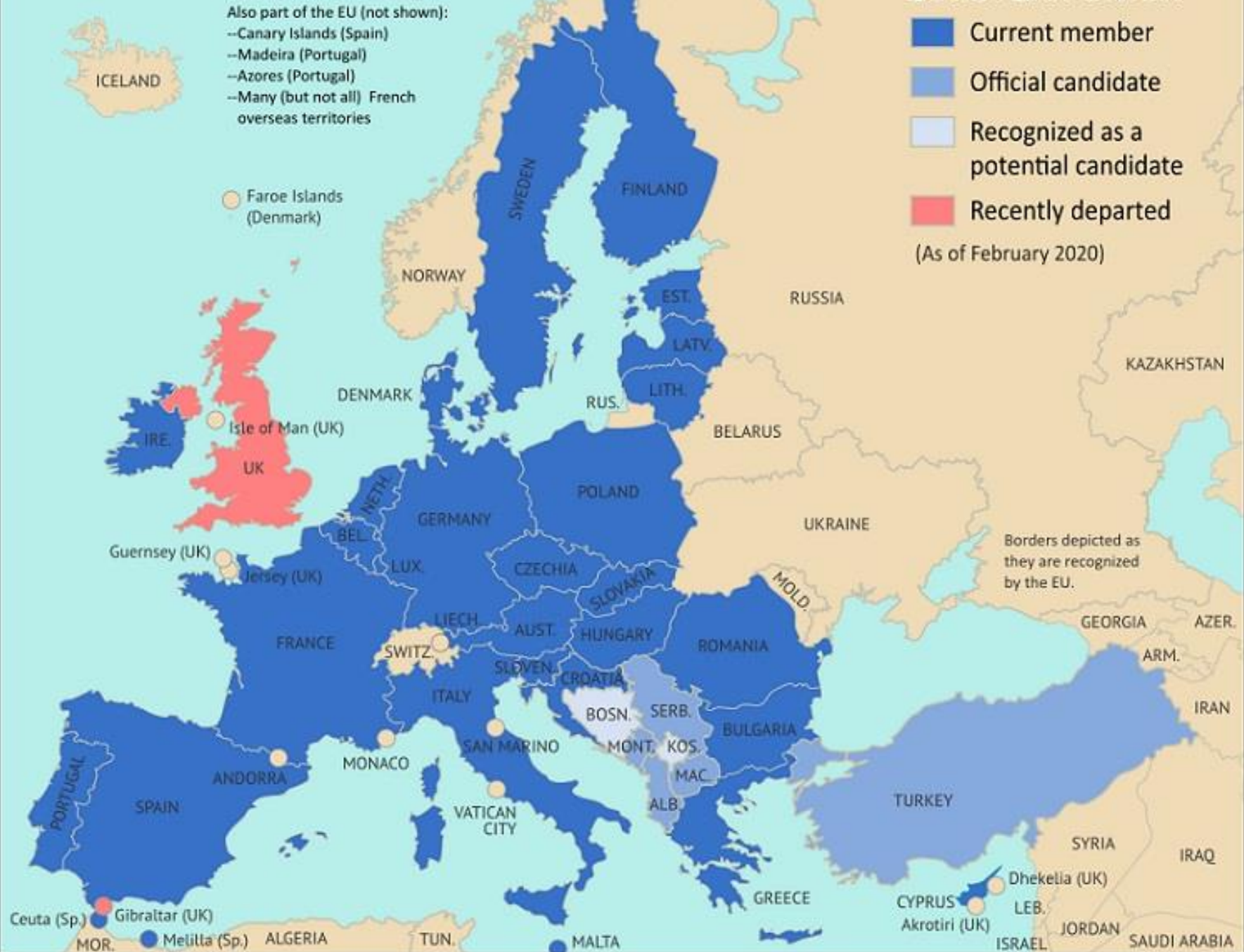
03

### Defence & Security Cooperation:

- India-EU joint naval exercises in the Gulf of Guinea (Oct 2023).
- India-EU Security & Defence Consultations initiated in 2022.

