

Daily Current Affairs



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10 MCQ QUIZ

A blurred photograph of a modern office interior. In the background, several people are seated around a long wooden table, engaged in a meeting. The scene is brightly lit by large windows, creating a soft, out-of-focus atmosphere. The text "Top 10 MCQ from the session for every exam" is overlaid in the center in a white, sans-serif font.

Top 10 MCQ from the session for
every exam

- What key minerals has China restricted in its new export controls?
- चीन ने अपने नए निर्यात नियंत्रण में किन प्रमुख खनिजों पर प्रतिबंध लगाया है?
- A. Gold, Silver, and Copper / सोना, चांदी और तांबा
- B. Uranium, Zinc, and Nickel / यूरेनियम, जिंक और निकेल
- C. Tungsten, Lithium, Magnesium, and Beryllium / टंगस्टन, लिथियम, मैग्नीशियम और बेरीलियम
- D. Platinum, Palladium, and Rhodium / प्लेटिनम, पैलेडियम और रोडियम

- Why are these restricted minerals critical for global industries?
- ये प्रतिबंधित खनिज वैश्विक उद्योगों के लिए क्यों महत्वपूर्ण हैं?
- A. Used in jewelry making / आभूषण निर्माण में उपयोग किया जाता है
- B. Essential for semiconductors, aerospace, and battery industries / अर्धचालक, एयरोस्पेस और बैटरी उद्योगों के लिए आवश्यक
- C. Required for currency minting / मुद्रा निर्माण के लिए आवश्यक
- D. Mainly used in agriculture fertilizers / मुख्य रूप से कृषि उर्वरकों में उपयोग किया जाता है

- What was the name of the law India passed to boost critical mineral exploration?
- भारत ने महत्वपूर्ण खनिज अन्वेषण को बढ़ावा देने के लिए कौन सा कानून पारित किया?
- A. Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2023 / खान और खनिज (विकास और विनियमन) संशोधन अधिनियम, 2023
- B. National Mining Act, 2024 / राष्ट्रीय खनन अधिनियम, 2024
- C. Indian Critical Minerals Act, 2025 / भारतीय महत्वपूर्ण खनिज अधिनियम, 2025
- D. Strategic Resources Act, 2023 / सामरिक संसाधन अधिनियम, 2023

- Which tax reform was introduced under India's new Double Tax Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) rules?
- भारत के नए दोहरे कर बचाव समझौते (DTAA) नियमों के तहत कौन सा कर सुधार पेश किया गया?
- A. Principal Purpose Test (PPT) / प्रधान उद्देश्य परीक्षण (PPT)
B. Direct Corporate Tax Credit (DCTC) / प्रत्यक्ष कॉर्पोरेट कर क्रेडिट (DCTC)
C. Automatic Tax Deduction Mechanism / स्वचालित कर कटौती तंत्र
D. International Tax Fairness Act / अंतर्राष्ट्रीय कर निष्पक्षता अधिनियम

- Which countries were granted exemptions under India's DTAA tax reforms?
- भारत के DTAA कर सुधारों के तहत किन देशों को छूट दी गई?
- A. USA, China, and Japan / अमेरिका, चीन और जापान
- B. Mauritius, Singapore, and Cyprus / मॉरीशस, सिंगापुर और साइप्रस
- C. Germany, France, and Russia / जर्मनी, फ्रांस और रूस
- D. UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Brazil / यूएई, सऊदी अरब और ब्राजील

- What is celebrated on Parakram Diwas in India?
- भारत में पराक्रम दिवस किसकी याद में मनाया जाता है?
- A. Birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel / सरदार वल्लभभाई पटेल की जयंती
- B. Birth anniversary of Subhas Chandra Bose / सुभाष चंद्र बोस की जयंती
- C. India's victory in the 1971 war / 1971 के युद्ध में भारत की विजय
- D. Anniversary of India's first nuclear test / भारत के पहले परमाणु परीक्षण की वर्षगांठ

- Which regiment was formed by Subhas Chandra Bose in the Indian National Army (INA)?
- भारतीय राष्ट्रीय सेना (INA) में सुभाष चंद्र बोस द्वारा कौन सा रेजिमेंट बनाया गया था?
- A. Netaji Infantry Battalion / नेताजी इन्फैंटी बटालियन
- B. Rani of Jhansi Regiment / रानी झांसी रेजिमेंट
- C. Swaraj Special Forces / स्वराज स्पेशल फोर्स
- D. Azad Hind Artillery Corps / आजाद हिंद आर्टिलरी कोर

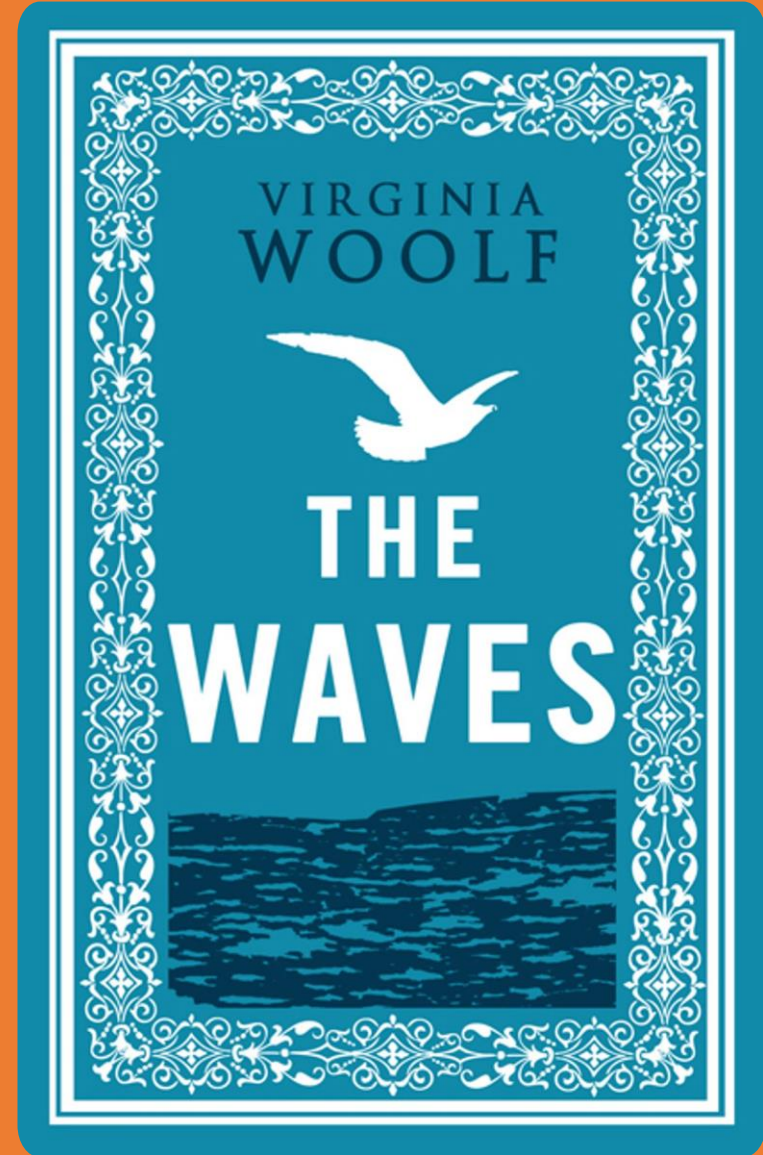
- What was the main focus of the Oxfam report "Takers, Not Makers"?
- ऑक्सफैम रिपोर्ट "Takers, Not Makers" का मुख्य फोकस क्या था?
- A. Impact of British colonial rule on Indian economy / ब्रिटिश औपनिवेशिक शासन का भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था पर प्रभाव
- B. Effects of global climate change on developing nations / विकासशील देशों पर वैश्विक जलवायु परिवर्तन के प्रभाव
- C. Role of technology in modern economic disparity / आधुनिक आर्थिक असमानता में प्रौद्योगिकी की भूमिका
- D. Economic policies of post-independence India / स्वतंत्रता के बाद की भारत की आर्थिक नीतियां

