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PDF



10 MCQ QUIZ

MCQ



- Which U.S. department recently canceled the \$21 million USAID fund meant for voter turnout in India?
- किस अमेरिकी विभाग ने हाल ही में भारत में मतदाता भागीदारी के लिए \$21 मिलियन की USAID फंडिंग रद्द कर दी?
- A. Department of State / विदेश विभाग
B. Department of Defense / रक्षा विभाग
C. Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) / सरकारी दक्षता विभाग (DOGE)
D. Federal Election Commission / संघीय चुनाव आयोग

- What was India's Ministry of External Affairs' (MEA) response to the USAID funding cancellation?
- भारत के विदेश मंत्रालय (MEA) की USAID फंडिंग रद्द करने पर क्या प्रतिक्रिया थी?
- A. It praised the U.S. decision / इसने अमेरिका के फैसले की सराहना की
B. It called the reports "deeply troubling" / इसने रिपोर्ट्स को "गहरी चिंता का विषय" बताया
C. It announced diplomatic sanctions on the U.S. / इसने अमेरिका पर राजनयिक प्रतिबंध लगाने की घोषणा की
D. It suspended all USAID projects in India / इसने भारत में सभी USAID परियोजनाओं को निलंबित कर दिया

- What directive did the Supreme Court of India issue regarding school education?
- भारत के सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने स्कूल शिक्षा के संबंध में कौन सा निर्देश जारी किया?
- A. Making gender sensitivity a compulsory subject / लैंगिक संवेदनशीलता को अनिवार्य विषय बनाना
- B. Introducing military training for students / छात्रों के लिए सैन्य प्रशिक्षण शुरू करना
- C. Mandating yoga and meditation in schools / स्कूलों में योग और ध्यान अनिवार्य करना
- D. Reducing the syllabus for stress-free learning / तनाव मुक्त शिक्षा के लिए पाठ्यक्रम कम करना

- Which Indian defense system is set to be finalized in the next 4-5 months?
- भारत की कौन सी रक्षा प्रणाली अगले 4-5 महीनों में अंतिम रूप लेने वाली है?
- A. Agni-V Missile System / अग्नि-V मिसाइल प्रणाली
- B. Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air Missile (QRSAM) System / त्वरित प्रतिक्रिया सतह-से-हवा मिसाइल प्रणाली (QRSAM)
- C. BrahMos-II Hypersonic Missile / ब्रह्मोस-II हाइपरसोनिक मिसाइल
- D. S-400 Air Defense System / S-400 वायु रक्षा प्रणाली

- Which missile system is undergoing high-altitude trials in India?
- भारत में कौन सी मिसाइल प्रणाली उच्च ऊंचाई पर परीक्षण के दौर से गुजर रही है?
- A. Prithvi-II / पृथ्वी-II
- B. Shourya Missile / शौर्य मिसाइल
- C. Akash Missile System / आकाश मिसाइल प्रणाली
- D. Nirbhay Cruise Missile / निर्भय क्रूज मिसाइल

- Which country became the second after China to launch a digital pilot license system?
- चीन के बाद कौन सा देश डिजिटल पायलट लाइसेंस प्रणाली शुरू करने वाला दूसरा देश बना?
- A. USA / संयुक्त राज्य अमेरिका
- B. Russia / रूस
- C. India / भारत
- D. United Kingdom / यूनाइटेड किंगडम

- Under which constitutional article can an MP be disqualified due to absence from Parliament?
- संसद से अनुपस्थिति के कारण किसी सांसद को संविधान के किस अनुच्छेद के तहत अयोग्य घोषित किया जा सकता है?
- A. Article 75(3) / अनुच्छेद 75(3)
B. Article 101(4) / अनुच्छेद 101(4)
C. Article 356 / अनुच्छेद 356
D. Article 123 / अनुच्छेद 123

- The Indian government is planning to lease out airports under which model?
- भारतीय सरकार किस मॉडल के तहत हवाई अड्डों को लीज पर देने की योजना बना रही है?
- A. Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) Model / बिल्ड-ऑपरेट-ट्रान्सफर (BOT) मॉडल
- B. Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Model / सार्वजनिक-निजी भागीदारी (PPP) मॉडल
- C. 100% FDI Model / 100% प्रत्यक्ष विदेशी निवेश (FDI) मॉडल
- D. Revenue Sharing Model / राजस्व साझेदारी मॉडल

- What is the key objective of the Electronic Personnel License (EPL) system in India?
- भारत में इलेक्ट्रॉनिक पर्सनल लाइसेंस (EPL) प्रणाली का मुख्य उद्देश्य क्या है?
- A. Replace traditional pilot licenses with digital ones / पारंपरिक पायलट लाइसेंस को डिजिटल लाइसेंस से बदलना
- B. Automate railway signaling systems / रेलवे सिग्नलिंग प्रणाली को स्वचालित करना
- C. Enhance digital identity verification for citizens / नागरिकों के लिए डिजिटल पहचान सत्यापन को बढ़ावा देना
- D. Issue blockchain-based trade licenses / ब्लॉकचेन आधारित व्यापार लाइसेंस जारी करना

- What is the purpose of India's efforts in lithium exploration with Argentina?
- अर्जेंटीना के साथ भारत के लिथियम अन्वेषण प्रयासों का उद्देश्य क्या है?
- A. To improve nuclear energy production / नाभिकीय ऊर्जा उत्पादन में सुधार करना
- B. To support India's electric vehicle and battery industry / भारत के इलेक्ट्रिक वाहन और बैटरी उद्योग को समर्थन देना
- C. To increase the gold reserve of India / भारत के स्वर्ण भंडार को बढ़ाना
- D. To develop high-speed rail technology / हाई-स्पीड रेल तकनीक विकसित करना



Marilyn Monroe

- “I'm selfish, impatient and a little insecure. I make mistakes, I am out of control and at times hard to handle. But if you can't handle me at my worst, then you sure as hell don't deserve me at my best.”

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IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Indian textile is having its moment

Textiles have entered their popular era, encouraged by revivalists, patrons, curators and exhibitions

MAGAZINE » PAGE 1



What is India's dilemma over fighter jets? FAQ » PAGE 8

Shaktikanta Das appointed Principal Secretary II to PM NEWS » PAGE 4

India and Pakistan in Super Sunday showdown SPORT » PAGE 13

NEARBY



India, Bhutan enjoy exemplary ties, says MEA

NEW DELHI India and Bhutan enjoy "exemplary ties" and the visit of Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay was in keeping with the tradition of regular exchanges between the two countries, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Saturday. » PAGE 3

Will restructure frontal groups to rebuild AAP: Rai

NEW DELHI Aam Aadmi Party Delhi convener Gopal Rai said on Saturday that his party will restructure frontal groups to address communication gaps wherever they exist. He said the contributions of different wings towards strengthening the party will be evaluated periodically. » PAGE 2

Ministry plans to regulate 'harmful' digital content

NEW DELHI The Information and Broadcasting Ministry is examining the existing statutory provisions and the need for a new legal framework to regulate "harmful" content on digital platforms. » PAGE 5

Man who blinded Rushdie in one eye found guilty

NEW YORK An American-Lebanese man was found guilty on Friday of attempting to kill novelist Salman Rushdie in a 2022 attack on the author. Hadi Matar faces up to 25 years in prison and will be sentenced in April. » PAGE 12



Trump shakes up U.S. military leadership

WASHINGTON U.S. President Donald Trump on Friday fired the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Air Force General C. G. Brown, and pushed out five other Admirals and Generals in an unprecedented shake-up of military leadership. » PAGE 12

8 trapped as Telangana tunnel roof caves in; rescue efforts on

13 injured after roof of Srisailem project tunnel collapses owing to seepage of water; officials say four feet of water has accumulated on the tunnel floor; Army and NDRF experts to reach site soon; Prime Minister assures State of all assistance

B. Chandrashekhara
HYDERABAD

Eight persons were trapped 14 km inside an under-construction tunnel of the Srisailem Left Bank Canal project after a section of its roof collapsed on Saturday morning in Nagarkurnool district of Telangana.

Thirteen workers who sustained injuries came out of the tunnel with the help of another 29 workers who escaped unhurt.

Those trapped are two engineers from Uttar Pradesh, two technical staff members from Jammu & Kashmir and Punjab, and four labourers from Jharkhand.

No headway was made in the rescue even as three teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) from Hyderabad and Vijayawada reached the site. The authorities are



Raiding against time: Police and fire services personnel near the Srisailem Left Bank Canal tunnel in Nagarkurnool district of Telangana on Saturday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

making arrangements to ensure oxygen supply in the tunnel. Those trapped were identified as Manoj Kumar (project engineer), Sri Nili (site engineer), Sunny Singh and Gurpreet Singh

(technical staffers handling the tunnel boring machine and supporting machinery) and Sandeep Sabu, Jagta Xess, Santosh Sabu, Anuj Sabu (all labourers). Telangana Minister for Irrigation N. Uttam Kumar

Prime Minister Narendra Modi called up Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy and enquired about the incident and offered all assistance from the Centre.

The Chief Minister explained to the Prime Minister how the incident took place.

Damp structure Authorities of the Irrigation Department said a three-metre section of the roof collapsed owing to continuous seepage of water, which also led to accumulation of about four feet of water on the floor. It eventually led to the tunnel crumbling over a stretch of eight metres.

Along with experts from the coal mines of Singareni Collieries Company Ltd, the SDRF and Fire Services personnel, the NDRF teams were trying to assess the situation at the site.

Hope Oli gets India invite in first half of this year: Nepal FM

Sahasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Nepal awaits an invitation for its Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli to visit India, Nepal Foreign Minister Arzu Desai Rana said on Saturday. She said she hoped that Mr. Oli would be invited to New Delhi in the first half of 2025.

Her comments indicate a strain in ties over India's unusual delay in hosting the Nepali PM.

FULL REPORT » PAGE 4

Turtle down



Olive Ridley turtles that have been coming ashore to nest seen on the Rushikulya beach on Odisha's eastern coast. BISHWANATH ROUTH

Congress asks Modi to come clean on Trump's claim on USAID money

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Playing a video clip of U.S. President Donald Trump saying that \$21 million from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) had been going to his "friend" Prime Minister Narendra Modi for voter turnout, the Congress on Saturday urged Mr. Modi to respond to the assertions.

The video showing Mr. Trump's remarks, made while addressing a meeting of U.S. State Governors on Saturday, was released by the White House.

"PM Modi must talk to his friend President Trump and strongly refute the allegation that America was about to give \$21 million to him and India for increasing voter turnout," Pawan Khera, who heads the Congress's media and publicity wing, said at a press conference.

"Misleading the nation" Mr. Khera alleged that the BJP-RSS ecosystem was making wild allegations to strengthen a false narrative against credible civil society members, NGOs, and political parties. "They must not only be named



and shamed on public forums, but legal action must also be taken against them for spreading lies and misleading the nation," he added. Several BJP leaders have said the money went to civil society organisations sympathetic to the

BJP-led National Democratic Alliance regime (2014-2024) while India received \$1.2 billion in grants, or 41.3%, during the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance regime (2004-2013).

Mr. Khera claimed that the USAID had disbursed \$650 million to India between 2002 and 2024. "Who and for what purposes did it receive \$650 million between FY21 and FY24?" he asked. The Congress leader added that the first \$165 million was meant to support "democratic participation and ci-

Manipur sees rising support for push to surrender weapons



Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Shaha with CRPF Director-General Gyarendra Pratap Singh at the Raj Bhavan. ANI

Members of the Kukli-Zo community in Churachandpur district of Manipur surrendered 16 looted and illegal weapons on Saturday following an appeal by Governor Ajay Kumar Shaha that were apprehended, including AK rifles, under-barrel grenade launchers, and voltmeter sticks, were surrendered following the joint efforts of the Assam Rifles, (AR), State Intelligence agencies, Central Reserve Police Force and Manipur Police.

The AR said in a statement that the agencies organised a series of meetings with the local community and the "act of surrender of weapons in the hill and valley areas is likely to result in further peace in the State".

The previous day, a .303 rifle, magazines, bullet-proof jackets, helmets and a "looted tear gas gun" were surrendered in Kaching and Kangpokpi districts.

On Thursday, the Governor appealed to people from all communities in the ethnic violence-hit State to surrender looted police weapons by February 26 and warned of strict action otherwise.

A senior government official said security forces, including the police and the army, have been asked to wait for the conclusion

of the amnesty period and give the communities adequate opportunity to surrender the weapons before a crackdown begins.

On Friday, the AR conducted an operation in the Kaching district where 26 armed members of Arambai Tenggot, a radical Meitei outfit, were apprehended. The arrests were followed by protests led by women volunteers or the Meira Paibis who had an altercation with the security forces. At least ten of the apprehended individuals were juveniles and were released on compassionate grounds due to the ongoing board examinations, a defence source said.

A police official said that winning people's trust was essential so that they are encouraged to surrender the weapons and that coercive steps may backfire. The AR recovered 11 weapons, a toy pistol, walkie-talkie sets, bullet-proof jackets and ₹2.5 lakh cash from the suspects.

The Manipur Police has instructed all police districts to deposit the recovered "looted police weapons and ammunition" either with the Army formations or the AR for "safe custody".

Union Home Minister Amit Shah is likely to renew the security restriction in Manipur on February 25, a first since President Rule was imposed in the State on February 13.

"Even Modi ji's much hyped Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has a USAID stamp," the Modi government considers USAID such a pariah, then why did it partner with them for Swachh Bharat Mission?" the Congress leader asked, reiterating his party's demand for a comprehensive White Paper on the issue.

In a post on X, Congress leader K. Venugopal also referred to the U.S. President's remarks urging U.S. Governors to switch to paper ballots and same-day voting and asked if the Mr. Modi would follow Mr. Trump's advice.

How was 'Vikatan' made inaccessible?

What are the rules? How do website blocking orders work in India? What can a website owner do?

Atorn Deep

The story so far: The website of the Tamil magazine, *Vikatan*, was rendered inaccessible for several readers on February 15, after the BJP's Tamil Nadu president K. Annamalai sent a letter to L. Murugan, the Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, complaining about a cartoon featuring Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.S. President Donald Trump. The magazine, as well as State leaders like Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, had condemned the move as an attack on freedom of expression.

Why was there a complaint about a cartoon? *Ananda Vikatan* has been a mainstay in the Tamil magazine space, and in its most recent avatar has been a constant source of political and entertainment reporting. The magazine also publishes an online e-magazine for paying subscribers called *Vikatan Plus*. The February 10 edition of this digital magazine had a cover cartoon featuring Prime Minister Modi shackled in chains, seated next to President Trump. The shackling was a reference to the plight of the migrants being deported from the U.S. to India aboard military planes in chains.

Website blockings are governed by Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000. This depiction of the Prime Minister set off a controversy on social media, which was further taken up by Mr. Annamalai, who wrote to the Information and Broadcasting (MIB). He accused the magazine of "operating as a mouthpiece of the DMK".