# EUROPEAN UNION

- Current member
  - Official candidate
  - Recognized as a potential candidate
  - Recently departed
- (As of February 2020)



# THE HISTORY AND TIMELINE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

1849

Emergence of Pan-European Feelings

Victor Hugo used the term 'United States of Europe'

1949

The first great effort to bring the nations of Europe together

Council of Europe was formed.

1952

Paris Treaty - The first step in the federation of Europe

Creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)

1957

Rome Treaty

Creation of the European Economic Community (EEC)

1993

Maastricht Treaty

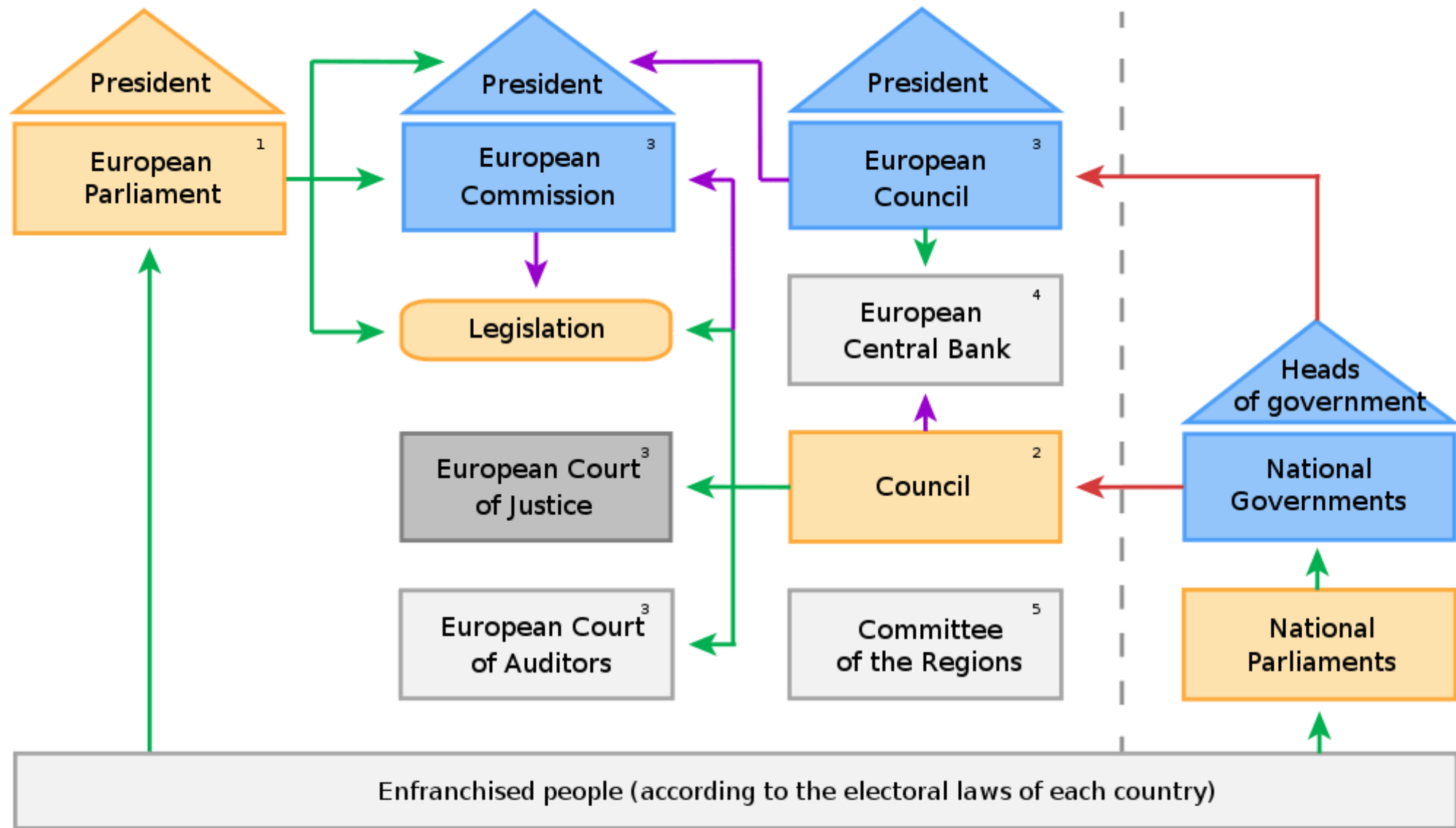
Creation of the European Union (EU)