- What is the estimated wealth extracted from India by Britain as per the Oxfam report?
- ऑक्सफैम रिपोर्ट के अनुसार ब्रिटेन द्वारा भारत से कितना धन निकाला गया था?
- A. \$32 trillion
- B. \$45 trillion
- C. \$64.82 trillion
- D. \$80 trillion

- Why did the US withdraw from the World Health Organization (WHO)?
- अमेरिका ने विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन (WHO) से हटने का निर्णय क्यों लिया?
- A. Alleged mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic / COVID-19 महामारी के कप्रबंधन का आरोप
- B. WHO's funding policies favoring China / WHO की चीन को प्राथमिकता देने वाली वित्त पोषण नीतियाँ
- C. WHO's inefficiency in global health reforms / वैश्विक स्वास्थ्य सुधारों में WHO की अक्षमता
- D. All of the above / उपरोक्त सभी

Virginia Woolf,
The Waves

*“You cannot find peace by avoiding
life.” –*





WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM
Trump tells Davos elite to invest in U.S.
WORLD » PAGE 14



NCLAT ORDER
Relief for Meta from ban on data-sharing
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NHRC 'DISSATISFIED'
Fresh probe ordered in Foxconn hiring case
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PARLEY
Is poverty being underestimated in India?
Experts question data used in survey
OPINION » PAGE 9



DRAMATIC WIN
Keys stuns Swiatek, takes on Sabalenka
SPORT » PAGE 16

INSIDE
Putin is anxious about economy distorted by war
MOSCOW
President Putin is concerned about distortions in Russia's wartime economy. Despite growth from oil and gas exports, the impact of Western sanctions and Ukraine war is raising alarms about Russia's economic stability. » PAGE 14

Loudspeakers not essential to religion, says HC
MUMBAI
The Bombay High Court ruled that loudspeakers are not essential to any religion. It directed authorities to act against those violating noise pollution norms, emphasizing noise as a health hazard and denying any rights claims for loudspeaker use. » PAGE 2

President of Indonesia arrives for Republic Day
NEW DELHI
Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto arrived in India to attend the 76th Republic Day ceremony on Sunday as chief guest, marking his first state visit and making him the fourth Indonesian President the chief guest to the Republic Day function. » PAGE 5

₹70,744 cr fund for welfare of workers unused
NEW DELHI
The Union Labour Ministry revealed in an RTI reply that the welfare boards for building and other construction workers of various States have not used ₹70,744 cr crore corpus in access for the welfare of the workers. » PAGE 6

Jalgaon train tragedy triggered by tea vendor's false 'fire' alarm

Maharashtra Deputy CM Ajit Pawar says accident was the result of 'sheer rumour' about fire by a vendor. Collector dismisses reports of any spark or smoke; death toll remains at 12; police were investigating the criminal conspiracy angle

Snehal Mutha
MUMBAI
The police and the Railways began a probe into Wednesday's Jalgaon train accident in which 12 passengers were killed, even as Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Thursday called the accident the result of a "sheer rumour" about fire by a tea seller on Pushpak Express.



Death trail: The police examine the tracks a day after the train accident in Jalgaon district of Maharashtra on Thursday. PTI

Mr. Prasad dismissed reports of spark or smoke as the fire 'brigade's' fault was not at all used during the rescue work. The railway investigation team includes the Principal Chief Safety Officer, the Principal Chief Security Commissioner, the Principal Chief Electrical Engineer, the Principal Chief Mechanical Engineer and the Principal Chief Commercial Manager from the Central Railway Zone, Chief Public Relations

Officer, Swapnil Dhanraj Nila, said the Railway Protection Force and the Government Railway Police initiated an inquiry. In the preliminary inquiry, it was found that after the Pushpak Express stopped, the driver activated the flasher light and applied the brakes as per rules. The curvature of the train was nearly two degrees, which obstructed visibility and reduced the distance for applying the brakes. Even people could not see the train coming. Pilots tried their best to avoid the incident, the CPRO said.

On Wednesday, passengers on Pushpak Express, travelling from Lucknow to Mumbai, jumped off the train after an emergency chain-pulling incident owing to rumour of fire. The death toll remains at 12. Earlier on Wednesday, the administration gave the official figure as 13 but it was lowered on Thursday as the police found decapitated bodies and misnumbered them.

One of the train's family members could not identify the decapitated body and Thursday, another member of the family identified the same body and the count came

down to 12," said Jalgaon Medical Superintendent Vijay Gaidwad. Among the 12 deceased, the administration has identified 11 bodies and handed over nine of them to their families. Among the 10 injured, two have spine injuries. Among the 12 deceased, seven are from Nepal and the rest from Uttar Pradesh.

Speaking to presspersons in Pune, Mr. Pawar said, "A tea seller from the pantry shouted about a fire having broken out in a coach." Two passengers from Shrawati in Uttar Pradesh heard it and conveyed the false alarm to others, leading to confusion and panic in their general coach and the adjoining one.



Sangam ritual
Spiritual grace: Priests perform Ganga Aarti at Sangam during the ongoing Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, on Thursday. PTI

Vikram Misri to visit Beijing on January 26

Sahasini Halder
NEW DELHI
Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri will travel to Beijing on Sunday, in another indication that India and China are reviving all dialogue mechanisms after the four-year break over the military stand-off at the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The meeting follows the October 21 agreement to end the stalemate at the LAC, which was ratified by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping at a summit in Beijing last month. The meeting is followed by meetings between the Foreign Ministers and the Defence Ministers of the two countries.

Iron Age kicked off in 4th millennium BCE in T.N.: Stalin



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Stalin (left) launches the book *Antiquity of Iron in Chennai* on Thursday. Siva/PTI

N. Sai Charan Dennis S. Leandran
CHENNAI
In a finding that may alter the understanding of the antiquity of iron in the Indian subcontinent, a report released by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Thursday said the introduction of iron in modern-day Tamil Nadu went back to the first quarter of the 4th millennium BCE. Samples were lifted from the Sivagalai site in Thoothukudi district.