How was it rendered unavailable? The Union government did not issue any statement confirming or denying that the website was made inaccessible. *Vikatan* was able to confirm with four people aware of the order that led to *Vikatan*'s inaccessibility, that it was issued by the MIB. The I&B disseminated the instructions through the Department of Telecommunications to internet providers and telecom operators, after which the website was not accessible in majority of their networks.

Website blockings are governed by Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000. The law's language broadly empowers the government to block a website in the "interest of sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States or public order or for preventing incitement". The blocking orders are confidential, and a copy has not been provided to *Vikatan* or to the public.

The Information Technology Procedure and Safeguards for Blocking of Access of Information by Public Rules, 2009 details the operation of these Rules, empowering Ministers and State government departments to refer a blocking request through a nodal officer to a designated officer under the IT Ministry, which then constitutes a committee that takes a decision. If a blocking is directed, the Department of Telecommunications is looped in to send the order to telecom service providers. This is different from the framework for removing content within a given website or streaming service. That is governed by the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, which are regulations under the IT Act empowering the I&B Ministry and the IT Ministry to issue emergency orders blocking content on social media platforms, streaming services, online news websites, and so on. The introduction of secure HTTPS websites, blocking a specific piece of content within a website is not possible without the cooperation of the website's publisher, as internet networks can only see the name of the domain, and not what a user is viewing on a given website.

What can 'Vikatan' do? Under the 2009 blocking rules, a notice should be sent to the website which is liable to be blocked, so that they may make a representation. This can be considered by a review committee. The publishers of *Vikatan* were able to obtain an unblocking of their website in 2022, after engaging in discussions with the IT Ministry. No such prior notice was sent to *Vikatan*. On February 16, the day after the order was issued, the magazine received a notice for the cartoon under the 2021 IT Rules governing content blocking on internet websites, which did not acknowledge the website's overall inaccessibility. After getting a notice, a website owner can typically make their case to the committee formed under the 2009 Rules. If the committee does not accept the defense, this can be appealed in a High Court. In *Vikatan*'s case, the notice from the I&B Ministry called for a hearing on February 20. The magazine presented its case, and has vowed to legally challenge the order if the outcome of the hearing "does not align with press freedom principles".

What is India's dilemma over fighter jets?

Does India have to opt for the F-35 offered by U.S. President Donald Trump? What about defence deals with Russia? Why were plans to acquire the SU-57 dropped? What is the status of an indigenous fighter jet? Is India too dependent on foreign capabilities and technology?

Dinakar Peri

The story so far: The two foremost Fifth Generation Fighter Aircraft (FGFA) of Russia and the U.S., the SU-57 and F-35, got a lot of attention at Aero India, which was held from February 10-14 in Bengaluru, with the former undoubtedly being the showstopper with its manoeuvres. Just as that wound up, U.S. President Donald Trump, addressing a press meet with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, said the U.S. is also paving the way to "ultimately" provide India with F-35 stealth fighters.

What's the F-35? The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter is a single seat, single-engine strike fighter jet with three variants, F-35A, which has a conventional take-off and landing for the Air Force, F-35B short take-off/vertical landing for the Marine Corps and an F-35C aircraft variant for the Navy and the Marine Corps. In addition to the U.S., the programme has seven international partners, and 10 foreign military sales customers, and the jets are expected to be in service well into the 2080s. As of January 30, 2025, 1,110 F-35s were delivered, according to the lead contractor Lockheed Martin, with 20 participants in the programme.

Noting that it wasn't a firm offer yet and what Mr. Trump meant was that they would look at a roadmap for making the F-35 available, Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh said recently that India "will look at that offer once it becomes a firm offer". Pointing out that there is a protocol to be followed, he said that first requirement is to have to be raised by the services, and only then

The costs are substantial and India has never operated a U.S. fighter jet

are options on offer studied. "Creating an option of this type is important for us and we will certainly look at it with an open mind," he said. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), which is mandated by the U.S. Congress to review the program, said in a report in 2014 that the Department of Defence estimates that these development efforts — as well as the costs to maintain and operate the 2,470 planned aircraft through 2088 — will exceed \$2 trillion. Based on various estimates, the F-35 costs upwards of \$100 million per aircraft with armaments and associated costs. India has never operated a U.S. fighter, and an advanced fighter like the F-35 will need new facilities for training and maintenance.

What is the status of the Russian fighter jet? It is pertinent to note that in 2010, India and Russia signed a preliminary design agreement to jointly produce the FGFA, now the SU-57, for use by both countries after which each had invested \$295 million for preliminary design which was completed in 2013. But protracted negotiations followed over the high cost and limited technology transfer and the limiting factors was that the SU-57 was a single seater and the creation of a twin-seater variant, the IAF's preference, would mean a steep rise in costs. India eventually pulled out of the FGFA project and decided to go with its indigenous PGFA, the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA).

What is the IAF's squadron strength? The IAF has a sanctioned strength of 42.5 fighter squadrons, but is languishing today at 31 squadrons with a significant proportion of ageing platforms. "Somewhere India got left behind in terms of technology, and a big gap and major countries have moved forward," noted a senior official. China, Russia and the U.S. already fielded fifth generation fighter jets, with China recently stealing a march over everyone else as it flew its indigenous fifth generation fighters, dubbed by some as a sixth-generation jet, in addition to the two jets already developed and inducted. Reports also suggest that Pakistan is looking to acquire 40 J-35 fifth generation jets from China.

In December, the government constituted a high-level committee led by the Defence Secretary to chalk out a roadmap for the IAF and address operational gaps. The report which was scheduled to be submitted by January 1, is still in the works, officials confirmed.

What is in the pipeline? India has an ambitious plan to acquire over 500 fighter jets, a bulk of them variants of the Light

Combat Aircraft (LCA) and the AMCA, that is at least a decade away from induction.

There has been a delay in the deliveries of 83 LCA-Mk1A already contracted, with 97 more to be ordered. The delay in deliveries has been partly due to engine delays from General Electric (GE), and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has now assured that 12 jets will be delivered to the IAF this year; the order for 83 jets will be completed in three-and-a-half years. Officials said that the more capable LCA-Mk2 is expected to make first flight in early 2026. The AMCA prototype is expected to roll out by end-2026 or early-2027, certified by 2032 and ready for induction by 2034. In addition, there is the proposal for 114 Multi-Role Fighter Aircraft (MRFA) to be imported from the U.S. However, the gap in numbers, the MRFA as envisaged may now be too expensive and too late to address the crisis. Last October, IAF chief Air Chief Marshal A. P. Singh said the MRFA was "needed as an eyesore".

While several experts and observers pitched for two F-35 squadrons as a stopgap, given the complex process and timelines, it would be a decade before the jets arrive. The 36 Rafale deal contracted at €7.67 billion from France in 2016 is a case in point. In addition, India had paid over €1 billion in one-time research and development costs for India-specific enhancements on the Rafales. Speeding up the domestic programmes is of critical importance as any new addition to the IAF's already diverse fleet will create a maintenance nightmare and also take away focus and resources from indigenous efforts.

When did diversification begin? Russian military hardware has constituted a bulk of the Indian military inventory, including the IAF, for decades and diversification began in the early 2000s. However, diversification shouldn't mean moving from one dependency to another. As per the current plan, by early 2040, the IAF will have 220 LCA-Mk1 variants, at least 120 LCA-Mk2s and the initial batch of AMCAs, all powered by the GE F-404 and F-414 jet engines, a significant proportion of the fighter fleet.

The licence manufacture of the F-414 engine or the new I10KN engine, likely to be co-developed and co-produced with France for the AMCA-Mk2, will mean that India would be dependent on others for the most critical systems. The Indian aero engine space for both fixed wing and helicopters will be powered by the U.S. and France for the rest of the century, as French co-developed engines power India's indigenous helicopters.

So adding new fighters, that too of the highest technological threshold of the U.S., would surely come with a lot of riders, some intrusive and some that could stymie operational flexibility and impact plans on indigenous manufacturing.



New wings: A U.S. Air Force F-35 Lightning II fighter jet on display at Aero India 2025 in Bengaluru. ANANDU PERI

Why is three-language policy controversial?

Why has the Centre withheld funds to Tamil Nadu under the Samagra Shiksha programme? When did the State adopt a two-language policy? What is its stand on mandatory imposition of Hindi? What is the central government's view? How can the issue be resolved?

D. Suresh Kumar

The story so far: The Union Government has withheld ₹2,152 crore in funds due to Tamil Nadu under the Samagra Shiksha scheme for refusing to join the Prime Minister Schools for Rising India (PMShRI) scheme. It is eager to participate in the PMP ShRI scheme, it stands by the accompanying mandate to implement the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. One of the State's core objections to the NEP is its insistence on adopting a three-language formula in schools. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has rejected any concessions, insisting that "T.N. must align 'with the Constitution'". Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, questioning which provision of the Constitution justifies such mandates, has declared that the State will not submit to "blackmail" or abandon its historically adopted two-language policy.

What does the NEP 2020 state? The NEP 2020 has retained the three-language formula, a concept first introduced in the NEP of 1968. "The key difference, however, is that back then the NEP advocated for Hindi to be a compulsory language across the nation.

Tamil Nadu, with its long-standing two-language policy, has consistently outperformed many other States in key education metrics

Hindi-speaking States were required to teach in English, and a modern Indian language — preferably a south Indian language — while non-Hindi speaking States were required to teach the local regional language, Hindi, and English. In contrast, NEP 2020 offers greater flexibility, technically not imposing any specific language on any State. It states that "the three languages learned by an individual will be that of the States, regions, and, of course, the students themselves, so long as at least two of the three languages are native to India". This means, in addition to the State's language, one would be required to learn at least one other Indian language — not necessarily Hindi. The policy also emphasises bilingual teaching, particularly in the home languages of the mother tongue and English. Conspicuously, it places significant emphasis on Sanskrit as an optional language to be taught in schools.

Why is there opposition to this policy in T.N.? Tamil Nadu has long resisted the 'imposition of Hindi'. In 1937, when the C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji) government in Madras proposed making Hindi a compulsory subject in secondary schools, the Justice Party vehemently opposed it. Two young men, Thalamurthi and Natarajan, who participated in the agitation, died and became icons in the anti-Hindi imposition movement. Rajaji eventually resigned, and the Congress government took over in 1954, as the deadline for adopting Hindi as the sole official language across India approached, the State witnessed student protests that led to the deaths of at least 70 people in police shootings or self-immolations. The agitation eventually resulted in Parliament adopting the Official Languages (Amendment) Act, 1967, and the Official Language Resolution, 1968, which mandated the teaching of Hindi as part of the three-language formula. In January 1968, the Madras Assembly, led by the C.N. Annadurai-led first Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) government, adopted a resolution calling for scrapping of the three-language formula and the elimination of Hindi from the curriculum in T.N. schools. Since then, the State has steadfastly followed its two-language policy teaching Tamil and English.



Not backing down: Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin and his allies protest against NEP's three-language policy in Chennai on February 18. S. ANANDU

Major political parties, including the ruling DMK and the principal opposition All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), have consistently opposed any efforts to alter this policy. In 2009, backlash led the Kasturirangan Committee to remove the mandatory Hindi learning clause from the draft NEP.

Why is the three-language policy seen as an imposition? Political parties and activists in T.N. view the three-language policy as a "smokescreen" and a "backdoor" attempt to impose Hindi. They argue that, in practice, the implementation of a three-language scheme would inevitably lead to the teaching of Hindi, given the limited resources for providing additional language teachers and learning materials. Moreover, the Union Government and prominent BJP leaders have periodically advocated for the promotion of Hindi. In 2019, the Union Budget allocated ₹50 crore to support the appointment of Hindi teachers in non-Hindi speaking States. Critics contend the Centre's actions do not match its rhetoric on promoting regional languages, as evidenced by the lack of efforts to train adequate regional language teachers in Kendriya Vidyalayas or to ensure south Indian languages are taught in schools above the Vindhyas. Mr. Pradhan has defended the withholding of funds to T.N., making it clear that adherence to the three-language policy is non-negotiable. He urged Mr. Stalin to "rise above political differences" and criticised the State for viewing the NEP 2020 with a "myopic vision". In response, Mr. Stalin has accused Mr. Pradhan of attempting to "impose Hindi" under the guise of the NEP's policy. Mr. Stalin has vowed that, as long as the DMK and he are around, Tamil and T.N.'s interests will not be compromised.

What is the way forward? The only viable solution lies in constructive dialogue and a practical compromise between the Centre and the State on an issue like education, which was transferred from the State to the concurrent list during the Emergency. Notably, T.N., with its long-standing two-language policy, has consistently outperformed many other States in key metrics such as Gross Enrolment Ratio and reduction of school dropout rates. Disagreements over teaching a third language should not be allowed to derail funding for Samagra Shiksha, a comprehensive programme for education.

What is India's dilemma over fighter jets?

Does India have to opt for the F-35 offered by U.S. President Donald Trump? What about defence deals with Russia? Why were plans to acquire the SU-57 dropped? What is the status of an indigenous fighter jet? Is India too dependent on foreign capabilities and technology?

Dinakar Peri

The story so far:

The two foremost Fifth Generation Fighter Aircraft (FGFA) of Russia and the U.S., the SU-57 and F-35, got a lot of attention at Aero India, which was held from February 10-14 in Bengaluru, with the former undoubtedly being the showstopper with its manoeuvres. Just as that wound up, U.S. President Donald Trump, addressing a press meet with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, said the U.S. is also paving the way to “ultimately” provide India with F-35 stealth fighters.

What's the F-35?

The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter is a single seat, single-engine strike fighter jet with three variants, F-35A, which has a conventional take-off and landing for the Air Force, F-35B short take-off/vertical landing for the Marine Corps and an F-35C aircraft carrier variant for the Navy and the Marine Corps. In addition to the U.S., the programme has seven international partners, and 10 foreign military sales customers, and the jets are expected to be in service well into the 2080s. As of January 30, 2025, 1,110 F-35s were delivered, according to the lead contractor Lockheed Martin, with 20 participants in the programme.

Noting that it wasn't a firm offer yet and what Mr. Trump meant was that they will look at a roadmap for making the F-35 available, Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh said recently that India “will look at that offer once it becomes a firm offer.” Pointing out that there is a protocol to be followed, he said that first requirements have to be raised by the services, and only then

The costs are substantial and India has never operated a U.S. fighter jet

are options on offer studied. “Creating an option of this type is important for us and we will certainly look at it with an open mind,” he said.

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), which is mandated by the U.S. Congress to review the programme, said in a May 2024 report that the Department of Defence estimates that these development efforts – as well as the costs to maintain and operate the 2,470 planned aircraft through 2088 – will exceed \$2 trillion. Based on various estimates, the F-35 costs upwards of \$100 million per aircraft with armaments and associated costs. India has never operated a U.S. fighter, and an advanced fighter like the F-35 will need new facilities for training and maintenance.

What is the status of the Russian fighter jet?