2009

Lisbon Treaty

Amendment to the Maastricht Treaty and the Rome Treaty





- Legislative branch → elects / appoints / decides
- Executive branch → membership
- Judicial branch → proposes

- 1: European elections take place every 5 years
- 2: State chamber. Convenes in varying composition depending on the policy area  
Each member state is represented by the respective minister.
- 3: Each member state is represented by one member
- 4: Composed of representatives of the national central banks.
- 5: Consists of representatives of subnational legislative bodies.



- **India-EU Free Trade Agreement (भारत-यूरोपीय संघ मुक्त व्यापार समझौता)**
- **India and the European Union are working towards finalizing their long-pending Free Trade Agreement (FTA) by the end of 2025.**
- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen discussed:**
  - **The bilateral FTA.**
  - **A new strategic security and defence partnership replacing the current Strategic Roadmap 2020-2025.**

- **Next India-EU summit** expected later in 2025. If completed, the deal will include: **Investment Protection Agreement.**
- **Geographical Indications Agreement.**
- Expected to be **one of the largest FTAs globally**

- **2. Key Tariff Issues (मुख्य शुल्क मुद्दे)**
- **The EU is pushing for lower tariffs on European cars and alcohol.**
- **EU officials said that without a commitment on these issues, the trade deal won't be signed.**
- **India has concerns about market access for its service sector and regulations on exports.**  
(\*यूरोपीय संघ यूरोपीय कारों और शराब पर भारत से कम शुल्क की मांग कर रहा है।)
- **यूरोपीय संघ के अधिकारियों ने कहा कि यदि इन मुद्दों पर सहमति नहीं बनी, तो व्यापार समझौता नहीं होगा।**
- **भारत को अपने सेवा क्षेत्र की बाजार पहुंच और निर्यात नियमों को लेकर चिंता है।)**

- **3. Geopolitical Context (भू-राजनीतिक संदर्भ)**
- **EU wants to "de-risk" ties with China and strengthen economic relations with India.**
- **Trade disruptions from the Russia-Ukraine conflict have made India a key partner.**
- **EU sees India as a major ally in its global trade policies.**

- **Potential Economic Benefits (संभावित आर्थिक लाभ)** If finalized, the FTA will significantly boost India-EU trade.
- **Improved market access for Indian exports (IT, pharma, textiles, and services).**



# Indian digital economy ranked 28th on user spending: report

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

Even as India is the third largest economy in the world, its 'user' economy ranks 28th in the world, according to a report.

"This means while India as a country has achieved high level digitalisation at the aggregate level, the level of digitalisation for the average Indian remains fairly modest," the report by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations' (ICRIER) Prosus Centre for Internet and Digital Economy (CIDE) said.

The density of Internet connectivity, which is com-



parable with other countries, is therefore not as high as the relative size of the digital economy as far as users' spending is concerned. This stark disparity notwithstanding, the CIDE says that there is much potential for greater investments to improve investments in digital penetration. "In fact, India's