Releasing the report, "Antiquity of iron: recent radiometric dates from Tamil Nadu", authored by K. Rajan and R. Sivanantham, Mr. Stalin said, "The Iron Age began on Tamil soil." He went on to cite carbon dating results from renowned institutions. The finding means that iron usage was prominent in South India over 5,300 years ago, he said. Iron was used on Tamil land in 3345 BCE, he said.

Experts suggested that the discovery proved that smelted iron could go back to the middle of the third millennium BCE. "It is not merely of Indian significance, but also in the context of the archaeology of the world," he said.

Former Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India Kishore Tewari said: "Tamil Nadu is one of those areas which is providing evidence for an independent culture having interaction with other areas and distinctive technologies also. I hope this kind of research will continue in this part of the country and other parts will also take inspiration from them."

Multiple labs
Though results were obtained a year ago, the findings went through different research methods in multiple labs and were sent eventually to archaeologists and experts for their validation so that the results were highly reliable and academic rigour, Commissioner of Archaeology T.

Udhayachandran told The Hindu. Both Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS) and Optically Stimulated Luminescence (OSL) were adopted, he said. Samples were sent to Beta Analytic Testing Laboratory in the U.S.A., Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences in Lucknow and Physical Research Laboratory in Ahmedabad to get the dating results.

Explaining the significance of the fresh findings of the antiquity of iron in the Indian subcontinent from in Tamil Nadu, Mr. Udhayachandran said: "Compared to other metals, you need to have high-temperature to smelt iron about 1,200 to 1,400 degree Celsius. You need superior technology. It shows people in Tamil land had mastered the skill even some 5,300 years ago."

The usage of iron played an important role in the history of humankind, as it was used to make tools for agriculture and that eventually led to more trade and eventually to formation of State, he contended. "Iron technology is the most important finding in the evolution of mankind," he said.

The earlier excavations at Sivagalai, Adichanallur, Mayiladuthurai, Kilmandi and Mangadu indicated the date falls between 2500 BCE and 3000 BCE as the introduction of iron in south India, particularly in Tamil Nadu. When cultural zones located north of Vindhyas experienced the Copper Age, the region south of Vindhyas might have entered into the Iron Age due to the limited availability of commercially exploitable copper ore, the report said. "Thus, the Copper Age of north India and the Iron Age of south India are probably contemporary," type of research will continue in this part of the country and other parts will also take inspiration from them."

Tusker falls in well, rescued after high drama in Kerala

Abdul Lathief Naha
MALAPPURAM
An elephant that fell into a well near Areekode in Malappuram district of Kerala was rescued and driven back into the nearby forest, ending the day-long protests and uncertainties on Thursday. Though the tusker fell into the well at Urangattiri on a plantation belonging to a farmer in the morning, Forest Department staff could not initiate rescue operations immediately as local people refused to move, pointing to the frequent elephant raids and attacks in the region.

The elephant was part of a herd that had damaged the farmlands of people living on the forest fringes. The farmers in the area have suffered heavy crop losses because of frequent elephant raids. The area falls under the Nilambur North forest division. Exhausted tusker The tusker exhibited signs of exhaustion after remaining immobile the whole day in the well even as the authorities held several rounds of discussions with the protesters. The day-long tension and concern over the tusker's health ended when the authorities



Local people stalling forest staff after an elephant fell into a well at Urangattiri in Malappuram district on Thursday. SIVA/PTI

ing to keep herds at ₹1.5 lakh to the well's owner. Prior to the rescue, P.V. Anwar, Trinamool Congress leader and former independent MLA of Nilambur, said the elephant should be "buried alive". He said rescuing the elephant would aggravate the farmers' problems. A threat to farms District Congress Committee president V.S. Joy said the forest staff would have to face the wrath of the people if the elephant returns to their farms after the rescue.

When people demanded that the elephant should be tranquillised within 10 days, the forest staff warned them that it would be dangerous for the animal's life. "It's too risky. We will start the operation after bringing it out of the well by breaking the sidewalls. We are sympathetic to the people, and would translocate the well after rescuing it," said Mr. Karthik. The DFO warned that the elephant had started showing symptoms of fatigue and was deteriorating by evening. Wildlife officials had warned that any delay in pulling it out would heavily affect the bull's chances of survival and jeopardise the rescue.

Iron Age kicked off in 4th millennium BCE in T.N.: Stalin



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Stalin (left) launches the book *Antiquity of Iron* in Chennai on Thursday. SRINATH M.

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Experts suggested that the discovery proved that usage of smelted iron could go back to the middle of the third millennium BCE.

Professor Emeritus in South Asian Archaeology in Cambridge University Dilip Kumar Chakrabarti said this discovery, for the first time in the world, proved that the usage of smelted iron could go back to the middle of the third millennium BCE. “It is not merely of Indian significance, but also in the context of the archaeology of the world”, he said.

Former Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India Rakesh Tewari said: “Tamil Nadu is one of those areas which is providing evidence for an independent culture having interaction with other areas and distinctive technologies also. I hope this type of research will continue in this part of the