It is pertinent to note that in 2010, India and Russia signed a preliminary design agreement to jointly produce the FGFA, now the SU-57, for use by both countries after which each had invested \$295 million for preliminary design which was completed in 2013. But protracted negotiations followed over the high cost and limited technology transfer. One of the limiting factors was that it was a single seater and the creation of a twin-seater variant, the IAF's preference, would mean a steep rise in costs. India eventually pulled out of the FGFA project and decided to go with its indigenous FGFA, the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA).

What is the IAF's squadron strength?

The IAF has a sanctioned strength of 42.5 fighter squadrons, but, is languishing today at 31 squadrons with a significant proportion of ageing platforms. “Somewhere India got left behind and is stuck in the middle. There is a big gap and major countries have moved forward,” noted a senior official. China, Russia and the U.S. have already fielded fifth generation fighter jets, with China recently stealing a march over everyone else as it flew two advanced fifth generation fighters, dubbed by some as a sixth-generation jet, in addition to the two jets already developed and inducted. Reports suggest that Pakistan is looking to acquire 40 J-35 fifth generation jets from China.

In December, the government constituted a high-level committee led by the Defence Secretary to chalk out a roadmap for the IAF and address operational gaps. The report which was scheduled to be submitted by end-January, is still in the works, officials confirmed.

What is in the pipeline?

India has an ambitious plan to acquire over 500 fighter jets, a bulk of them variants of the Light

Combat Aircraft (LCA) and the AMCA, that is at least a decade away from induction.

There has been a delay in the deliveries of 83 LCA-Mk1A already contracted, with 97 more to be ordered. The delay in deliveries has been partly due to engine delays from General Electric (GE), and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has now assured that 12 jets will be delivered to the IAF this year; the order for 83 jets will be completed in three-and-a-half years. Officials said that the more capable LCA-Mk2 is expected to make first flight in early 2026. The AMCA prototype is expected to roll out by end-2026 or early-2027, certified by 2032 and ready for induction by 2034. In addition, there is the proposal for 114 Multi-Role Fighter Aircraft (MRFA) to be imported and licence-manufactured locally but has seen no progress for many years, with the Request For Information (RFI) issued in April 2019. However, given the gap in numbers, the MRFA as envisaged may now be too expensive and too late to address the crisis. Last October, IAF chief Air Chief Marshal A. P. Singh said the MRFA was “needed as on yesterday.”

While several experts and observers pitched for two F-35 squadrons as a stopgap, given the complex process and timelines, it would be a decade before the jets arrive. The 36 Rafale deal contracted at €7.87 billion from France in 2016 is a case in point. In addition, India had paid over €1 billion in one-time research and development costs for India-specific enhancements on the Rafales. Speeding up the domestic programmes is of critical importance as any new addition to the IAF's already diverse fleet will create a maintenance nightmare and also take away focus and resources from indigenous efforts.

When did diversification begin?

Russian military hardware has constituted a bulk of the Indian military inventory, including the IAF, for decades and diversification began in the early 2000s. However, diversification shouldn't mean moving from one dependency to another. As per the current plan, by early 2040, the IAF will have 220 LCA-Mk1 variants, at least 120 LCA-Mk2s and the initial batch of AMCAs, all powered by the GE F-404 and F-414 jet engines, a significant proportion of the fighter fleet.

The licence manufacture of the F-414 engine or the new 110KN engine, likely to be co-developed and co-produced with France for the AMCA-Mk2, will mean that India would be dependent on others for the most critical systems. The Indian aero engine space for both fixed wing and helicopters will be powered by the U.S. and France for the rest of the century, as French co-developed engines power India's indigenous helicopters.

So adding new fighters, that too of the highest technological threshold of the U.S., would surely come with a lot of riders, some intrusive and some that could stymie operational flexibility and impact plans on indigenous manufacturing.



New wings: A U.S. Air Force F-35 Lightning II fighter jet on display at Aero India 2025 in Bengaluru. DINAKAR PERI

- **1** Background & Current Scenario (पृष्ठभूमि और वर्तमान स्थिति)
- India is considering multiple options for fighter jets, including F-35 (USA), SU-57 (Russia), and indigenous AMCA (India).
- भारत एफ-35 (अमेरिका), एसयू-57 (रूस) और स्वदेशी एएमसीए (भारत) सहित कई लड़ाकू विमानों पर विचार कर रहा है।
- The Aero India 2025 event in Bengaluru showcased the F-35 as a strong contender, with U.S. President Donald Trump stating that the aircraft could be offered to India.
- बेंगलुरु में हुए एयरो इंडिया 2025 इवेंट में एफ-35 को एक मजबूत दावेदार के रूप में प्रस्तुत किया गया, और अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप ने इसे भारत को पेश करने की बात कही।

India has traditionally operated Russian aircraft (MiG, Sukhoi), but is now exploring Western and indigenous options.

भारत पारंपरिक रूप से रूसी विमानों (MiG, सुखोई) का संचालन करता रहा है, लेकिन अब पश्चिमी और स्वदेशी विकल्पों की खोज कर रहा है।

- **2 The F-35 & Its Challenges (एफ-35 और उसकी चुनौतियाँ)**
- **The F-35 is a 5th Generation Stealth Fighter with different variants (F-35A, F-35B, and F-35C) for the U.S. Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps.**
- **एफ-35 एक 5वीं पीढ़ी का स्टील्थ लड़ाकू विमान है, जिसके विभिन्न संस्करण (F-35A, F-35B, और F-35C) अमेरिकी वायु सेना, नौसेना और मरीन कॉर्प्स के लिए बनाए गए हैं।**

As of January 2025, 1,110 F-35s have been delivered globally.

जनवरी 2025 तक, दुनिया भर में 1,110 एफ-35 विमानों की डिलीवरी हो चुकी है।

Major challenges for India:

- **High cost** (over \$100 million per aircraft with maintenance).
- **भारत के लिए मुख्य चुनौतियाँ:**
 - उच्च लागत (प्रति विमान \$100 मिलियन से अधिक, रखरखाव अलग)।
- **No previous operational experience with U.S. fighter jets.**
- **अमेरिकी लड़ाकू विमानों के साथ भारत का कोई पूर्व संचालन अनुभव नहीं।**

3 The Russian SU-57 & India's Withdrawal (रूसी एसयू-57 और भारत का समझौते से हटना)

India & Russia signed an agreement in 2010 to co-develop the SU-57 under the FGFA (Fifth Generation Fighter Aircraft) project.

भारत और रूस ने 2010 में एसयू-57 को एफजीएफए (फिफथ जेनरेशन फाइटर एयरक्राफ्ट) परियोजना के तहत सह-विकसित करने का समझौता किया था।

India withdrew in 2018 citing high costs and limited technology transfer.

भारत ने 2018 में उच्च लागत और सीमित प्रौद्योगिकी हस्तांतरण के कारण इस परियोजना से हटने का फैसला किया।

Instead, India decided to develop its own 5th Gen fighter – AMCA (Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft).

इसके बजाय, भारत ने अपना 5वीं पीढ़ी का लड़ाकू विमान - एएमसीए (एडवांस्ड मीडियम कॉम्बैट एयरक्राफ्ट) विकसित करने का फैसला किया।

4 Indigenous Fighter Jet Programs (स्वदेशी लड़ाकू विमान परियोजनाएँ)

A. Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas (हल्का लड़ाकू विमान - तेजस)

LCA Tejas has been successfully inducted, and 97 jets have been ordered.

एलसीए तेजस को सफलतापूर्वक शामिल किया गया है, और 97 विमानों का ऑर्डर दिया गया है।

B. Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) (एडवांस्ड मीडियम कॉम्बैट एयरक्राफ्ट - एएमसीए)

India's indigenous 5th Gen fighter, expected to make its first flight in 2026, induction by 2032.

भारत का स्वदेशी 5वीं पीढ़ी का लड़ाकू विमान, जो 2026 में पहली उड़ान भरेगा और 2032 तक सेवा में शामिल किया जाएगा।



C. Multi-Role Fighter Aircraft (MRFA) (मल्टी-रोल फाइटर एयरक्राफ्ट - एमआरएफए)

Proposed plan to acquire 114 MRFA jets, likely imported initially but with long-term indigenous production.

114 मल्टी-रोल लड़ाकू विमानों की खरीद की योजना, जिनमें से कुछ शुरू में आयात किए जाएंगे लेकिन बाद में स्वदेशी रूप से निर्मित किए जाएंगे।

- **5** India's Air Force Strength & Future Needs (भारतीय वायु सेना की शक्ति और भविष्य की आवश्यकताएँ)
- India's sanctioned strength is 42.5 fighter squadrons, but only 31 are operational.
- भारत की स्वीकृत शक्ति 42.5 लड़ाकू स्क्वाड्रन है, लेकिन केवल 31 सक्रिय रूप से काम कर रहे हैं।
- Retirement of older MiG-21s and Jaguars is increasing the need for new fighters.
- पुराने मिग-21 और जैगुआर विमानों की सेवानिवृत्ति के कारण नए लड़ाकू विमानों की आवश्यकता बढ़ रही है।
- Pakistan is reportedly acquiring 35 J-35 fighters from China.
- पाकिस्तान चीन से 35 जे-35 लड़ाकू विमान खरीदने की योजना बना रहा है।

- **6 Economic & Strategic Implications (आर्थिक और रणनीतिक प्रभाव)**
- **A. Economic Aspects (आर्थिक पहलू)**
- **Purchasing expensive jets like F-35 could strain India's defence budget.**
- **एफ-35 जैसे महंगे जेट खरीदना भारत के रक्षा बजट पर भारी पड़ेगा।**
- **Investing in indigenous development (AMCA, LCA) could boost India's aerospace industry.**
- **स्वदेशी विकास (एएमसीए, एलसीए) में निवेश करने से भारत के एयरोस्पेस उद्योग को बढ़ावा मिलेगा।**

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- **B. Political & Strategic Aspects (राजनीतिक और रणनीतिक पहलू)**
 - India must balance its relations with the U.S. and Russia while maintaining defence autonomy.
 - भारत को अमेरिका और रूस के साथ अपने संबंधों को संतुलित करना होगा, साथ ही रक्षा आत्मनिर्भरता बनाए रखनी होगी।
 - Dependence on any one country for fighter jets can impact strategic decisions.
 - किसी एक देश पर लड़ाकू विमानों के लिए निर्भरता रणनीतिक निर्णयों को प्रभावित कर सकती है।
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Sunil Mittal receives Britain's honorary knighthood medal

FE BUREAU
New Delhi, February 22

BHARTI ENTERPRISES FOUNDER and chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal on Saturday received the prestigious award from the British Empire for exceptional service to UK-India business relation, and contribution to business and philanthropy. He was honoured with the Knight Commander of the most excellent order of the British Empire (KBE), at a special investiture ceremony in the presence of friends and family at the British High Commissioner's residence in New Delhi, according to a release by British High Commission.

"I was delighted to present Sunil Bharti Mittal the KBE medal on behalf of His Majesty the King. Mr Mittal is a great friend of the UK – with significant investments, including BT, Gleneagles, Norlake Hospitality, and OneWeb," said Lindy Cameron, British High Commissioner to India.

The ceremony followed the announcement in 2024 by King Charles III of the UK that will be awarded an honorary



Bharti Enterprises founder and chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal

Knighthood. With this, Mittal became the first Indian citizen to receive such an honour from the British monarch, recognising his significant contributions to strengthening business ties between India and the UK. "It is an honour to have received the KBE from His Majesty, King Charles III. As India and the United Kingdom continue to chart remarkable scale in our bilateral relations, I acknowledge this recognition both as a privilege and a responsibility," Mittal said in a statement.

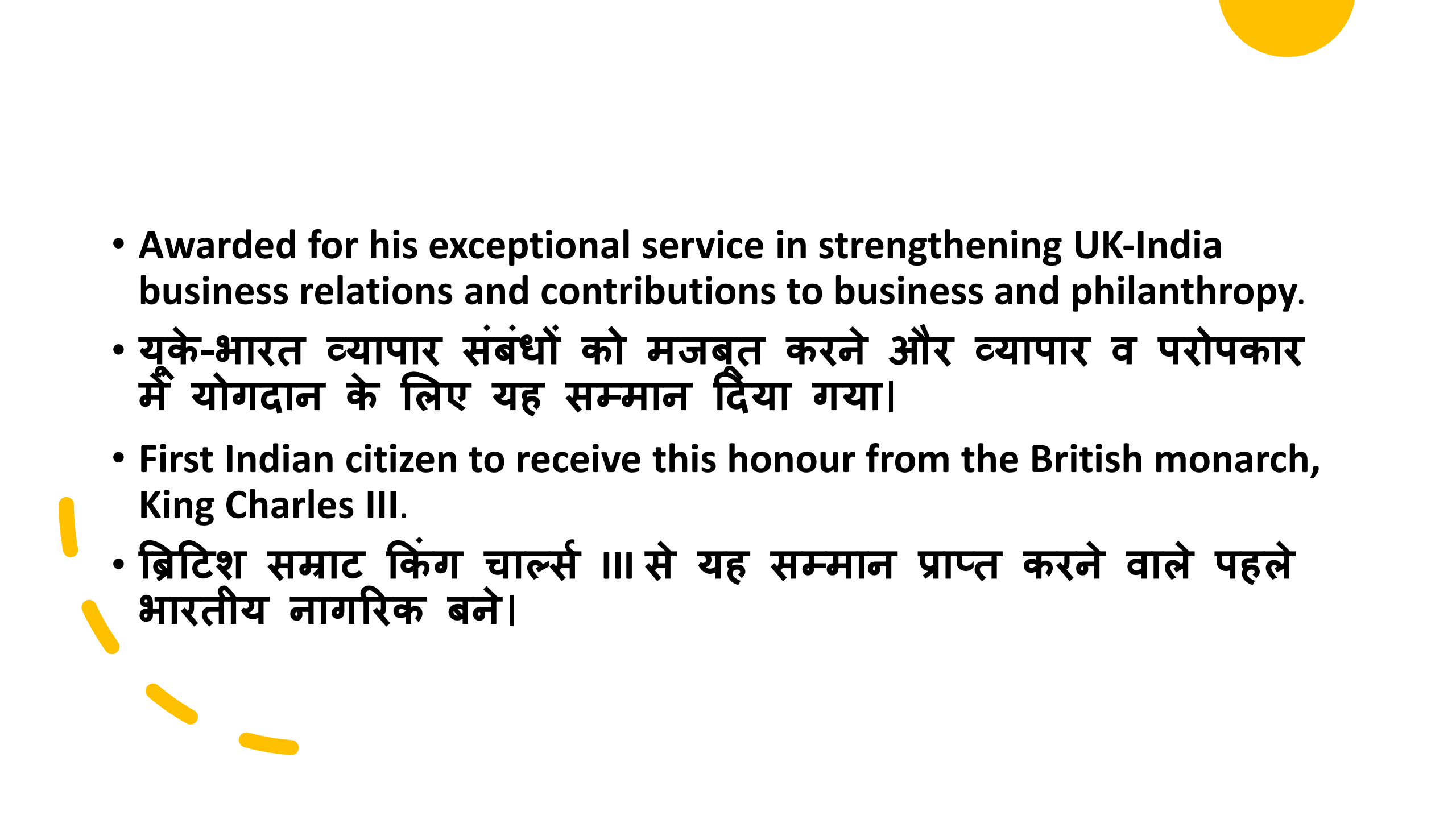
"I remain committed to working with stakeholders in

our nations towards advancing India – UK business relations," he added.