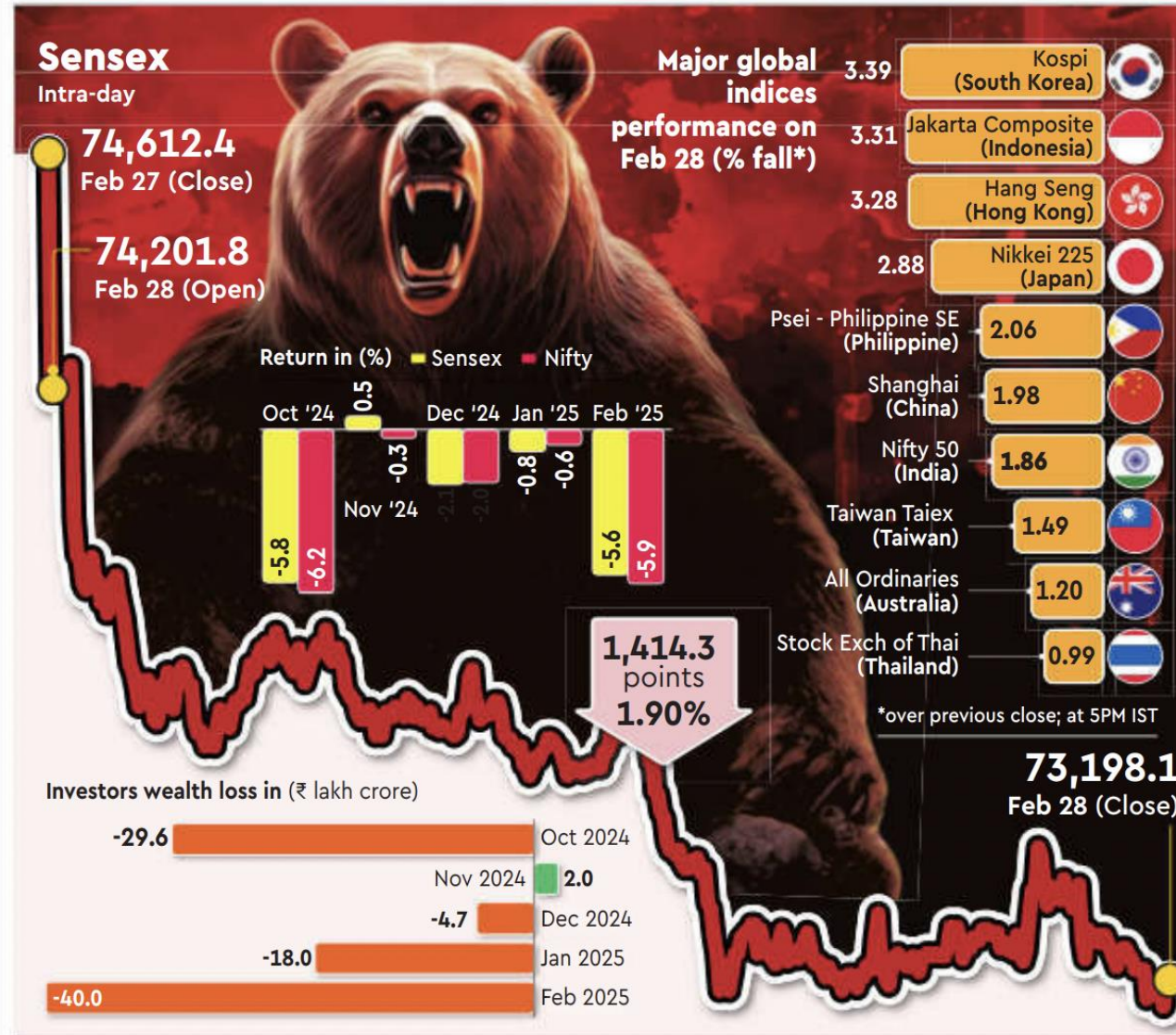
digital economy is growing at twice the rate of its overall economy, and is expected to become one fifth of the economy by 2029," the CIDE said, echoing a similar finding by another ICRIER report released with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology in January.

Overall, the report uses a 'CHIPS' framework to conclude that while India is the third largest overall economy, and the 28th largest digital user economy; it ranks eighth in an overall combination of these two ranking systems. The framework uses criteria like access quality and AI readiness.

# FEBRUARY BLUES

● ₹40-lakh-crore investor wealth wiped out during the month

● Foreign investors pull out over \$25 billion in 5 months





# This Feb was India's warmest in 125 years of record-keeping

Summer Likely To Be Hotter Than Normal: IMD

Vishwa.Mohan  
@timesofindia.com

**New Delhi:** The past month was the warmest Feb in India since record keeping commenced in the country in 1901 and the upcoming hot weather season (March-May) is likely to be warmer than normal in most parts of the country with a high number of heatwave days during the period, the IMD said on Friday.