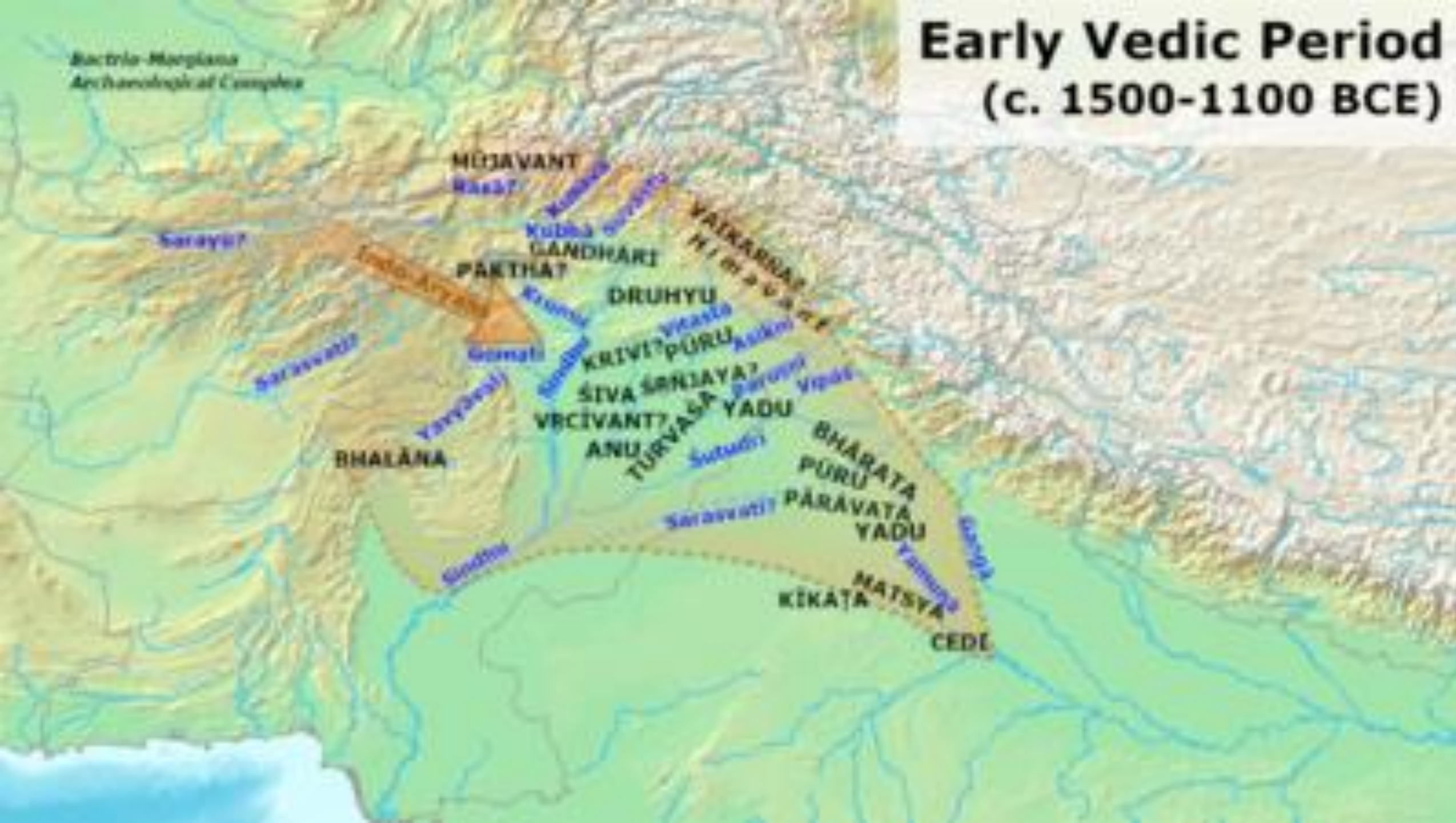
Indian subcontinent from sites in Tamil Nadu, Mr. Udhayachandran said: “Compared to other metals, you need to have higher temperature to smelt iron about 1,200 to 1,400 degree celsius. You need superior technology. It shows people in Tamil land had mastered the skill even some 5,300 years ago.”

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“Thus, the Copper Age of north India and the Iron Age of south India are probably contemporary,” the report contended. Based on the availability of

Early Vedic Period (c. 1500-1100 BCE)





Civilization



Class 11



600 bc



Bhunesh sir

EARLY VEDIC AGE
 (1500 - 1000 BC)
 LET'S FALL IN LOVE WITH HISTORY
 BY BHUNESH SIR 02


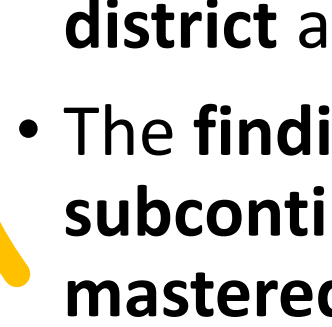
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Bhunesh Sir | Iconic GK/GS Class ...


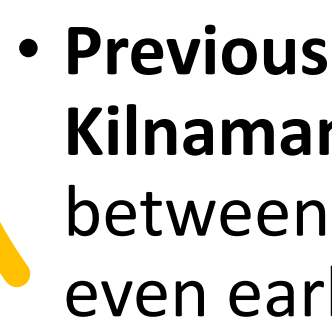
LATER VEDIC AGE
 (1000 - 600 BC)
 LET'S FALL IN LOVE WITH HISTORY
 BY BHUNESH SIR 03

YouTube

Later Vedic Age (1000 - 600 BC) | L 03 ...

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- **Discovery of Early Iron Usage in Tamil Nadu**
 - A report released by Tamil Nadu CM **M.K. Stalin** suggests that **iron usage in Tamil Nadu dates back to the first quarter of the 4th millennium BCE (~3345 BCE).**
 - Samples were **collected from the Sivagalai site in Thoothukudi district** and tested in multiple international laboratories.
 - The **findings push back the antiquity of iron in the Indian subcontinent by nearly 5,300 years**, indicating that **Tamil Nadu mastered iron smelting much earlier than previously believed.**
- 

- **Importance of the Discovery**
- **The discovery challenges the existing understanding of the Iron Age in India and suggests that South India developed iron technology independently.**
- **Iron played a crucial role in human civilization, aiding in agriculture, state formation, and technological advancements.**
- **Experts believe this discovery is one of the most important findings in the evolution of mankind.**



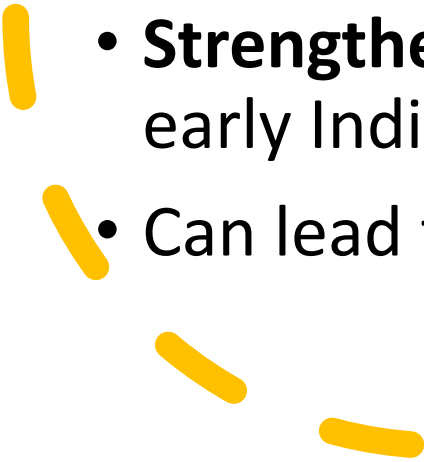
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- **Scientific Verification and Methods Used**
 - **Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS) and Optically Stimulated Luminescence (OSL)** were used for dating.
 - **Samples were tested at top laboratories in the USA, Lucknow, and Ahmedabad** to ensure accuracy.
 - **Previous excavations at sites like Adichanallur, Mayiladumparai, Kilnamandi, and Mangadu** placed South India's iron introduction between **2500 BCE and 3000 BCE**, but the new discovery suggests an even earlier date (~3345 BCE).
- 



- **Implications for Archaeology**
- **The discovery suggests that the Iron Age in South India developed parallel to the Copper Age in North India.**
- **It challenges the existing notion that iron technology spread from North to South India, suggesting an independent cultural evolution in Tamil Nadu.**
- **Tamil Nadu's archaeological research is setting a benchmark for India, encouraging further studies.**



- **Future Steps and Government Initiatives**
- **CM Stalin announced the establishment of new museums at Keezhadi and GangaiKonda Cholapuram** to highlight Tamil Nadu's rich archaeological history.
- **Further excavations and research are expected** to deepen our understanding of early Indian metallurgy.