The British High Commission said Mittal's leadership has made a lasting impact on the UK-India partnership, including through his work with the India-UK CEO Forum.

Most recently, Mittal also led a senior Indian business delegation to the UK to meet with Prime Minister Keir Starmer, the Foreign Secretary, the Chancellor, and other Cabinet Ministers to identify opportunities for accelerating economic growth across both nations.



- **1 Background & Significance (पृष्ठभूमि और महत्व)**
- **Sunil Bharti Mittal, Founder & Chairman of Bharti Enterprises, received the Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (KBE).**
- **सनील भारती मिश्र, भारती एंटरप्राइजेज के संस्थापक और अध्यक्ष, को "नाइट कमांडर ऑफ द ऑर्डर ऑफ द ब्रिटिश एम्पायर (KBE)" से सम्मानित किया गया।**

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- Awarded for his exceptional service in strengthening UK-India business relations and contributions to business and philanthropy.
 - यूके-भारत व्यापार संबंधों को मजबूत करने और व्यापार व परोपकार में योगदान के लिए यह सम्मान दिया गया।
 - First Indian citizen to receive this honour from the British monarch, King Charles III.
 - ब्रिटिश सम्राट किंग चार्ल्स III से यह सम्मान प्राप्त करने वाले पहले भारतीय नागरिक बने।

2 Economic & Business Impact (आर्थिक और व्यावसायिक प्रभाव)

Mittal's Bharti Enterprises has significant investments in the UK, including BT, Gleneagles, Norlake Hospitality, and OneWeb.

मित्तल के भारती एंटरप्राइजेज ने ब्रिटेन में बीटी, ग्लेनीगल्स, नॉरलेक हॉस्पिटैलिटी और वनवेब जैसी प्रमुख कंपनियों में निवेश किया है।

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- Strengthening UK-India trade and investment ties through platforms like India-UK CEO Forum.
 - इंडिया-यूके सीईओ फोरम जैसे मंचों के माध्यम से भारत-ब्रिटेन व्यापार और निवेश संबंधों को मजबूत किया।
 - Led a high-level Indian business delegation to the UK to meet Prime Minister Keir Starmer and key ministers.
 - ब्रिटेन में प्रधानमंत्री कीर स्टारमर और प्रमुख मंत्रियों से मुलाकात करने के लिए एक उच्च स्तरीय भारतीय व्यापार प्रतिनिधिमंडल का नेतृत्व किया।
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- **3 Historical & Political Context (ऐतिहासिक और राजनीतिक संदर्भ)**
 - Knight Commander of the British Empire (KBE) is a prestigious honorary title granted by the UK government.
 - "नाइट कमांडर ऑफ द ब्रिटिश एम्पायर (KBE)" ब्रिटेन सरकार द्वारा दिया जाने वाला एक प्रतिष्ठित मानद उपाधि है।
 - Past Indian recipients of British knighthood include Ratan Tata and Narayana Murthy.
 - ब्रिटिश नाइटहुड प्राप्त करने वाले अन्य भारतीयों में रतन टाटा और नारायण मूर्ति शामिल हैं।
 - The award reflects the deepening economic and diplomatic ties between India and the UK.
 - यह सम्मान भारत और ब्रिटेन के बीच गहरे होते आर्थिक और कूटनीतिक संबंधों को दर्शाता है।

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- **4 Social & Philanthropic Contributions (सामाजिक और परोपकारी योगदान)**
 - Sunil Mittal's leadership in philanthropy through the Bharti Foundation, focusing on education and rural development.
 - सुनील मित्र के नेतृत्व में "भारती फाउंडेशन" ने शिक्षा और ग्रामीण विकास पर विशेष ध्यान केंद्रित किया है।
 - Commitment to advancing India-UK partnerships in economic and social spheres.
 - भारत-ब्रिटेन की साझेदारी को आर्थिक और सामाजिक क्षेत्रों में आगे बढ़ाने की प्रतिबद्धता।
 - Recognition as a key figure in shaping global business relationships.
 - वैश्विक व्यापार संबंधों को आकार देने में एक प्रमुख व्यक्ति के रूप में मान्यता प्राप्त।

Modi to be chief guest for 2nd time at Mauritius' national day celebration

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: PM Narendra Modi will travel to Mauritius next month as chief guest for the national day celebrations of the Indian Ocean country. After 2015, this is the second time Modi has been given that honour by Mauritius.

The announcement about Modi's participation as the guest of honour on the 57th anniversary of the independence of Mauritius on March 12 was made by PM Navinchandra Ramgoolam in Parliament on Friday.

"It is indeed a singular privilege for our country to host such a distinguished personality, who is doing us this honour in spite of his very tight schedule and in spite of his recent visits to



Modi's visit is a testimony of the close relations between the two nations, said Mauritius PM Navinchandra Ramgoolam (right). With 70% of its people tracing their roots to India, Mauritius is a key partner for India in the western Indian Ocean



Paris and the United States. He has agreed to be here as our special guest. The visit of Modi is a testimony of the close relations between our

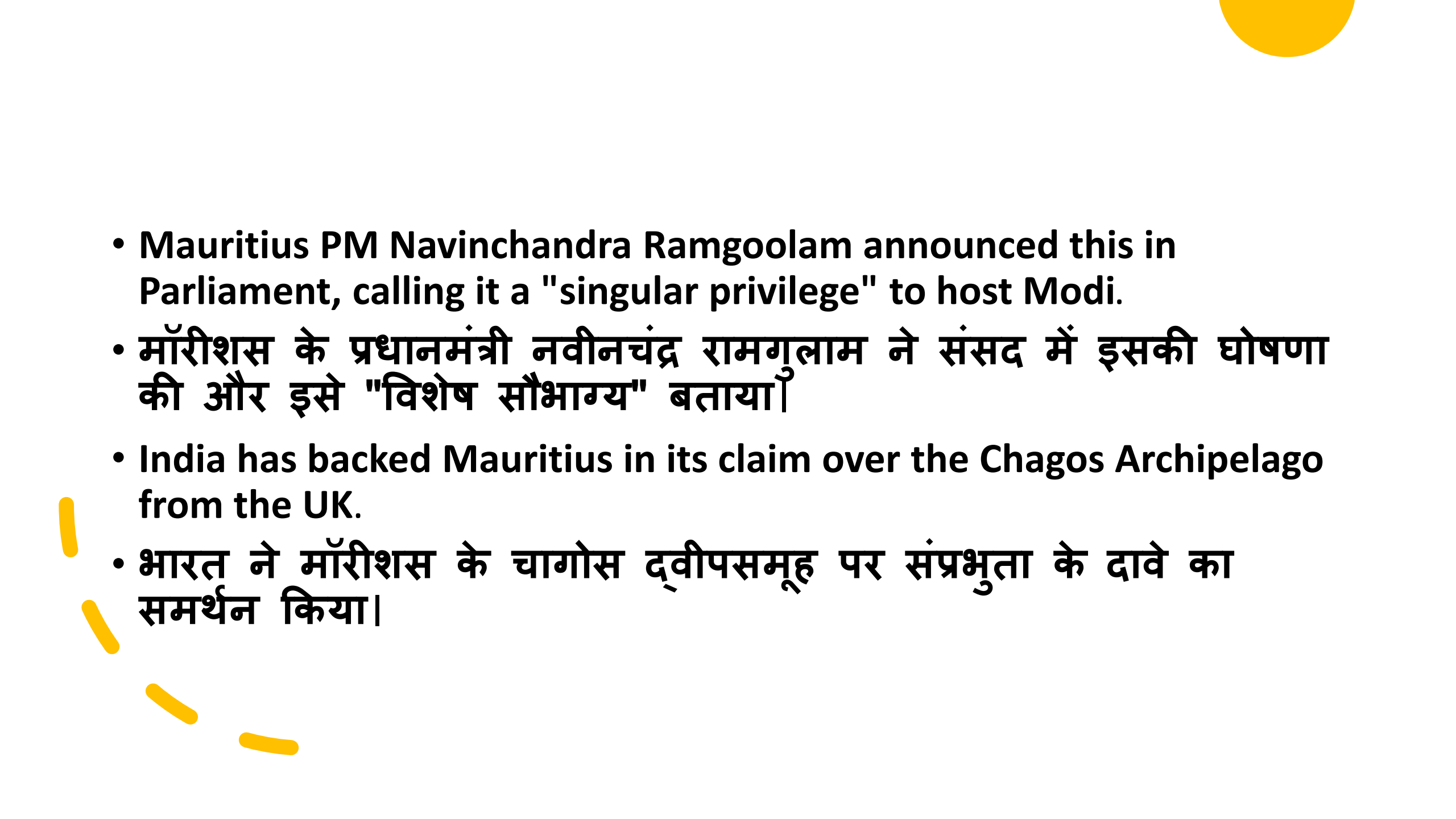
two nations," said Ramgoolam.



President Droupadi Murmu attended Mauritius National Day celebrations

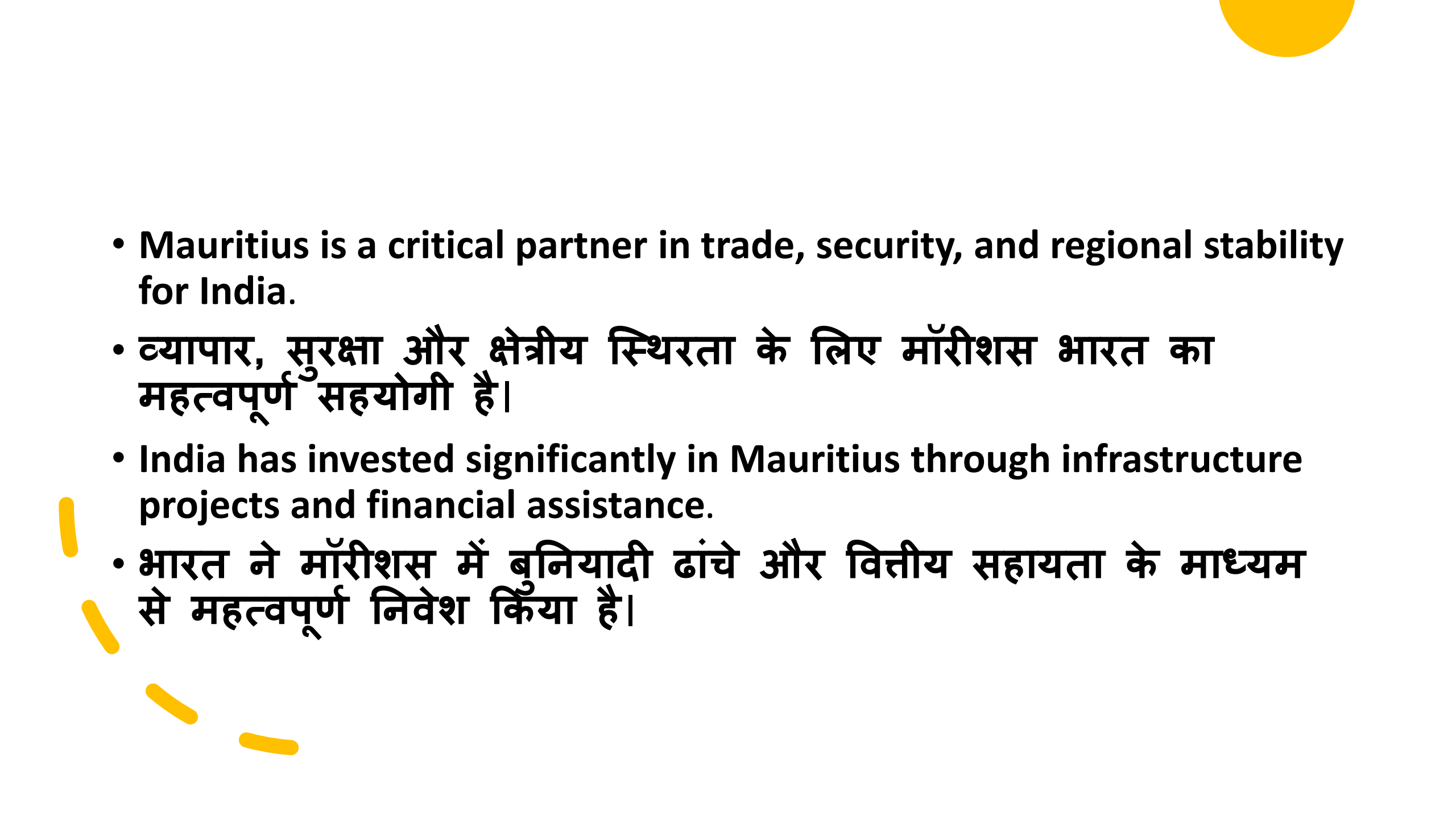
last year as the chief guest. With 70% of its people tracing their roots to India, Mauritius is a key partner for India in the western Indian Ocean.



India last year strongly backed the agreement between the United Kingdom and Mauritius for the return of Mauritian sovereignty over the Chagos archipelago, including Diego Garcia, saying it completed the decolonisation of Mauritius. India has consistently supported Mauritius's claim for sovereignty over Chagos, in line with its long-held position on decolonization and support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations, as well as its longstanding and close partnership with Mauritius.

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- **1** Historical & Political Aspects (ऐतिहासिक और राजनीतिक पक्ष)
 - PM Narendra Modi will visit Mauritius on March 12 as the chief guest for the country's 57th Independence Day celebrations.
 - प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी 12 मार्च को मॉरीशस की 57वीं स्वतंत्रता दिवस समारोह में मुख्य अतिथि के रूप में भाग लेंगे।
 - This is Modi's second time as chief guest, the first being in 2015.
 - यह दूसरी बार है जब पीएम मोदी को यह सम्मान मिला है, पहली बार 2015 में मुख्य अतिथि बने थे।
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- Mauritius PM Navinchandra Ramgoolam announced this in Parliament, calling it a "singular privilege" to host Modi.
 - मॉरीशस के प्रधानमंत्री नवीनचंद्र रामगुलाम ने संसद में इसकी घोषणा की और इसे "विशेष सौभाग्य" बताया।
 - India has backed Mauritius in its claim over the Chagos Archipelago from the UK.
 - भारत ने मॉरीशस के चागोस द्वीपसमूह पर संप्रभुता के दावे का समर्थन किया।

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- **2 Economic & Strategic Relations (आर्थिक और रणनीतिक संबंध)**
 - **70% of Mauritius' population traces its roots to India, making it a key partner in the western Indian Ocean.**
 - **मॉरीशस की 70% जनसंख्या की जड़ें भारत से जुड़ी हैं, जिससे यह पश्चिमी हिंद महासागर में भारत का प्रमुख भागीदार बनता है।**
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- Mauritius is a critical partner in trade, security, and regional stability for India.
 - व्यापार, सुरक्षा और क्षेत्रीय स्थिरता के लिए मॉरीशस भारत का महत्वपूर्ण सहयोगी है।
 - India has invested significantly in Mauritius through infrastructure projects and financial assistance.
 - भारत ने मॉरीशस में बनियादी ढांचे और वित्तीय सहायता के माध्यम से महत्वपूर्ण निवेश किया है।

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- **3** Diplomatic & Cultural Significance (राजनयिक और सांस्कृतिक महत्व)
 - President Droupadi Murmu attended Mauritius' National Day celebrations last year.
 - राष्ट्रपति द्रौपदी मुर्मू ने पिछले वर्ष मॉरीशस के राष्ट्रीय दिवस समारोह में भाग लिया था।
 - Modi's visit symbolizes the close historical and diplomatic ties between the two nations.
 - मोदी की यात्रा भारत और मॉरीशस के बीच घनिष्ठ ऐतिहासिक और राजनयिक संबंधों का प्रतीक है।
 - India's consistent support for Mauritius' sovereignty strengthens bilateral relations.
 - मॉरीशस की संप्रभुता के लिए भारत का सतत समर्थन द्विपक्षीय संबंधों को मजबूत करता है।
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USAID funded 7 projects in India in FY24: report

Finance Ministry report says U.S. agency funded projects worth \$750 million related to agriculture, food security, water, sanitation and hygiene, disaster management, health, and renewable energy

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

Amid a raging political controversy over the United States Agency for International Development's alleged role in influencing Indian elections, the latest annual report of the Finance Ministry has disclosed that USAID funded seven projects estimated at \$750 million in 2023-24.