Both months of 2025 so far have figured among top three warmest on record, as Jan was the third warmest since 1901. Earlier, 2024 was declared the warmest year in records dating back to 1901.

**Back-to-back warm winter months and the forecast of above-normal heat in March may negatively impact winter crops such as wheat and rapeseed during their maturing phase.** Forecast of higher-than-normal heatwave days may threaten

## 11 MTHS OF HEAT

> India witnessing **unprecedented heat** in recent months

> Feb was the **11th consecutive month** when mean temps in the country were among **8 all-time highest** for the respective months. 2 of these months were the **hottest ever** while 4 others were **2nd or 3rd hottest** on record

> Minimum temps have been the **highest** on record in **5 of the last 8 months**



the output in certain states where sowing was delayed.

"Above-normal heatwave days are expected over Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab, MP, Maharashtra, UP, Bihar, Jharkhand, Bengal, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and north Karnataka from March to May," said D S Pai, senior IMD scientist, while releasing the weather outlook for the hot weather season.

► **Continued on P 5**

# Man-in-Loop Anti-Ship Missile

- DRDO and the Indian Navy successfully tested the indigenous Naval Anti-Ship Missile – Short Range (NASM-SR) with a ‘Man-in-Loop’ capability from a Seaking 42B helicopter at ITR, Chandipur.

- **What is a Man-in-Loop Missile?**

- A missile that allows real-time human intervention during flight for decision-making.
- Enables **in-flight retargeting** based on **live seeker images** sent to the pilot.

-

# Herath Festival

- Herath festival holds deep religious and cultural significance for the Kashmiri Hindu community.
- **About 'Herath' Festival**
- The name Herath is derived from the **Sanskrit term Hararatri, meaning "The Night of Hara", a reference to Lord Shiva.**
- The festival is observed with a night of prayers, followed by a day of feasting and celebrations.

# Hague Service Convention

- The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) formally requested the Indian government to serve summons on Gautam Adani and Sagar Adani under the **Hague Service Convention**.
- **What is the Hague Service Convention?**
- The Hague Service Convention (1965), formally known as the **Convention on the Service Abroad of Judicial and Extrajudicial Documents** in Civil or Commercial Matters, is a multilateral treaty that simplifies the process of serving legal documents across international borders in civil and commercial cases.



# Prani Mitra and Jeev Daya Award

- The Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) has announced the Prani Mitra and Jeev Daya Award Ceremony, to be held in New Delhi.
- **About**
- This initiative aims to **recognize outstanding individuals and organizations** for their remarkable contributions to animal welfare and protection.

- **The Prani Mitra Award** will be conferred under **five sub-categories:** Advocacy (Individual), Innovative Idea (Individual), Lifetime Animal Service (Individual), along with two awards for **Animal Welfare Organizations** and for **Corporate, PSUs, Government Bodies, or Co-operatives.**
- **The Jeev Daya Award** will be presented in **three sub-categories:** Individual, Animal Welfare Organization, and for either Schools, Institutions, Teachers, or Children.

- **Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI)**
  - The Animal Welfare Board of India is a **statutory advisory body** promoting animal welfare in the country.
  - **Establishment:** It was established in **1962** under the **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960**.

National Science Day 2025

- National Science Day is celebrated every year on 28th February to commemorate the discovery of the 'Raman Effect' made by the physicist Sir C.V. Raman.
- **About**
- Sir C.V. Raman was awarded the **Nobel Prize in 1930** for the discovery of the Raman Effect.
- **The first celebration** took place on **February 28, 1987**, marking the beginning of a tradition that continues to inspire generations.

- **The objective** of the observation of National Science Day is to spread the message of the importance of science and its application among the people.
- **Theme for 2025:** Empowering Indian Youth for Global Leadership in Science & Innovation for VIKSIT BHARAT.
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### **About C V Raman**

- He founded the **Indian Journal of Physics** in **1926**.
- He became the **first Indian director of the** Indian Institute of Science (**IISc**) in **1933**.
- He established the Raman Research Institute in **1948**.
- In **1954**, the Government of India honored him with the Bharat Ratna.