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- **Political, Geographical, Economic, and Historical Aspects**
 -  **Political Aspect**
 - The Tamil Nadu government **actively promotes archaeological research**, highlighting **Dravidian history and independent technological advancements**.
 - **Strengthens Tamil Nadu's cultural identity** and its role in shaping early Indian civilization.
 - Can lead to **national and international collaborations in archaeology**.
- 

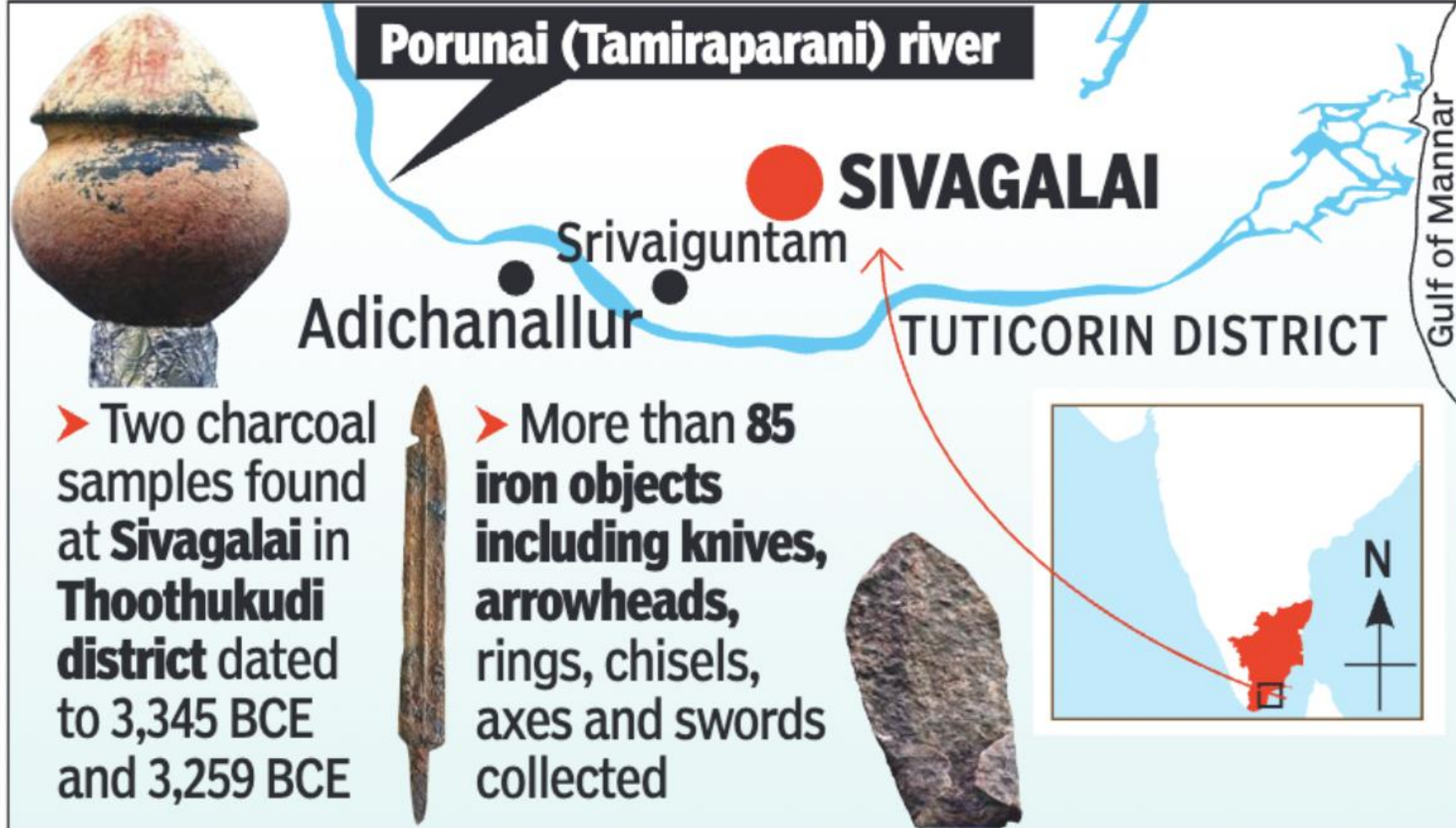
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- **Geographical Aspect**
 - **Tamil Nadu's rich archaeological sites (e.g., Sivagalai, Keezhadi, Adichanallur) provide valuable insights into early human settlements and metallurgy.**
 - **Iron technology in Tamil Nadu developed independently, not necessarily influenced by North India.**
- 

- **Economic Aspect**
- **Boosts heritage tourism and museum-based economy** in Tamil Nadu.
- **Archaeological discoveries attract funding from government and research institutions.**
- **Potential impact on metallurgy and historical studies**, positioning Tamil Nadu as a key center for early technology.



- 
- **Historical Aspect**
 - **Challenges the existing chronology of Indian metallurgy by suggesting a parallel Iron Age in South India.**
 - **Tamil Nadu's independent evolution of iron technology indicates a sophisticated ancient civilization.**
 - **Further studies may redefine South Asia's ancient trade and cultural networks.**
- 

3 RESEARCH LABS ANALYSED SAMPLES



IN BRIEF

**Punjab police withdrawn from Kejriwal's security**

The Punjab police personnel deployed in the security of Aam Aadmi Party national convener Arvind Kejriwal have been withdrawn, the State police chief said on Thursday. "Time to time, we get reports of threats to Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and Arvind Kejriwal and we share them with the concerned agencies. Following the directions of the Election Commission, we withdrew the component of the Punjab police in the security of Mr. Kejriwal," Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said. The development comes ahead of the elections for the 70-member Delhi Assembly on February 5. **IN**

Asaram leaves for Ahmedabad for treatment at his ashram

Nine days after he was granted interim bail by the Rajasthan High Court, rape convict Asaram on Thursday left for Ahmedabad, where he will undergo treatment at his Motera ashram, sources said. The self-styled 'godman' had been staying at the ashram in Jodhpur since the court's order on January 14. He is serving life imprisonment in a 2013 rape case. Asaram is out on interim bail till March 31. First the Supreme Court and then a High Court Bench of Jodhpur granted him interim bail on health grounds and accorded him the liberty to get the treatment at any place of his choice in the country. **IN**

Use of loudspeakers not crucial for any religion, says Bombay High Court

Directs law enforcement agencies to take prompt action against violation of noise pollution norms, asks State govt. to direct religious institutions to adopt mechanisms for controlling noise levels

Press Trust of India

Use of loudspeakers is not an essential part of any religion, the Bombay High Court said on Thursday, directing the law enforcement agencies to take prompt action against loudspeakers that violate the noise pollution norms and rules.

A Division Bench of Justice A.S. Gadgil and S.G. Chandak said noise was a major health hazard and no one can claim that their rights are affected in any manner if he or she is denied permission to use loudspeakers.

The High Court asked the State government to direct religious institutions to adopt mechanisms for controlling noise levels, including calibrated sound systems with auto-decibel limits.

The court passed its judgment on a petition filed by two housing associations from suburban Kurla — Jaago Nehru Nagar



Loud and clear: The court said common citizens are helpless victims of obnoxious use of loudspeakers and amplifiers. FILE PHOTO

Residents' Welfare Association and Shirsrushti Co-operative Housing Societies, Association Ltd — alleging police inaction against noise pollution caused by loudspeakers installed on mosques in the area.

The petitioners contended that the use of loudspeakers for religious purposes, including the recitation of azan (Islamic call to prayer) disturbed the peace and violated the Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000, as well as provisions under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

The Bench, in its order, said Mumbai was a cosmopolitan city and obviously there are persons of different religions in every part of the city.