"Currently, seven projects worth a total budget of \$750 million (approx.) are being implemented by USAID in partnership with Government of India," says the Finance Ministry annual report for 2023-24.

For the financial year 2023-24, an obligation of a total of \$97 million (about ₹825 crore) has been made by USAID under the seven projects, it said.

The Department of Economic Affairs under the Finance Ministry which is the nodal department for bilateral funding arrangements has also shared the



Annual commitment: For 2023-24, USAID has made an obligation of \$97 million under the seven projects, the report said. REUTERS

details of projects funded in 2023-24 in the report.

Funded projects

During the year, no funding was made for enhancing voter turnout but to projects related to agriculture and food security programme; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); renewable energy; disaster management and health.

Besides, funds were committed for Sustainable Forests and Climate Adaptation Programme and

Energy Efficiency Technology Commercialisation and Innovation Project.

Political controversy erupted in India earlier this month after the Elon Musk-led Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) claimed that it had cancelled a \$21 million grant to India to boost "voter turnout".

U.S. President Donald Trump also repeatedly claimed that USAID under the previous administration led by Joe Biden allo-

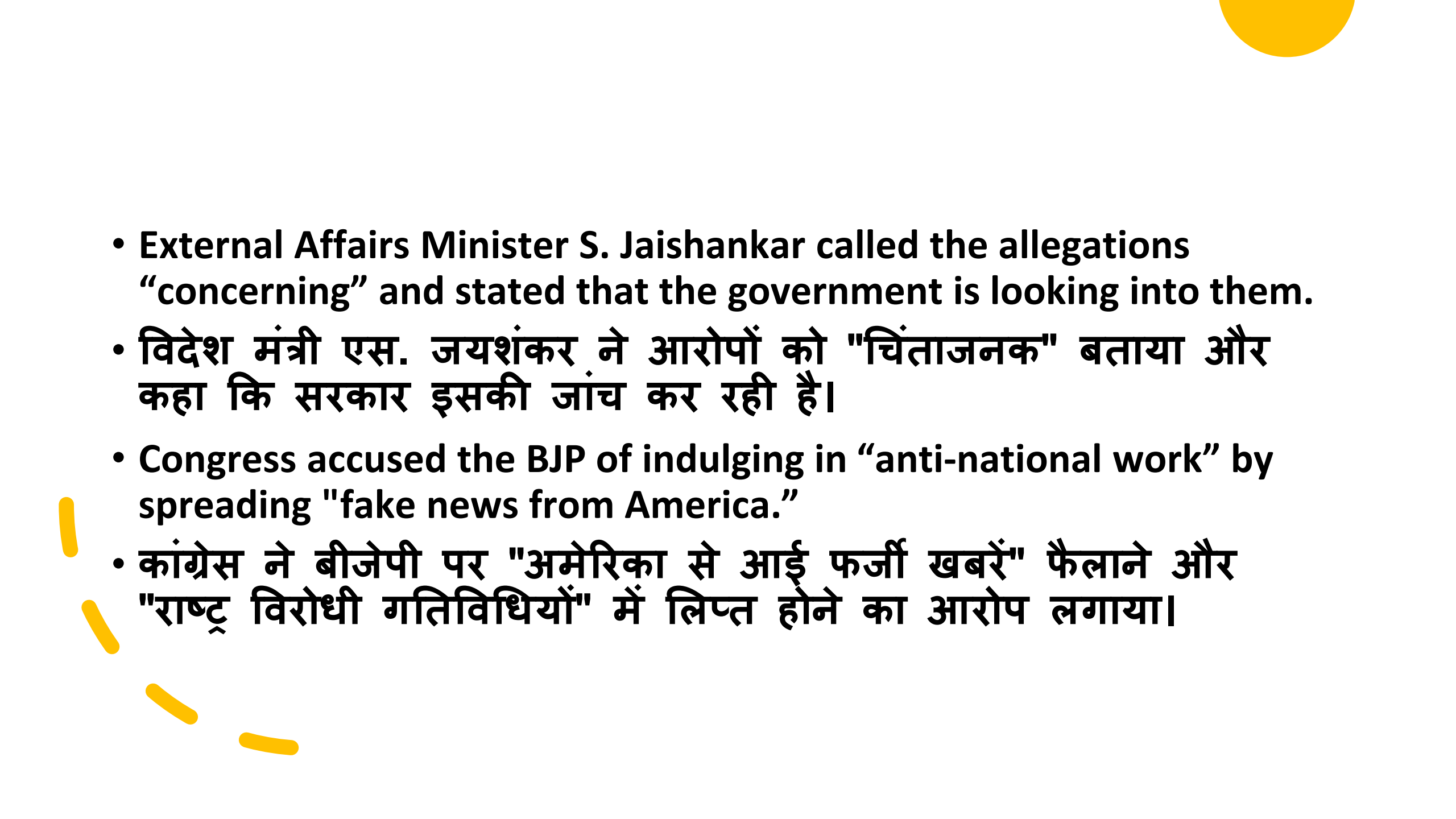
cated \$21 million to India for 'voter turnout'. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Saturday said the information put out by the Trump administration is "concerning" and that the government is looking into it.

'Procession of liars'

The Congress on Sunday accused the BJP of indulging in "anti-national work" by spreading "fake news from America" and asserted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Mr. Jaishankar will also have to answer as to why the government is silent when Mr. Trump and Mr. Musk are "insulting" India repeatedly.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "BJP is a procession of liars and illiterates. The news about \$21 million, on which the BJP and their bootlickers were jumping on, turned out to be fake. The \$21 million in 2022 was not for 'voter turnout' in India, but for Bangladesh."

- **1 Political Aspects (राजनीतिक पक्ष)**
- The report by the Finance Ministry disclosed that USAID funded seven projects in India worth \$750 million in FY 2023-24.
- वित्त मंत्रालय की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, वित्त वर्ष 2023-24 में यूएसएआईडी ने भारत में 750 मिलियन डॉलर की सात परियोजनाओं को वित्त पोषित किया।
- Political controversy erupted when U.S. DOGE claimed that USAID had planned to spend \$21 million for voter turnout in India.
- अमेरिकी DOGE (Department of Government Efficiency) ने दावा किया कि यूएसएआईडी ने भारत में मतदान बढ़ाने के लिए 21 मिलियन डॉलर खर्च करने की योजना बनाई थी, जिससे विवाद खड़ा हो गया।

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- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar called the allegations “concerning” and stated that the government is looking into them.
 - विदेश मंत्री एस. जयशंकर ने आरोपों को "चिंताजनक" बताया और कहा कि सरकार इसकी जांच कर रही है।
 - Congress accused the BJP of indulging in “anti-national work” by spreading “fake news from America.”
 - कांग्रेस ने बीजेपी पर "अमेरिका से आई फर्जी खबरें" फैलाने और "राष्ट्र विरोधी गतिविधियों" में लिप्त होने का आरोप लगाया।

- **2** Funded Projects (वित्त पोषित परियोजनाएं)
- Projects focused on agriculture, food security, water sanitation and hygiene (WASH), disaster management, health, and renewable energy.
- परियोजनाओं का उद्देश्य कृषि, खाद्य सुरक्षा, जल स्वच्छता और स्वच्छता (WASH), आपदा प्रबंधन, स्वास्थ्य और नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा से संबंधित था।
- Some funds were also committed for Sustainable Forests and Climate Adaptation Programme and the Energy Efficiency Technology Commercialisation and Innovation Project.
- कुछ धनराशि सतत वन और जलवायु अनुकूलन कार्यक्रम तथा ऊर्जा दक्षता तकनीक व्यावसायीकरण और नवाचार परियोजना के लिए भी आवंटित की गई थी।

- **3 Economic & Strategic Aspects (आर्थिक और रणनीतिक पक्ष)**
- The total obligation made by USAID under these projects in 2023-24 was \$97 million (approx. ₹825 crores).
- यूएसएआईडी द्वारा 2023-24 में इन परियोजनाओं के तहत कुल 97 मिलियन डॉलर (लगभग ₹825 करोड़) का दायित्व बनाया गया था।
- Bilateral funding arrangements between the USAID and the Government of India have been a significant part of India-US relations.
- यूएसएआईडी और भारत सरकार के बीच द्विपक्षीय वित्तीय व्यवस्थाएं भारत-अमेरिका संबंधों का एक महत्वपूर्ण हिस्सा रही हैं।

- **4 Controversy Over \$21 Million Funding (21 मिलियन डॉलर फंडिंग पर विवाद)**
- **USAID was accused of attempting to influence Indian elections through voter turnout programs.**
- **यूएसएआईडी पर भारतीय चुनावों को प्रभावित करने के लिए मतदान कार्यक्रमों के माध्यम से हस्तक्षेप करने का आरोप लगाया गया।**
- **U.S. President Donald Trump claimed that the previous administration under Joe Biden had allocated \$21 million for voter turnout in India.**

अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप ने दावा किया कि जो बाइडेन प्रशासन ने भारत में मतदान बढ़ाने के लिए 21 मिलियन डॉलर आवंटित किए थे।

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh countered, saying that the amount was actually meant for Bangladesh, not India.

कांग्रेस नेता जयराम रमेश ने पलटवार करते हुए कहा कि यह राशि भारत के लिए नहीं बल्कि बांग्लादेश के लिए थी।

CDU's Merz set to be German Chancellor; AfD makes big gains

Agence France-Presse

BERLIN

Germany's conservatives won Sunday's elections, with their leader Friedrich Merz set to become the next Chancellor, followed by the far-right AfD in second place after record gains, according to exit polls.

If confirmed in the final count, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) roughly doubled its score to at least 19.5%, boosted by fears over immigration and security after a spate of deadly attacks blamed on asylum seekers.

Mr. Merz's CDU/CSU alliance won at least 28.5%,

said the first exit polls from two public broadcasters, crushing the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) of the outgoing Chancellor, Olaf Scholz, which were looking at around 16%.

Irregular immigration

Mr. Merz – a long-time party rival of ex-chancellor Angela Merkel – has vowed a crackdown on irregular immigration. He hopes to win back votes from the AfD and halt its rise, which has stunned many in a country still seeking to atone for its Nazi history.

For now, the AfD – basking in the vocal support of key allies of U.S. President Donald Trump – is set to



Victory move: Friedrich Merz with supporters at the party headquarters in Berlin on Sunday, after the national election. AP

stay in Opposition.

Before Mr. Merz, 69, takes over from the now caretaker chancellor Olaf Scholz, he will have to

forge a new coalition government in Europe's top economy, an often drawn-out process he has vowed to complete by Easter.

This threatens to leave Berlin paralysed for weeks to come as the Trump administration has forced head-spinning change on the world scene and among European allies, especially over the Ukraine war which has raged for three gruelling years.

"The world out there is not waiting for us and it is not waiting for lengthy coalition talks and negotiations," Mr. Merz said after claiming victory, calling for a new government "as quickly as possible".

To build a majority, Mr. Merz would be expected to reach out first to the SPD, though without Mr. Scholz, who has led Germany's tra-

ditional workers' party to a historically poor result.

To gain enough seats, Mr. Merz may also reach out to the Greens, who scored at least 12% in the exit polls, although the CDU's Bavarian sister party the CSU has so far rejected this.

Much depends on the fate of smaller parties in the complex parliamentary arithmetic of the Bundestag. Several hovered around the 5% cutoff mark for re-entry into the Bundestag and feared for their survival.

One of them was the liberal and pro-business Free Democrats (FDP), a potential ally for the conserva-

tives to help them gain a majority.

The final balance will also be influenced by how the smaller far-left parties do in the final count. Die Linke appears to be headed for at least 8.5%, while the "left-wing conservative" newcomer BSW is at 4.7% to 5%.

Campaign vows

Once in power, Mr. Merz has promised a "strong voice" in Europe at a time of chaotic disruption.

In his final campaign event in Munich on Saturday, he said the EU needed to walk tall to be able to "sit at the main table" of the world powers.

1 Political Aspects (राजनीतिक पहलू)

Germany's conservative party CDU/CSU, led by Friedrich Merz, won the national elections and is set to form the next government.

जर्मनी की कंजरवेटिव पार्टी CDU/CSU, फ्रेडरिक मर्ज के नेतृत्व में, राष्ट्रीय चुनाव जीतकर अगली सरकार बनाने जा रही है।

Far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) doubled its vote share to 19.5%, becoming the second-largest party.





फार-राइट अल्टरनेटिव फॉर जर्मनी (AfD) ने अपना वोट शेयर दोगुना कर 19.5% कर लिया और यह दूसरी सबसे बड़ी पार्टी बन गई।

The outgoing Social Democratic Party (SPD), led by Chancellor Olaf Scholz, suffered a major defeat, securing only 16% of the votes.