- **Raman Effect**

- When a beam of light passes through a **transparent medium** (such as a liquid or gas), a small fraction of the **scattered light changes in wavelength**.

- This change occurs due to the **interaction of light with the vibrational and rotational energy levels** of the molecules in the medium.

# Ancient India's Contributions to Global Science



## **The Idea of Zero**

Aryabhata introduced the symbol for zero, enabling modern arithmetic operations.

## **The Decimal System**

India developed the decimal system, revolutionizing arithmetic calculations.

## **Numeral Notations**

Indian numeral system, adopted by Arabs and later the West, became "Arabic numerals."

## **Fibonacci Numbers**

The Fibonacci sequence was first recorded in India through Sanskrit prosody.

## **Binary Numbers**

Pingala introduced the concept of binary numbers in his work on poetic meters.

## **Chakravala Method of Algorithms**

Brahmagupta devised an early algorithm to solve quadratic equations.

## **Ruler Measurements**

Harappan rulers had precise calibrations used in ancient architecture.

## **Theory of Atom**

Kanad proposed an atomic theory centuries before John Dalton.

## **Heliocentric Theory**

Aryabhata described Earth's rotation and revolution around the Sun.

## **Wootz Steel**

High-quality Indian steel was renowned worldwide for its strength and pattern.

## **Smelting of Zinc**

India pioneered the distillation process for zinc production.

## **Seamless Metal Globe**

Mughals created seamless metal globes using lost-wax casting.

## **Plastic Surgery**

Sushruta developed advanced surgical techniques, including rhinoplasty.

## **Cataract Surgery**

Sushruta performed the first recorded cataract surgeries.

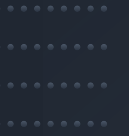
## **Ayurveda**

Charaka laid the foundation for holistic medicine and preventive healthcare.

## **Iron-Cased Rockets**

Tipu Sultan developed iron-cased rockets, influencing modern warfare.

# It's a City, a Country, and an Island



- In which region of Tamil Nadu has the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas approved oil and gas exploration?
- तमिलनाडु के किस क्षेत्र में पेट्रोलियम और प्राकृतिक गैस मंत्रालय ने तेल और गैस अन्वेषण को मंजूरी दी है?
- A. Palk Bay / पाल्क खाड़ी
- B. Gulf of Mannar / गल्फ ऑफ मन्नार
- C. Kaveri Basin / कावेरी बेसिन
- D. Andaman Basin / अंडमान बेसिन

- Which policy governs the recent oil and gas exploration initiative in Tamil Nadu?
- तमिलनाडु में हाल ही में शुरू किए गए तेल और गैस अन्वेषण की पहल किस नीति के तहत आती है?
- A. New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) / नई अन्वेषण लाइसेंसिंग नीति (NELP)
- B. Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP) / हाइड्रोकार्बन अन्वेषण और लाइसेंसिंग नीति (HELP)
- C. National Energy Policy (NEP) / राष्ट्रीय ऊर्जा नीति (NEP)
- D. Strategic Energy Initiative (SEI) / स्ट्रैटेजिक एनर्जी इनिशिएटिव (SEI)

- Which mineral is India exploring in Zambia, Congo, and Australia to reduce dependence on China?
- भारत चीन पर निर्भरता कम करने के लिए ज़ाम्बिया, कांगो और ऑस्ट्रेलिया में किस खनिज की खोज कर रहा है?
- A. Iron ore / लौह अयस्क
- B. Bauxite / बॉक्साइट
- C. Lithium / लिथियम
- D. Nickel / निकल

- What is the significance of lithium in the energy sector?
- ऊर्जा क्षेत्र में लिथियम का क्या महत्व है?
- A. It is used in petroleum refining / यह पेट्रोलियम परिशोधन में प्रयोग होता है
- B. It is a key component in battery storage and electric vehicles / यह बैटरी भंडारण और इलेक्ट्रिक वाहनों का प्रमुख घटक है
- C. It is a crucial metal in nuclear energy production / यह परमाणु ऊर्जा उत्पादन में एक महत्वपूर्ण धातु है
- D. It is mainly used for making construction materials / यह मुख्य रूप से निर्माण सामग्री बनाने में उपयोग होता है