"It is in public interest that such permissions should not be granted by denying such permissions, rights under Article 19 or 25 of the Constitution of India are not at all infringed," Use of loudspeakers is not an essential part of any religion, the High Court said.

The court said it was the "bounden duty" of the State government and other authorities to enforce the law by adopting all the necessary measures, as prescribed by the provisions of law.

"In a democratic State, there cannot be a situation that a person/group of persons/association of persons would say that, it will not follow or adhere to the law of the land and the law enforcers would be meek or silent spectators to it," the judgment said.

"Noise pollution" It added that common citizens are "helpless and helpless victims of these obnoxious use of loudspeakers and/or amplifiers."

The court said the police must act on complaints against loudspeakers violating the noise pollution rules without requiring identification of the complainant to avoid such complaints being tagged as ill will and developing hatred.

BPSC announces results of exam amid retest row**Amit Bhalari**

PATNA

The Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) on Thursday announced the results of the integrated 70th BPSC Combined (Preliminary) Competitive Examination 2024, which had sparked protests by students and drawn support from various political parties. The exam held on December 15, 2024 at 912 centres in the State was marred by allegations of paper leaks and irregularities.

According to the BPSC, 3,28,990 candidates appeared for the exam, out of which 21,581 cleared it. It expressed happiness over declaring the results within 45 days and congratulated the successful candidates, wishing them the best for the upcoming written test.

Many candidates had boycotted the December 13 exam alleging that they did not receive the question paper on time at the Raps Exam Centre in Patna.

The BPSC subsequently cancelled the exam at the centre and conducted a retest on January 4 at 22 centres, which was taken by 5,943 candidates.

Patna HC is hearing a plea calling for the cancellation of the exam, a retest, not publishing the results

Despite BPSC chairman Parmar Ravi Mamibhai's denial of allegations of a paper leak, many candidates have been demanding that the exams be cancelled and re-conducted at all centres, citing irregularities. Several politicians, including Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejashwi Yadav, Independent MP Pappu Yadav, and Jan Sana Party founder Prashant Kishor, have extended their support to the students.

Petition in HC The Patna High Court, which is hearing a plea calling for the cancellation of the exam, a retest, and not allowing the results to be published, has directed the BPSC to file a counter affidavit by January 30. The court has postponed the next hearing on January 31.

The BPSC has also debarred 13 candidates from competitive exams for three years due to involvement in "unfair practices".

Crime, graft are 2 drivers of much-vaunted double-engine Bihar govt., says Tejashwi**Amit Bhalari**

PATNA

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader and former Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav on Thursday came down hard on the Nitish Kumar government over two incidents that have triggered a political debate in Bihar.

The first is exchange of fire between two towns of Mokama involving former MLA Anant Singh, and another in the State vigilance Unit (SVU) conducting raids on Thursday linked to Bettiah District Education Officer (DEO) Rajnikant Pravin in which the anti-corruption wing seized movable and immovable assets valued over ₹2 crore, including ₹50 lakh in cash.

Taking a dig at the State government, Mr. Yadav alleged that law and order



Cash recovered by State Vigilance Unit from the house of Bettiah DEO Rajnikant Pravin on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

has collapsed in Bihar and corruption is at its peak under the Mr. Kumar's leadership.

Speaking about the cash recovery, Mr. Yadav said, "See the level of corruption. Can you imagine such a huge amount of cash recovered from the house of a DEO. Crime and corruption are two engines of the double-engine government in Bihar." In the evening, the Bihar Education Department suspended the Bettiah DEO with immediate effect.

On Wednesday, more than 100 rounds were exchanged between the supporters of Mr. Singh and So-mu-Monu group. The incident happened when Mr. Singh, a strongman, along with his supporters to settle some dispute. Mr. Yadav urged the people of Bihar to ensure the defeat of NDA in the upcoming Assembly election.

ED conducts searches in Kamakhya funds case**The Hindu Bureau**

GUWAHATI

Searches of the Guwahati Zonal Office of Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted search operations on Wednesday in a case relating to the alleged misappropriation of funds by officials of a defunct board that administered the Kamakhya Temple in Guwahati.

The operations were conducted under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002.

A statement issued by the ED on Thursday said the investigation was based on a First Information Report (FIR) registered by the Crime Investigation Department alleging that officials of the Kamakhya De-outer Board siphoned off ₹7.62 crore from 2003 to 2019. The board was subsequently dissolved.

including Ms. Kumari in her petition, have argued that the Supreme Court's direction was clear in calling for her petition to be treated as that of a transpeople, i.e. a percentage for transpeople within each socio-economic quota category; a section in the special amendment called for in the 2014 NALSA judgment of the Supreme Court.

Ever since the 2014 NALSA judgement of the Supreme Court, there has been an arguable ambiguity in the direction that asked governments to provide transpeople all kinds of reservation.

Ms. Kumari, who is being represented by advocates Vivek and Uditi Mathur, further argued that the Rajasthan government's circular falls to consider that

Trinamool, BJP attack Rahul over date of death in tribute for Subhas Chandra Bose**Shiv Sahav Singh**

KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party leadership in West Bengal on Thursday criticised Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for a social media post on Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, which mentioned that the late freedom fighter had died on August 18, 1945.

Offering tributes to the great revolutionary on his 80th anniversary, Mr. Gandhi had put up a photograph of Netaji on social media platform X and captioned it as "January 25, 1897 - August 18, 1945".

However, Trinamool and BJP leaders took exception to the post and asked Mr. Gandhi to "correct it". "The post that Rahul Gandhi is wrong and is not acceptable. We are celebrating the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on January 25, 1897," said Trinamool leader and BJP president Sukanta Majumdar also targeted the Congress leader. "It wrongly repeats the claim that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose died on 18th August, 1945, as stated



In Netaji's honour: A boy salutes a photo of Subhas Chandra Bose on the freedom fighter's birth anniversary in Kolkata on Thursday. AP

in post by @RahulGandhi I also demand that Mr. Gandhi apologize within the next 24 hours for showing disrespect to Netaji," he said.

While a large section of the late leader's family, including his daughter Anita Bose Pfaff, is of the opinion that he died in a plane crash in Taiwan on August 18, 1945, there are people who believe otherwise.

High Court notice to Rajasthan govt. over petition challenging classification of transpeople as OBCs**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

The Rajasthan High Court has issued notices to the State on a petition filed by a transwoman challenging the State government's classification of transpeople as Other Backward Classes (OBC) for reservation in public education and employment.

A Bench of Chief Justice Manindra Mohan Srivastava and Justice Nupur Bharti has directed the State government to respond to the petition in four weeks' time. The petitioners, Ganga Kumari, the first transwoman to enter service as a Rajasthan police constable, has challenged a January 2023 circular issued by the State government's Depart-



The court has directed the State government to respond to the petition in four weeks' time. FILE PHOTO

"could lead to their exclusion from both OBC-related and transgender-related benefits.