चांसलर ओलाफ स्कोल्ज़ के नेतृत्व वाली सोशल डेमोक्रेटिक पार्टी (SPD) को करारी हार का सामना करना पड़ा और उसे केवल 16% वोट मिले।

- **[2] Immigration and Security (आप्रवासन और सुरक्षा)**
- Merz has pledged a strict crackdown on irregular immigration, a key factor behind AfD's rising popularity.
- मर्ज ने अवैध आप्रवास पर कड़ी कार्रवाई करने का वादा किया है, जो AfD की बढ़ती लोकप्रियता का एक मुख्य कारण है।
- AfD gained support by blaming asylum seekers for recent deadly attacks in Germany.
- AfD ने जर्मनी में हाल ही में हुए घातक हमलों के लिए शरणार्थियों को जिम्मेदार ठहराते हुए समर्थन हासिल किया।

- **3 Economic and Strategic Aspects (आर्थिक और रणनीतिक पहलू)**
- **Germany is facing economic uncertainty with high inflation and recession concerns.**
- **जर्मनी उच्च मुद्रास्फीति और मंदी की आशंका के कारण आर्थिक अनिश्चितता का सामना कर रहा है।**
- **Merz emphasized the need for Europe to strengthen its economy and be independent in global power politics.**
- **मर्ज ने यूरोप की अर्थव्यवस्था को मजबूत करने और वैश्विक शक्ति राजनीति में आत्मनिर्भर बनने की आवश्यकता पर जोर दिया।**

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- **4 Coalition and Governance Challenges (गठबंधन और शासन की चुनौतियां)**
 - Merz needs to form a coalition government as CDU/CSU does not have an absolute majority.
 - CDU/CSU के पास पूर्ण बहुमत नहीं है, इसलिए मर्ज को गठबंधन सरकार बनानी होगी।
 - Possible coalition partners include SPD, the Greens (12% votes), and the Free Democrats (FDP).
 - संभावित गठबंधन सहयोगियों में SPD, ग्रीन्स (12% वोट) और फ्री डेमोक्रेट्स (FDP) शामिल हो सकते हैं।
 - The coalition talks could take weeks, delaying the formation of a stable government.
 - गठबंधन वार्ता में सप्ताहों का समय लग सकता है, जिससे एक स्थिर सरकार बनने में देरी हो सकती है।
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- **5 Global Impact and EU Relations (वैश्विक प्रभाव और यूरोपीय संघ संबंध)**
- Germany's political shift could impact EU policies, especially on defense and trade.
- जर्मनी का यह राजनीतिक बदलाव यूरोपीय संघ की नीतियों, विशेष रूप से रक्षा और व्यापार पर प्रभाव डाल सकता है।
- Merz has called for Europe to "sit at the main table" in global power dynamics, signaling a more assertive EU role.
- मर्ज ने यूरोप को "वैश्विक शक्ति संतुलन में मुख्य भूमिका निभाने" का आह्वान किया, जिससे EU की अधिक सक्रिय भूमिका का संकेत मिलता है।

- **◆ Conclusion (निष्कर्ष)**
- **The CDU/CSU's victory marks a shift in German politics, with a stronger stance on immigration and economic policies.**
- **CDU/CSU की जीत जर्मन राजनीति में एक बदलाव का संकेत देती है, जिसमें आप्रवास और आर्थिक नीतियों पर अधिक सख्त रुख अपनाया जाएगा।**
- **AfD's rise indicates growing far-right influence, which could reshape German and European policies.**
- **AfD की बढ़त फार-राइट के बढ़ते प्रभाव को दर्शाती है, जो जर्मनी और यूरोप की नीतियों को प्रभावित कर सकता है।**

The coming weeks will be crucial for coalition-building, as Germany navigates political and economic challenges.

आने वाले सप्ताह गठबंधन निर्माण के लिए महत्वपूर्ण होंगे, क्योंकि जर्मनी राजनीतिक और आर्थिक चुनौतियों से निपटने की तैयारी कर रहा है।

IN BRIEF



American Airlines flight to New Delhi diverted to Rome

An American Airlines flight from New York to Delhi was forced to divert to Rome on Sunday evening. The Italian Air Force scrambled fighter jets to escort the aircraft to the airport. American Airlines Flight AA292 took off from New York on Saturday for a 14-hour journey. With four hours left to reach the destination, the aircraft took a U-turn after crossing Azerbaijan, according to flight tracking website Flight radar 24. Flight radar reported that the diversion was due to a bomb threat. However, there was no official statement from the airline. After being escorted by Italian Eurojet fighter planes, the flight landed at Rome's Fiumicino airport.

India to host a conference on women peacekeepers

India will host a two-day conference beginning Monday on women peacekeepers at UN missions to highlight their contributions. The conference will bring together women peacekeepers from 35 troop-contributing countries from the Global South. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will deliver the keynote address. The conference is being organised by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), in collaboration with the Defence Ministry and the Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping. The two-day conference for Women Peacekeepers on the theme "Women in Peacekeeping: A Global Perspective" will take place in New Delhi on February 24 and 25," the MEA said.

Health Ministry bans export of drugs containing Tapentadol, Carisoprodol

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Following reports about the export of unapproved combination drugs containing Tapentadol and Carisoprodol by Aveso Pharmaceuticals, Mumbai, to certain countries in West Africa, the Health Ministry on Sunday issued a stop notice order and immediate withdrawal of export no-objection certificate (NOC) and manufacturing licenses for the combinations.

Tapentadol is an opioid medication that is used to treat moderate to severe pain. Carisoprodol is a muscle relaxant which works on the centres in the brain and spinal cord to relieve pain.

Both Tapentadol and Carisoprodol are individually approved by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) in India. Tapentadol is approved in 50, 75, and 100 mg tablet forms, as well as 100, 150, and 200 mg extended-release tablets. However, the combination of Tapentadol and Carisoprodol is not approved in India. Neither of these drugs is included in the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) list in India," the Health Ministry said.



Tapentadol and Carisoprodol are not part of the NDPS list in India. GETTY IMAGES

In a release issued on Sunday, the Ministry said

to ensure regulatory compliance across the pharmaceutical sector, the CDSCO, in collaboration with State regulators, initiated risk-based inspections of drug manufacturing and testing firms in December 2022. As of now, 505 units have been inspected, resulting in 694 actions being taken. These actions include stop production orders, stop testing orders, licence suspensions/cancellations, and warning letters, and show-cause notices, depending on the severity of non-compliance.

Comprehensive audit
Listing the actions taken by the Health Ministry, the release said a joint team from the CDSCO and the State Regulatory Authorities conducted a comprehensive audit of Aveso Pharmaceuticals between February 21 and 22. The findings from

the audit led to the issuance of a stop activity order, halting all operations at the company's premises.

Following the audit, the investigation team seized all raw materials, in-process materials, and finished products. Approximately 1.3 crore tablets/capsules and 26 batches of APIs (Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients) of Tapentadol and Carisoprodol were seized to prevent further distribution of these potentially dangerous drugs.

The Maharashtra FDA issued a stop production order on Saturday and issued communications to all State Drugs Control Offices to immediately withdraw export NOCs and manufacturing licences granted for any combination of Tapentadol and Carisoprodol.

Women achievers to take charge of PM's social media accounts for a day

In *Mam Ki Baar* address, PM says the achievers will share their insights on his social media accounts to mark International Women's Day; he also praises ISRO's recent feats, underscores the importance of AI and the country's growth in the field

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Days after Delhi got its fourth woman Chief Minister, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his monthly *Mam Ki Baar* radio address on Sunday, highlighted the contribution of women achievers who would share their insights with fellow Indians.

Mr. Modi said Women's Day was a special occasion to salute "our *Matri Shakti*". "In our culture, respect for daughters has been paramount. The *Matri Shakti* (motherly energy) of the country also played a big role in our freedom struggle and creation of the Constitution. I am sharing with all of you what Hansa Mehta had said while presenting our National Flag in the Constituent Assembly, in her own voice," he said, before an audio clip of the freedom fighter's soaring letter.

"Hansa Mehta brought to the fore the contribution of women from all over the country, right from the



Making a mark: Prime Minister Narendra Modi said participation of women in the space sector has been on the rise in the country.

making of our national flag to sacrificing their lives for its sake. She was the belief that the saffron colour of our Tricolour also represents this sentiment. She had expressed confidence that our woman power would make its valuable contribution for a strong and prosperous India. Today, her words are proving to be true," he said.

The Prime Minister said on the occasion of Women's Day, he would hand over his social media accounts, such as those on X and Instagram, to women who had achieved success in myriad fields, who had

innovated and created a unique identity for themselves in various fields."

"If you want to avail yourself of this opportunity, become a part of this experiment through the special forum created on Namoo, share your message with the whole world through my X and Instagram accounts," he said.

Growth in space sector
Mr. Modi talked about the growing opportunities for the youth and the country's recent achievements in the space sector. He said over the past 10 years

alone, around 460 satellites, including those of other countries, were launched.

Another important aspect witnessed in recent years was that the participation of women was consistently on the rise among our team of space scientists, he said.

About "National Science Day" on February 28, he urged the youth and children to spend one day as a "scientist", visit a research lab, planetarium, or space centre.

Importance of AI
Underscoring the importance of artificial intelligence, Mr. Modi spoke about his recent visit to Paris to participate in an AI conference.

"There, the world praised India's progress in this sector. We are also getting to see how people of our country are using AI today," he said citing the example of the Dasam Kailash, a government schoolteacher in Adilabad, Telangana who creates digital music in Koinam language.

Mr. Modi spoke about the recently scheduled National Games in Uttarakhand, which saw the parti-

icipation of over 11,000 athletes from all over the country.

"The number of teenage champions in this year's National Games is astonishing. Fifteen-year-old shooter Gavin Antony, 16-year-old hammer thrower Anushka Yadav from Uttar Pradesh and 19-year-old pole vaulter Dew Kumar Meena from Madhya Pradesh have proved that India's sporting future lies in the hands of a very talented generation," he added.

During the address, Mr. Modi spoke about wild animals which are deeply embedded in our history and culture.

"Many animals are also observed as the vehicles of our gods and goddesses. I would also like to thank my tribal brothers and sisters, because they actively participate in work related to wildlife protection," he said.

About the ongoing Board examinations, Mr. Modi wished the students well and asked them to appear for papers without any stress and with a positive spirit.

He also talked about various social welfare initiatives.

XR Creator Hackathon throws open opportunities for myriad aspirants

Devesh K. Pandey
NEW DELHI

Born with a clubfoot, S. Bala Subramanyam, 27, a postgraduate in computer science, was no stranger to mobility challenges and societal biases despite holding two Extended Reality (XR) patents, he struggled to find opportunities in the industry. However, the XR Creator Hackathon, organised under the Information and Broadcasting Ministry's "WAVES" initiative, has provided him with a platform to showcase his ideas.

Wavelaps founder Ashutosh Kumar, who is the nodal officer of the hackathon, told *The Hindu*, "Mr. Subramanyam said the XR industry had been difficult to break through the world to him".

Mr. Subramanyam's team, XR Titans, is developing a Virtual Reality so-



Solving problems: The challenge saw registration of over 2,200 aspirants, from hobbyists to academicians. SPECIFIC/SHREYAS

lution for enabling remote medical diagnosis and surgery using 3D Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) visualisations. While physiotherapy often is painful, repetitive, and expensive, he is of the view that it can be transformed into an interactive experience using XR-based games and training.

The challenge which was launched in August 2024, saw registration of over 2,200 aspirants - ranging

Over 62 crore devotees took holy dip at Maha Kumbh

Press-Trust of India
AGRA/MATHURA/PRITHVI NAGAR

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said 62 crore devotees had come to Maha Kumbh so far and out of about 120 crore *Sanatan Dharma* followers in the world, half of them had already taken the holy dip.

Addressing the seers in the presence of Kanchi Kankoti Peeth Shankaracharya Shankara Vijayanendra Sarawati at the Maha Kumbh, Mela Mahotsava held at Mahakumbh Nagar, he said, "Which is that religion and sect in the world where such a large number of devotees are coming and expressing their faith within a specific time frame?"

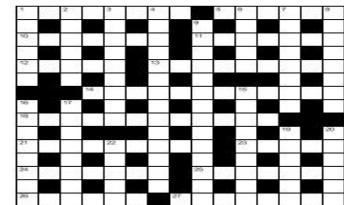
He said, "This [Kumbh] has always been a medium for the followers of *Sanatan Dharma* to express their gratitude towards their seers, the 'Rishi' tradition and their devotion. Devotion and their festivals and celebrations." He added that the Kanchi Kankoti Peeth had always been at the forefront of promoting *Sanatan Dharma*. Speaking at an event in Agra, he said the gathering of such a large number of people during a certain period in itself is "one of the rarest events of the century".

He also talked about various social welfare initiatives.

He also talked about various social welfare initiatives.

from hobbyists, working professionals, students, freelance professionals, entrepreneurs, and academicians to social workers - from about 250 cities in over 25 States and Union Territories. About 80% of the participants were women.

The XR Creator Hackathon is being organised by Wavelaps in association with the WAVES initiative of the Ministry. Bharat XR and XDC, two XR communities within India, are co-organisers. With the WAVES grant, the final event from May 1 to 5, the top five teams will showcase their innovations. The finalists are exploring various domains for XR/VR applications. Many of them are focusing on "healthcare, fitness and well-being" for solutions enhancing medical training, mental wellness, and personalised fitness experiences.

TH CROSSWORD 14416
(Set by Dr. X)

Across

1. Tiptoe show after drinking liquor in plot (8)
2. Groom, tense around beginning of amorous encounter (6)
3. Uptie as money used is fake (7)
4. Experienced starter of eggplant and peanut salad (5,2)
5. Tangle with England's captain after tense victory (5)
6. Adopts country ways, change is surreal (5)

To solve this puzzle online, get access to our crossword site at <https://www.press-trust.com/think/gp/>



SUDOKU

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

Solution to previous puzzle

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Prapatti, the prescribed way

Parasara Bhattar, in his Rangaraja Stava, first praises his father Kooratadivan and then his own Acharya - Embar. His next verse of praise is about Ramanujacharya, who, he says, destroyed the fear of Kali. And what was the weapon that Ramanujacharya used for this? It was the yantra called bhakti. In Visishtadvaita, the path to reach Sri Valmunka and to serve at the Lord's feet is prapatti, said P.B. Ranganamanam in a discourse. "That being the case, we should take the reference to bhakti here in this Rangaraja Stava verse as referring to prapatti."

For Visishtadvaitas, what is meant by bhakti is not what we usually understand as bhakti yoga. The bhakti that Visishtadvaitas has, is a result of his prapatti. The *nava vidha bhaktis* are the fruits of his prapatti. They are the gifts given to him by Lord Narayana, because he has surrendered to Him. Prapatti is said to be one of the 32 *Brhama vidyas*. While following the other *Brhama vidyas* may not be possible for everyone, prapatti, by its very nature, is simple and can be resorted to by everyone. While praising Alavandar, Parasara Bhattar again uses the word bhakti with thorns, making life difficult for those traversing that path, and Alavandar removed these thorns. But what were these thorns? They were the arguments of those who questioned the validity of the Vedas. Again, when he next talks about Nathamuni, Bhattar talks of bhakti. Here, it should be taken to mean prapatti. Bhattar says that Nathamuni was like a clove, which rained three things - disregard for anything other than the Lord, jnana about the nature of the Paramatma and love for the Lord.

India to host a conference on women peacekeepers

India will host a two-day conference beginning Monday on women peacekeepers at UN missions to highlight their contributions. The conference will bring together women peacekeepers from 35 troop-contributing countries from the Global South. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will deliver the keynote address. The conference is being organised by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), in collaboration with the Defence Ministry and the Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping . “The first-ever Conference for Women Peacekeepers on the theme “Women in peacekeeping: a Global South perspective” will take place in New Delhi on February 24 and 25,” the MEA said.