- India is working on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with which international organization?
- भारत किस अंतरराष्ट्रीय संगठन के साथ मुक्त व्यापार समझौते (FTA) पर काम कर रहा है?
- A. G7
- B. BRICS
- C. European Union (EU) / यूरोपीय संघ (EU)
- D. ASEAN




- What is a key demand of the European Union in the India-EU FTA negotiations?
- भारत-यूरोपीय संघ मुक्त व्यापार समझौता वार्ता में यूरोपीय संघ की मुख्य मांग क्या है?
- A. Higher tariffs on Indian pharmaceutical exports / भारतीय दवा निर्यात पर अधिक शुल्क
- B. Lower tariffs on European cars and alcohol / यूरोपीय कारों और शराब पर कम शुल्क
- C. More regulations on Indian textile exports / भारतीय वस्त्र निर्यात पर अधिक नियम
- D. Increased foreign direct investment (FDI) in agriculture / कृषि में प्रत्यक्ष विदेशी निवेश (FDI) में वृद्धि

- What is the unique feature of the newly tested Naval Anti-Ship Missile (NASM-SR)?
- नवीनतम परीक्षण किए गए नौसैनिक एंटी-शिप मिसाइल (NASM-SR) की विशेषता क्या है?
- A. It is India's first hypersonic missile / यह भारत की पहली हाइपरसोनिक मिसाइल है
- B. It has a "Man-in-Loop" capability for real-time target adjustment / इसमें वास्तविक समय में लक्ष्य समायोजन के लिए "मैन-इन-लूप" क्षमता है
- C. It is launched from submarines only / यह केवल पनडुब्बियों से लॉन्च किया जाता है
- D. It can carry nuclear warheads / यह परमाणु हथियार ले जाने में सक्षम है

- What is the 'Herath' festival associated with?
- 'हेरथ' त्योहार किससे संबंधित है?
- A. Buddhist Monasteries of Ladakh / लद्दाख के बौद्ध मठों से
- B. Kashmiri Hindu Community and Lord Shiva / कश्मीरी हिंदू समुदाय और भगवान शिव से
- C. Tribal celebrations in Jharkhand / झारखंड के आदिवासी उत्सवों से
- D. Harvest festival in Tamil Nadu / तमिलनाडु के फसल त्योहार से

- **What is the significance of National Science Day celebrated on February 28?**
- **28 फरवरी को मनाए जाने वाले राष्ट्रीय विज्ञान दिवस का महत्व क्या है?**
- **A. It marks the birthday of Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam / यह डॉ. ए.पी.जे. अब्दुल कलाम की जयंती का प्रतीक है**
- **B. It commemorates the discovery of the 'Raman Effect' by C.V. Raman / यह सी.वी. रमन द्वारा 'रमन प्रभाव' की खोज की याद दिलाता है**
- **C. It celebrates India's first nuclear test at Pokhran / यह पोखरण में भारत के पहले परमाणु परीक्षण का जश्न मनाता है**
- **D. It marks the launch of India's first satellite Aryabhata / यह भारत के पहले उपग्रह आर्यभट्ट के प्रक्षेपण का प्रतीक है**

- What is the Hague Service Convention related to?
- हैग सेवा संधि (Hague Service Convention) किससे संबंधित है?
- A. International trade agreements / अंतरराष्ट्रीय व्यापार समझौते
- B. Legal document service across international borders / अंतरराष्ट्रीय सीमाओं के पार कानूनी दस्तावेजों की सेवा
- C. Cybersecurity regulations / साइबर सुरक्षा नियम
- D. Diplomatic immunity laws / राजनयिक प्रतिरक्षा कानून

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 low, creating a moody atmosphere. There are some red dots and an orange bar in the top left corner, likely part of a graphic design.

Thank you  
guys.

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