Unique status Ms. Kumari, who is being represented by advocates Vivek and Uditi Mathur, further argued that the Rajasthan government's circular falls to consider that

Hyderabad: no progress in probe into ex-serviceman's wife's murder**Press Trust of India**

HYDERABAD

The Raichakonda police are making all efforts to recover the woman's mortal remains, though they say the body parts of a woman killed by her husband in a domestic violence case, has already been picked up.

The police are facing with a challenging situation as they are yet to recover the woman's mortal remains, though they say the body parts of a woman killed by her husband in a domestic violence case, has already been picked up.

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occurred in their residential premises.

Gurumathy, the suspect, an ex-serviceman, was employed as a security guard at the time of the incident.

He had even accompanied his in-laws when they lodged a complaint with the Meerpet police on January 18.

The police had then registered a missing complaint only. As per the FIR, the victim quarrelled with Gurumathy on January 16 and left their home without any intimation to anyone. She did not return home, prompting the relatives to lodge a complaint.

Use of loudspeakers not crucial for any religion, says Bombay High Court

Directs law enforcement agencies to take prompt action against violation of noise pollution norms, asks State govt. to direct religious institutions to adopt mechanisms for controlling noise levels

Press Trust of India
MUMBAI

Use of loudspeakers is not an essential part of any religion, the Bombay High Court said on Thursday, directing the law enforcement agencies to take prompt action against loudspeakers that violate the noise pollution norms and rules.

A Division Bench of Justices A.S. Gadkari and S.C. Chandak said noise was a major health hazard and no one can claim that their rights are affected in any manner if he or she is denied permission to use loudspeakers.

The High Court asked the State government to direct religious institutions to adopt mechanisms for controlling noise levels, including calibrated sound systems with auto-decibel limits.

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Loud and clear: The court said common citizens are helpless victims of obnoxious use of loudspeakers and amplifiers. FILE PHOTO

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The petitioners contended that the use of loudspeakers for religious purposes, including the recitation of *azaan* (Islamic call to prayer) disturbed the peace and violated the Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000, as well as provisions under

the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

The Bench, in its order, said Mumbai was a cosmopolitan city and obviously there are persons of different religions in every part of the city.

"It is in public interest that such permissions should not be granted. By denying such permissions, rights under Article 19 or 25 of the Constitution of India are not at all infringed. Use of loudspeakers is not an essential part of any religion," the High Court said.

The court said it was the "bounden duty" of the State government and other authorities to enforce the law by adopting all the necessary measures, as may be prescribed by the provisions of law.

"In a democratic State, there cannot be a situation that, a person/group of persons/association of persons would say that, it will not follow or adhere to the law of the land and the law enforcers would be meek or silent spectators to it," the judgment said.

'Noise pollution'

It added that common citizens are "hapless and helpless victims of these obnoxious use of loudspeakers and/or amplifiers".

The court said the police must act on complaints against loudspeakers violating the noise pollution rules without requiring identification of the complainant to avoid such complainants being targets or ill will and developing hatred.

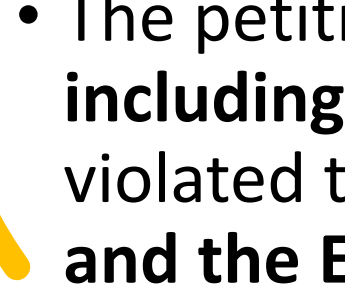
- **High Court's Ruling on Loudspeakers**
- The **Bombay High Court** ruled that **the use of loudspeakers is not an essential part of any religion.**
- The court **directed law enforcement agencies to take prompt action against violation of noise pollution norms.**





- **Case Background**


- The ruling came in response to a petition filed by **two housing associations from Kurla, Mumbai (Jaago Nehru Nagar Residents' Welfare Association & Shivrushti Co-operative Housing Society Association Ltd)**.



- The petitioners alleged that the **use of loudspeakers in mosques, including for azaan (Islamic call to prayer)**, disturbed the peace and violated the **Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000, and the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**.



- **Court's Observations**

- **Noise pollution is a major health hazard and no person can claim their rights are affected** if they are denied permission to use loudspeakers.
 - The court **asked the Maharashtra government to direct religious institutions to adopt calibrated sound systems with auto-decibel limits.**
- 

- **Enforcement & Public Interest**
- The court directed police to take **strict action against loudspeaker violations** without requiring **identification of the complainant to protect citizens from retaliation.**
- The court emphasized that **Mumbai is a cosmopolitan city** with people of **different religions**, and **no one has an absolute right to disturb public peace.**





- **Political Aspect**

- The ruling reinforces **secular governance** and **equal law enforcement** across religious institutions.



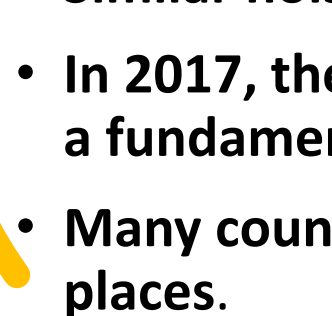
- The judgment may **influence future regulations on religious noise pollution** in other states.



- **Possible political debates** over freedom of religious practice vs. public order.

- **Geographical Aspect**
- The ruling primarily affects **Maharashtra**, especially **Mumbai**, which has a **diverse religious population**.
- **Similar complaints about loudspeaker use** have been raised in **Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, and West Bengal**.



- 
- **Economic Aspect**
 - **Strict noise pollution enforcement** could impact businesses that rely on loud public announcements (e.g., religious festivals, processions, wedding halls).
 - **Real estate value in noise-affected areas** may improve if laws are enforced properly.
 -  **Historical Aspect**
 - **Similar noise pollution cases have been debated in India since the 1990s.**
 - **In 2017, the Allahabad High Court ruled that Azaan is allowed but loudspeakers are not a fundamental right.**
 - **Many countries, including Saudi Arabia, have restricted loudspeakers in religious places.**
- 

Vikram Misri to visit Beijing as India, China look to revive all dialogue mechanisms

Foreign Secretary will meet Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Sun Weidong and discuss resumption of direct flights between the two countries, visas, and the Mansarovar yatra; trade issues and concerns over hydropower project may also come up; the meeting follows the agreement to end the stalemate at the LAC, which was ratified by Modi and Xi

Sahasini Halder
NEW DELHI

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri will travel to Beijing on Sunday. In another indication that India and China are reviving all dialogue mechanisms after the four-year break over the military stand-off at the Line of Actual Control (LAC),

The meeting follows the October 21 agreement to end the stalemate at the LAC, which was ratified by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping during a summit in Russia last month. Misri, who served as India's Ambassador to Beijing (2019-2022) and Deputy National Security Adviser (2021-2024), will meet Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister

Sun Weidong, who was his counterpart as Chinese Ambassador to India (2019-2022).

Among issues expected to be discussed are the resumption of direct flights between India and China, which remain suspended since the pandemic; issuance of visas particularly for businesspersons and journalists; ironing out trade issues; and arrangements for the resumption of the Mansarovar Yatra for pilgrims.