HOW HIV SELF-TESTING CAN BECOME A GAME-CHANGER FOR MIZORAM

ANURADHA MASCARENHAS

PUNE, FEBRUARY 23

A STUDY by Pune-based Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Translational Virology and AIDS Research (formerly NARI) and Mizoram University has highlighted how HIV self-testing has helped many young people in Mizoram get tested for the first time. The state has the highest HIV prevalence in the country.

“This innovative approach empowers vulnerable youth by providing a private, convenient, and stigma-free way to know their status,” study co-author Dr Samiran Panda, former Additional Director General, Indian Council of Medical Research, told *The Indian Express*.

Human immunodeficiency virus or HIV attacks the body’s immune system. If left untreated, HIV can lead to AIDS, a deadly disease. However, modern anti-retroviral therapy (ART) regimens can help people with HIV live long and healthy lives.

The virus is transmitted via contact with infected body fluids, often through sexual contact or contaminated needles.

HIV burden in Mizoram

An estimated 25.44 lakh people live with HIV in India. Among all states, Mizoram has the highest prevalence of HIV in the adult population. According to *Sankalak* (2024), the flagship publication of the National AIDS Control Programme, 2.73% of all adults in the state are infected with HIV – 13 times the national average.

According to the National AIDS Control Organisation’s ‘HIV Sentinel Surveillance Technical Brief 2016-17’, 19.8% of individuals in Mizoram who inject drugs were infected with HIV, as were 24.7% of female sex workers – also highest in India.

The study & HIV self-testing

Mizoram witnessed an uptick in an-

nual new HIV infections in 2017/2018, following which Pune-based ICMR-NITVAR planned a series of focussed investigations and “rapid situation and response assessments”, aiming to draw upon community voices. The latest study was one such assessment.

“The aim was also to investigate the potential of HIV self-test to reach individuals who otherwise might not access testing or anti-retroviral therapy,” Dr Rao said.

HIV self-testing is a process in which individuals collect their blood and saliva specimens, and themselves interpret the results using a test kit. Such self-testing has been adopted by nearly 41 countries ever since the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2016 released guidelines for the same. India is yet to introduce guidelines.

This is why, beyond making available self-test kits, the study looked at how implementation of a self-testing program could be done. Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with HIV program officials, religious leaders, community influencers, and key population groups. Information gathered here guided strategic communication, community engagement, and the delivery of HIV self-test kits.

Specifically, linkages were established with community-based organisations, church-based youth associations, college festivals, outreach sites at street corners, pharmacies, and community events.

First-time testers

Published on February 5 in the journal *Frontiers of Public Health*, the study reported that some 2,101 youths in Aizawl came forward to take HIV tests in the six months when strategised HIV self-testing was implemented. As many as 1,772 of these (or 84%) were first-time testers.

A high proportion (85%) of youths aged 18–24 years who tested positive in the self-tests went on to take confirmatory tests, and were linked with ART.

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) weakens the immune system, and if untreated, leads to AIDS.

HIV (ह्यूमन इम्यूनोडेफिशिएंसी वायरस) शरीर की रोग प्रतिरोधक क्षमता को कमजोर करता है, और यदि बिना इलाज के छोड़ दिया जाए, तो यह एड्स में बदल सकता है।

HIV self-testing is a private, convenient, and stigma-free way for individuals to check their HIV status.

HIV सेल्फ-टेस्टिंग एक निजी, सुविधाजनक और कलंक-मुक्त तरीका है जिससे व्यक्ति अपने HIV की स्थिति की जांच कर सकते हैं।

2 HIV Burden in Mizoram (मिजोरम में HIV का भार)

Mizoram has the highest HIV prevalence in India, with 2.73% of adults infected – 13 times the national average.

मिजोरम में भारत में सबसे अधिक HIV प्रसार है, जहाँ 2.73% वयस्क संक्रमित हैं – जो राष्ट्रीय औसत से 13 गुना अधिक है।

Key vulnerable groups include injecting drug users (19.8% infected) and female sex workers (24.7% infected).

मुख्य रूप से संवेदनशील समूहों में इंजेक्टिंग ड्रग उपयोगकर्ता (19.8% संक्रमित) और महिला यौनकर्मी (24.7% संक्रमित) शामिल हैं।

3 Importance of Self-Testing (सेल्फ-टेस्टिंग का महत्व)

Encourages first-time testers who may avoid traditional testing due to stigma or fear.



पहली बार टेस्ट करने वालों को प्रोत्साहित करता है, जो पारंपरिक परीक्षण से कलंक या डर के कारण बचते हैं।


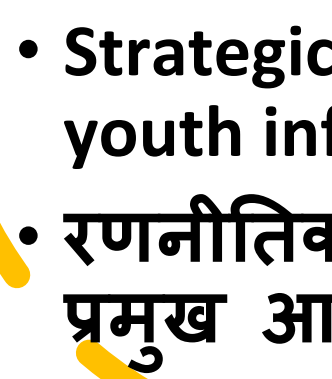
Reduces the gap in HIV detection and ensures timely access to anti-retroviral therapy (ART).

HIV का जल्दी पता लगाने में मदद करता है और समय पर एंटी-रेट्रोवायरल थेरेपी (ART) की सुविधा सुनिश्चित करता है।

85% of youth aged 18-24 who tested positive through self-testing went for confirmation tests and linked to treatment.

18-24 वर्ष के 85% युवाओं ने जो सेल्फ-टेस्ट में पॉजिटिव पाए गए, उन्होंने पुष्टि परीक्षण कराए और इलाज से जुड़े।


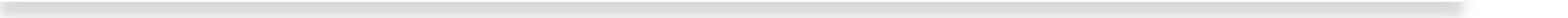
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- **4 Government and Research Initiatives (सरकारी और शोध पहल)**
 - Pune-based ICMR-NARI and Mizoram University conducted the study to analyze self-testing's impact.
 - पुणे स्थित ICMR-NARI और मिजोरम विश्वविद्यालय ने इस अध्ययन का आयोजन किया ताकि सेल्फ-टेस्टिंग के प्रभावों का विश्लेषण किया जा सके।
 - ICMR initiated targeted investigations and rapid response assessments to engage local communities.
 - ICMR ने लक्षित जांच और त्वरित प्रतिक्रिया आकलन की शुरुआत की ताकि स्थानीय समुदायों को शामिल किया जा सके।
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- **5 Implementation Strategies (कार्यान्वयन रणनीतियाँ)**
 - Community-based organizations, colleges, festivals, and pharmacies were involved in delivering self-testing kits.
 - स्वयं-परीक्षण किटों को वितरित करने में सामुदायिक संगठनों, कॉलेजों, त्योहारों और फार्मेशियों को शामिल किया गया।
 - Strategic communication and engagement of religious leaders, youth influencers, and key populations helped expand outreach.
 - रणनीतिक संचार और धार्मिक नेताओं, युवा प्रभावशाली व्यक्तियों और प्रमुख आबादी की भागीदारी ने पहुंच को विस्तारित करने में मदद की।
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- |
- ◆ Conclusion (निष्कर्ष)
- HIV self-testing has the potential to be a game-changer in Mizoram by improving early detection and reducing stigma.
- HIV सेल्फ-टेस्टिंग मिजोरम में शुरुआती पहचान में सुधार कर और कलंक को कम करके एक क्रांतिकारी बदलाव ला सकता है।
- The success of this model can serve as a blueprint for other high-risk regions in India.
- इस मॉडल की सफलता भारत के अन्य उच्च-जोखिम वाले क्षेत्रों के लिए एक उदाहरण के रूप में कार्य कर सकती है।



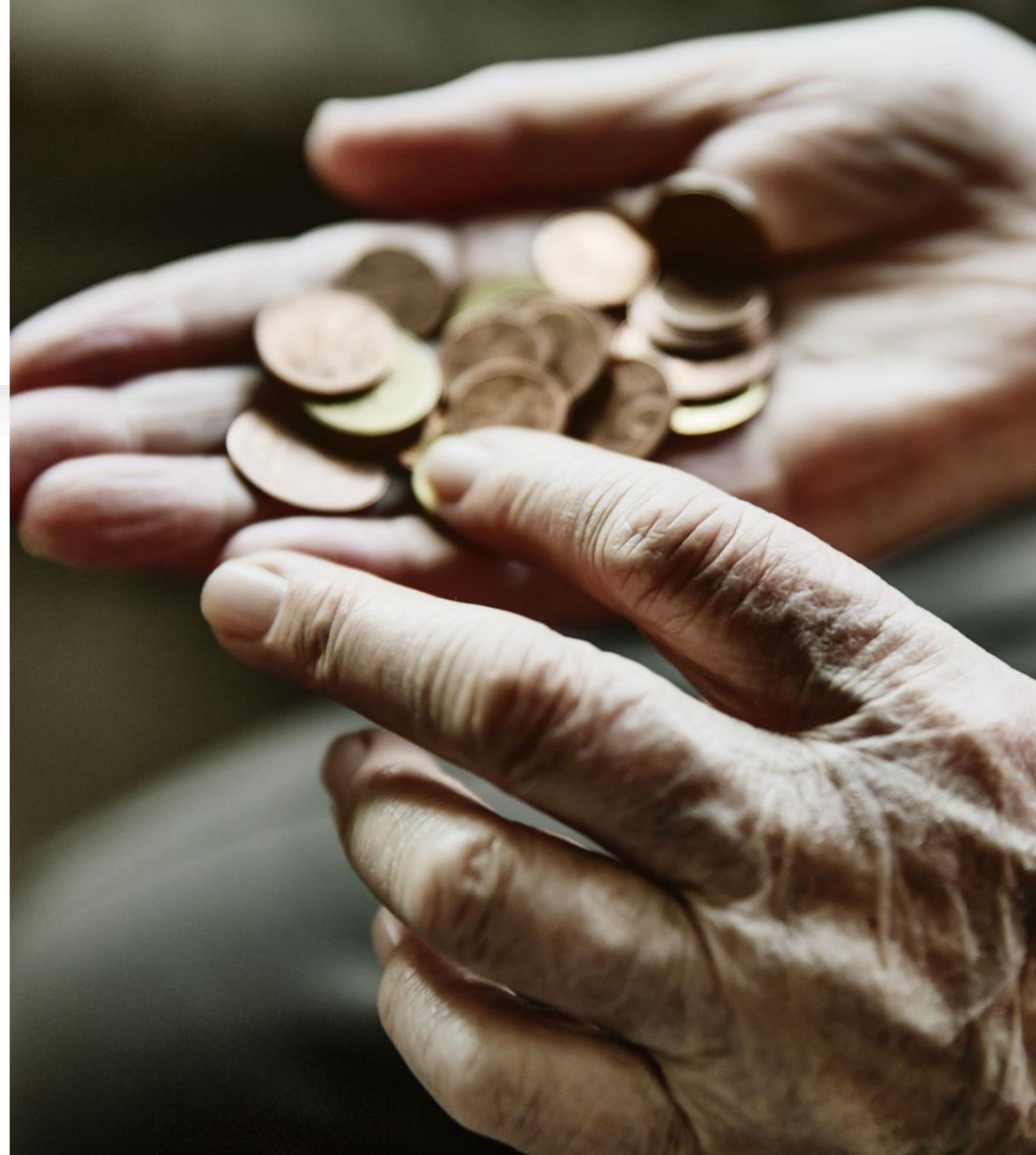
Rupee & Dollar Swap Auctions

- 
- RBI announced a \$10 billion USD/INR buy/sell swap auction to inject ₹86,000 crore into the banking system
- 

- It is a tool used by **RBI** to **manage liquidity** in the economy and **stabilize currency volatility**.
- Banks **sell US dollars** to RBI in exchange for rupees in the first leg and agree to **repurchase dollars at a future date**.
- **Who Conducts It?**
 - The **Reserve Bank of India RBI** , as part of its monetary policy interventions, executes the **swap auctions**.

- How It Works?

- First Leg (Buy Phase): Banks **sell USD** to RBI and receive **Indian Rupees (INR)**.
- Reverse Leg (Sell Phase): Banks **buy back USD** from RBI at a pre-determined price at the end of the swap period.



- **Impact on the Indian Economy:**

- **Improves Banking Liquidity:** Injects Rs 86,000 crore into the banking system, addressing the current liquidity shortfall of Rs 1.7 lakh crore.
- **Enhances Monetary Policy Transmission:** Ensures that interest rates in money markets align with RBI's policy stance.
- **Strengthens the Rupee:** Reduces depreciation pressure on INR due to forex market fluctuations.
- **Supports Economic Growth:** Enables banks to lend more to businesses and industries, promoting investment and consumption.
- **Controls Inflation Risks:** Provides liquidity without increasing inflationary pressures, as money is infused against future forex obligations.



Volcanic Eruptions in News




**Mount Etna
(Italy)** erupted,
spewing lava sprays
and attracting
thousands of
tourists, creating
safety risks.



**Mount Dukono
(Indonesia)** erupted,
emitting a 2,000-
metre ash cloud,
prompting an
aviation warning and
public safety
advisory.




- 
- **Mount Etna (Italy):**
 - **Location: Sicily, Italy**
 - **Type: Stratovolcano, Europe's highest and most active volcano (~3,350 m).**
 - **Features:**
 - The current eruption is from the **Bocca Nuova crater** (“new mouth”).
 - **Lava flows interacting with snow** pose risks of **rock explosions**.



A large vulture is shown in flight, its wings fully extended, soaring over a savanna landscape. The bird's feathers are a mix of brown and tan, and its wings are spread wide, showing the intricate structure of the feathers. The background features a clear blue sky and a blurred horizon with green trees and distant hills. The text "Vulture Population Increases" is overlaid in white, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

Vulture Population Increases

- 
- Madhya Pradesh now has the highest number of vultures in India, with a population of 12,981 vultures, as per the recent state-level census.
 - **About Vultures**
 - Vultures are large, social raptors that **live on every continent except Antarctica and Australia.**
 - They live predominantly in the **tropics and subtropics.**
 - There are 23 species of vultures found in the world out of **which 9 species are found in India.**
 - **Nine species and their IUCN Status:**



BRING BACK THE VULTURES

WHAT IF THE VULTURES ARE GONE ?

Nine species of vultures are found in India, most of them threatened. They are the most effective scavengers, and play a vital role in keeping the environment healthy and stopping the spread of diseases from carcass by feeding on it quickly and efficiently. No other scavenger can replace this service.

With very low populations of vultures, free-ranging dog populations have also increased. Dogs are carriers of rabies and other diseases which can affect humans and animals.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO SAVE VULTURES?

- Stop the use of drugs toxic to vultures.
- Prevent poisoning of animals and carcasses.
- Infrastructure, including for electricity, should be sensitively sited.
- Do not disturb their roosting and nesting sites.
- Gain knowledge about vulture species.

Red-headed Vulture **CR**



Egyptian Vulture **EN**



Slender-billed Vulture **CR**



White-rumped Vulture **CR**



Himalayan Griffon **NT**



Eurasian Griffon **LC**



Cinereous Vulture **NT**



Indian Long-billed Vulture **CR**



Bearded Vulture **NT**



IUCN CATEGORIES

ILLUSTRATIONS & DESIGN: Richa Ravda; REFERENCE IMAGES: Aditya Roy
© 1984 Panda Symbol WWF - World Wide Fund For Nature (Formerly World Wildlife Fund) ® WWF is a WWF Registered Trademark



- **Importance**

- They are nature's efficient scavengers and play a crucial role in the ecosystem by removing carrion, such as cattle carcasses, keeping the environment clean.
- They are the primary natural animal disposal system in India.
- A decrease in vulture population can lead to an increase in rats and feral dogs, raising the risk of disease spread.

A photograph of a red carpet event. In the foreground, a woman in a light-colored coat and black shoes walks away from the camera, carrying a black handbag. To her right, the lower legs and feet of several other people are visible, including a man in a suit. Long, dark shadows are cast across the red carpet, indicating a low sun position. The background shows a grey paved area. The text "Vienna Convention" is overlaid in white, sans-serif font in the center of the image.

Vienna Convention

-
- The Ministry of External Affairs has asked Kenya to revoke the immunity of a Kenyan diplomat's son so that he can be prosecuted for the alleged sexual assault of a minor girl.
 - **About**
 - The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations is a key international treaty that **governs the conduct of diplomacy between independent states.**
 - It was adopted in **1961**, and came into force in **1964.**

It provides a framework for the functioning of diplomatic missions, the protection of diplomats, and the maintenance of peaceful relations between states.



Privileges and Immunities: Diplomats cannot be arrested or detained and are exempt from the jurisdiction of the host country's courts in most cases.

Family members of a diplomat who live with them and are not citizens of the host country receive the same immunity as the diplomat.

The immunity can only be waived by the sending country.



- **Responsibilities of Diplomats:**

- While diplomats enjoy privileges, they must also respect the laws and regulations of the host country.
- Any actions that are inconsistent with the diplomatic purpose can lead to the recall or expulsion of the diplomat.

Time's Women Of The Year 2025 List



A biologist from Assam, Purnima Devi Barman, was featured on the **Time's Women Of The Year 2025 list.**

About

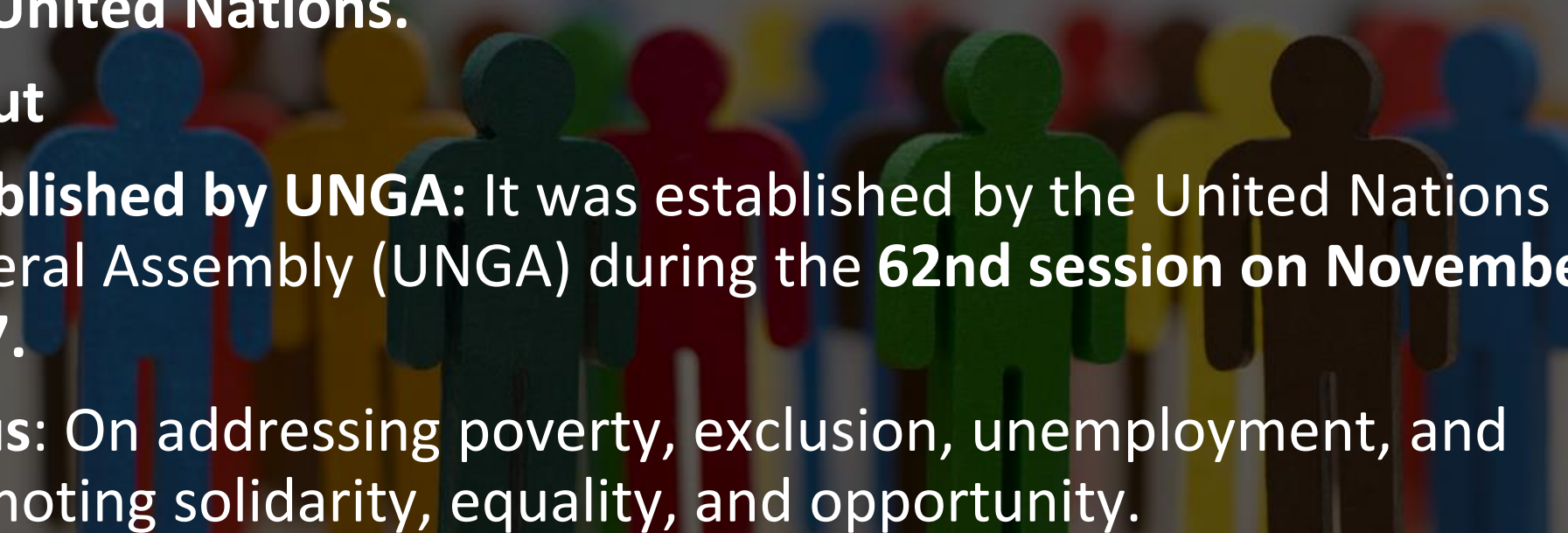
Purnima Devi Barman is the **only Indian woman on Time's 2025 Women of the Year list.**

- The list includes notable women such as actress Nicole Kidman and Gisele Pelicot, a survivor of sexual violence who became an advocate for the cause.

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- In 2007, Barman's intervened to save a tree home to **greater adjutant storks** in Assam, inspired by the birds' vulnerability.
 - She found the **Hargila Army**, a group of 20,000 women who protect the **storks' nests and educate about their conservation.**
 - The population of greater adjutant storks in Assam grew from **450 in 2007 to over 1,800 in 2023**, with the **bird's conservation status** improved from "endangered" to "near threatened."

A pair of ornate brass scales of justice is shown against a light background. The scales are made of dark metal with intricate carvings on the base. The two pans are suspended by chains and are currently empty. The text "World Day of Social Justice" is overlaid in white, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

World Day of Social Justice

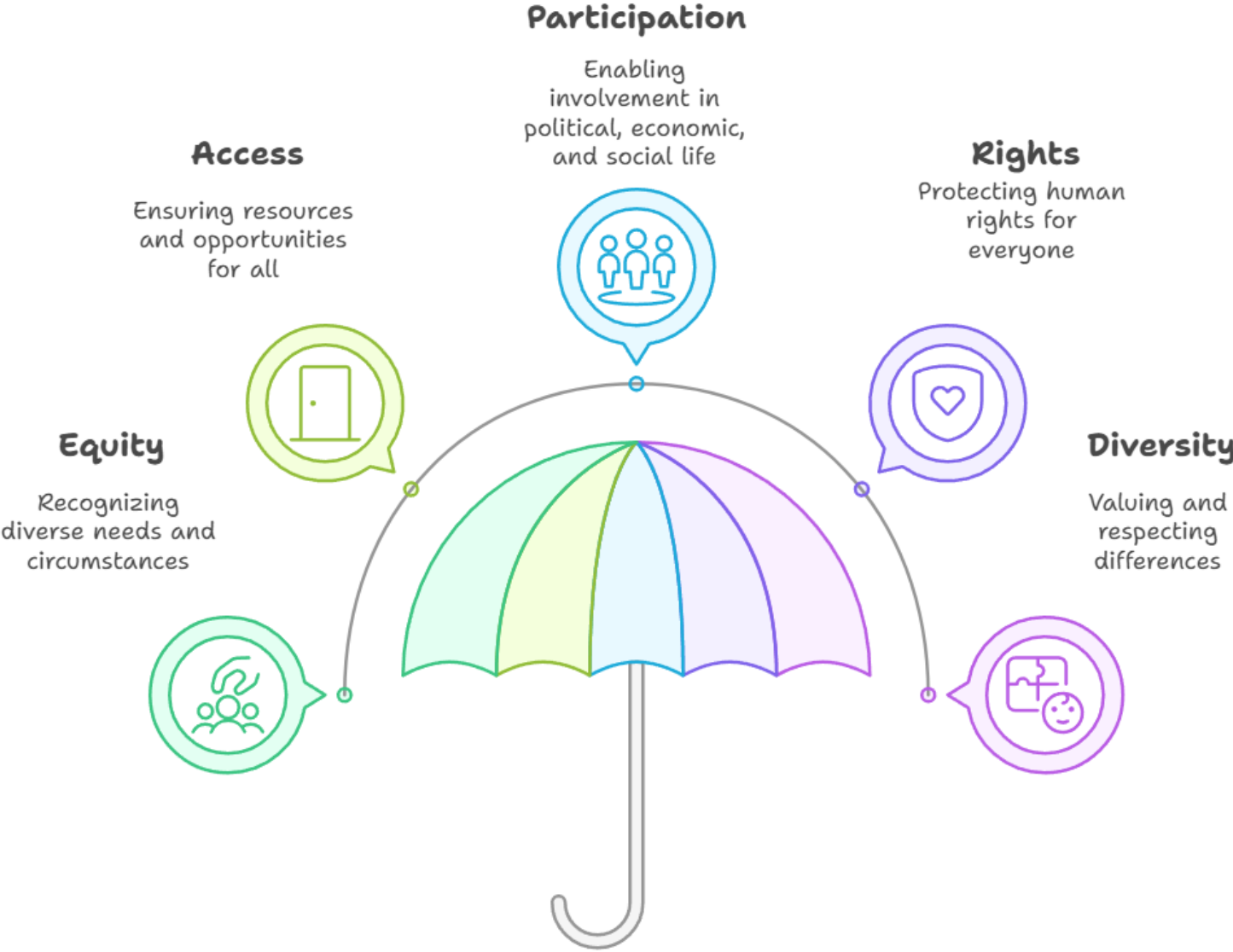
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- World Day of Social Justice is observed annually on **February 20th by the United Nations.**
 - **About**
 - **Established by UNGA:** It was established by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) during the **62nd session on November 26, 2007.**
 - **Focus:** On addressing poverty, exclusion, unemployment, and promoting solidarity, equality, and opportunity.



- **Key Constitutional Provisions:**

- **Preamble:** Ensures social, economic, and political justice, guarantees equality, and promotes fraternity for national unity.
- **Fundamental Rights (Part III):**
 - Article 23: Prohibits human trafficking and forced labor.
 - Article 24: Bans child labor in hazardous occupations.

Pillars of Social Justice



- **Other than the Fundamental Rights, which of the following parts of the Constitution of India reflect/reflects the principles and provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)? (2020)**

1.Preamble

2.Directive Principles of State Policy

3.Fundamental Duties

- **Select the correct answer using the code given below:**

- (a) 1 and 2 only

- (b) 2 only

- (c) 1 and 3 only

- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Word of the day

Salubrious:

promoting health; favourable to health of mind or body

Synonym: healthy

Usage: *This is not the most salubrious campsite.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/
salubriouspro

**International Phonetic
Alphabet:** /sə'l(j)u:.bɪ.əs/

1

10 MCQ



- Which fighter jets is India currently considering for its air force modernization?
- भारत अपनी वायु सेना के आधुनिकीकरण के लिए किन लड़ाकू विमानों पर विचार कर रहा है?
- A. F-16 (USA), MiG-35 (Russia), and Tejas (India)
- B. F-22 (USA), J-20 (China), and Su-30MKI (India)
- C. F-35 (USA), Su-57 (Russia), and AMCA (India)
- D. Eurofighter Typhoon (UK), Rafale (France), and JF-17 (Pakistan-China)

- Who recently received the 'Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (KBE)' award?
- हाल ही में 'नाइट कमांडर ऑफ द ऑर्डर ऑफ द ब्रिटिश एम्पायर (KBE)' पुरस्कार किसे मिला?
- A. Ratan Tata / रतन टाटा
- B. Sunil Bharti Mittal / सुनील भारती मित्तल
- C. Mukesh Ambani / मुकेश अंबानी
- D. Narayan Murthy / नारायण मूर्ति

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit which country as the Chief Guest for its Independence Day celebrations on March 12, 2025?
- प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी 12 मार्च 2025 को किस देश के स्वतंत्रता दिवस समारोह में मुख्य अतिथि के रूप में भाग लेंगे?
- A. Sri Lanka / श्रीलंका
- B. Mauritius / मॉरीशस
- C. Bangladesh / बांग्लादेश
- D. Nepal / नेपाल

- **What percentage of Mauritius' population traces its roots to India?**
- **मॉरीशस की कितनी प्रतिशत जनसंख्या की जड़ें भारत से जुड़ी हैं?**
- **A. 50%**
- **B. 60%**
- **C. 70%**
- **D. 80%**

- Which Indian state now has the highest vulture population according to the latest census?
- नवीनतम जनगणना के अनुसार, भारत में गिद्धों की सबसे अधिक संख्या किस राज्य में पाई जाती है?
- A. Rajasthan / राजस्थान
- B. Madhya Pradesh / मध्य प्रदेश
- C. Uttarakhand / उत्तराखंड
- D. Maharashtra / महाराष्ट्र


- India launched the Electronic Personnel License (EPL) for pilots, making it the second country after which nation to implement digital pilot licenses?
- भारत ने पायलटों के लिए इलेक्ट्रॉनिक पर्सनल लाइसेंस (EPL) लॉन्च किया, जिससे यह किस देश के बाद डिजिटल पायलट लाइसेंस लागू करने वाला दूसरा देश बन गया?
- A. USA / संयुक्त राज्य अमेरिका
- B. Russia / रूस
- C. China / चीन
- D. United Kingdom / यूनाइटेड किंगडम

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently announced a \$10 billion USD/INR swap auction to inject how much liquidity into the banking system?
- भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक (RBI) ने हाल ही में बैंकिंग प्रणाली में कितनी राशि की तरलता डालने के लिए \$10 बिलियन का USD/INR स्वैप नीलामी की घोषणा की?
- A. ₹50,000 crore
- B. ₹86,000 crore
- C. ₹1 lakh crore
- D. ₹1.5 lakh crore

- According to the latest census, how many species of vultures are found in India?
- नवीनतम जनगणना के अनुसार, भारत में कितनी प्रजातियों के गिद्ध पाए जाते हैं?
- A. 5
- B. 7
- C. 9
- D. 11

- What is the key objective of RBI's USD/INR swap auction?
- RBI के USD/INR स्वैप नीलामी का मुख्य उद्देश्य क्या है?
- A. To increase inflation in the economy / अर्थव्यवस्था में मुद्रास्फीति बढ़ाना
- B. To reduce currency volatility and improve liquidity / मुद्रा अस्थिरता को कम करना और तरलता में सुधार करना
- C. To boost forex reserves only / केवल विदेशी मुद्रा भंडार बढ़ाना
- D. To regulate cryptocurrency transactions / क्रिप्टोकॉरेंसी लेनदेन को विनियमित करना

- **The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, which governs diplomacy between independent states, was adopted in which year?**
- **स्वतंत्र राज्यों के बीच कूटनीति को नियंत्रित करने वाला वियना कन्वेंशन किस वर्ष अपनाया गया था?**
- **A. 1951**
- **B. 1961**
- **C. 1971**
- **D. 1981**



Thank you
guys.