"The resumption of this bilateral mechanism flows from the agreement at the leadership level to discuss the next steps for India-China relations, including in the political, economic and people-to-people domains," the External Affairs Ministry said in a statement, indicating that this will be part of the revival of regular dialogue.

The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs also commented on the visit thus far. On Tuesday, the Ministry spokesperson had



Vikram Misri during an event in Thailand in December 2024. China's Vice-Foreign Minister Sun Weidong, right, was present, too.

said that India and China must "deliver" on the understandings reached between Mr. Xi and Mr. Modi. "We need to view and handle the bilateral relations from a strategic height and long-term perspective, bringing solutions back to the track of healthy and stable development, and find the right path for big, neighbouring countries to live in harmony and develop side by side," spokesperson Guo Jishun said in Beijing, in

response to remarks by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar that the two sides were still trying to "disentangle themselves from the constraints" of the 2020 stand-off, when the Chinese People's Liberation Army brought aggression along the LAC.

Mr. Misri will be in Beijing on January 26 and 27. He will leave after the Republic Day parade in Delhi, officials said. The Foreign Secretary's visit comes just before the

Misri will be in Beijing on January 26 and 27. He will leave after the Republic Day parade.

Chinese New Year holidays that begin on January 28. Chinese Ambassador to India Xu Feihong is already in Beijing, understood to be in preparation for the visit. At a reception for the New Year in Delhi this week, Chinese Charge D'Affaires Wang Lei said India and China would hold "dozens" of celebratory events to mark the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and India. He said that India-China economic exchanges had grown 2% in the past year, with trade figures reaching \$22.6 billion in the first 11 months of 2024 and 2,80,000 visas issued by China during the year.

Considerable tensions However, the two sides have also cited consid-

erable tensions over economic and visa issues, with reports suggesting that Chinese manufacturers were withholding technology and exports to India, including for Tunnel boring Machine manufactured in China and Germany.

Beijing has also been asking New Delhi to issue more visas and facilitate travel links. Despite a declaration after a meeting between Jaishankar and Mr. Wang in November 2024 over resumption of visas, flights and the Mansarovar Yatra pilgrimage, there has been little movement on the ground on these issues thus far.

In addition, a Chinese hydropower project on the upper riparian area of the Brahmaputra (Yarlung Zaskarum) in the Indo-Pac region has caused concern about flooding in eastern Assam.

"We must convey that any reset in ties would require a lot of hard work because accumulated anxieties remain, both on border issues and other

issues," former Ambassador to China (2014-2016) Ashok Kaul told *The Hindu*.

"The Army chief has himself said that India is not so far normal, and we cannot revert to business-as-usual conversations on resumption of travel and visas without progress on the border," he said, adding that India must take up concerns over the hydropower project "more seriously" during Mr. Misri's visit.

Nearly 30 representatives from 13 countries (Bhutan, Georgia, Namibia, Lithuania, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Ireland, Mauritius, the Philippines, Russia, Tunisia, and Nepal) are participating in the conference.

The CEC also emphasises the critical role of technology and digital innovation in enhancing efficiency, transparency and voter confidence. He, however, cautioned that while technology offers significant opportunities, it also brings challenges.

Tungsten mining: Centre decides to annul auction of mineral block in Madurai

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Union Ministry of Mines on Thursday announced its decision to annul the auction of tungsten mineral block at Nayakkarpatti in Madurai district. The locals had been protesting against the auction, and the Assembly had unanimously adopted a special resolution urging the Union government to immediately cancel the tungsten mining rights granted to a firm.

The decision was taken considering the importance of the biodiversity heritage site in the area, and showed the commitment of the Government of India to protecting tribal rights, an official told in a press release said.

The centre's decision followed a meeting between leaders of the Ambalakar community from Madurai district and Union

Locals are protesting against the auction and Assembly had unanimously adopted a special resolution

Minister for Coal and Mines G. Kishan Reddy, New Delhi on January 22.

The community leaders had told the Union Minister that the Nayakkarpatti tungsten mineral block included the Arripattai biodiversity heritage site and a number of cultural heritage sites. They requested the Union Minister to cancel the auction of the Nayakkarpatti block.

In a social media post, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin recalled having asserted in the Assembly that his government would not permit the proposal as long as he held his post.

"We adopted a resolution unanimously in the Assembly. The Union go-

vernment has now given in to the sentiments of the people and the determination of the State government," he said.

The Centre should not issue notifications for such auctions without the consent of the State government, Mr. Stalin said. "The AIADMK, too, should not go along with legislation that is against the State's rights," he added.

Welcoming the decision, AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami recalled the steps that his party took to highlight the issue in the Assembly and expose the "drama" staged by the DMK government over it.

The decision of the Centre was a victory to the steps undertaken by the AIADMK, and had put a stop to the "cross-standard" of the DMK government over the proposal. The people's power had won, Mr. Palaniswami said.

Budget must provide relief from rising prices, says Congress

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Unemployment and inflation resulting from the "wrong policies" of the Narendra Modi government had made life extremely difficult for lower and middle-class families, and the country now needed a budget that provided relief from rising prices, the Congress said on Thursday. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to present the Union Budget on February 1.

Sharing a media report on his X handle, Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh claimed that the "back-breaking inflation in the last 10 years has emptied the pockets of the common people."

"The Modi (Modi) government has not taken care of its rich friends in the last ten years. Ever-increasing employment and inflation



Jairam Ramesh

Court refuses to order FIR against Delhi Art Gallery over display of Husain's paintings

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Thursday refused to order the police to file an FIR against the Delhi Art Gallery for displaying "objectionable" paintings by M.F. Husain.

The court, in a judgment, said that the police should not be directed to file an FIR against the Delhi Art Gallery for displaying "objectionable" paintings by M.F. Husain. The court said that the police should not be directed to file an FIR against the Delhi Art Gallery for displaying "objectionable" paintings by M.F. Husain.

The court added that if



M.F. Husain

The FIR would be required at the later stage, then Section 225 of the BNSS should be resorted to.

According to the lawyer-petitioner, when she visited the DAG last December, she photographed the "offensive" paintings. She applied to the police to lodge a formal complaint despite which no FIR was filed and the paintings were removed during her subsequent visit. The gallery officials denied that artworks.

The lawyer's plea had sought an FIR under Section 299 of the BNS (delib-

CEC cautions against fake narratives that erode trust

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar on Thursday sounded a note of caution against "fake narratives" that erode trust in the electoral process.

Addressing a two-day international conference of Election Management Bodies (EMBs), Mr. Kumar said that such narratives are timed to strike at the vitals of the electoral process.

The conference being held in the national capital on January 23-24, ahead of National Voters Day on January 25.

Nearly 30 representatives from 13 countries (Bhutan, Georgia, Namibia, Lithuania, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Ireland, Mauritius, the Philippines, Russia, Tunisia, and Nepal) are participating in the conference.

The CEC also emphasises the critical role of technology and digital innovation in enhancing efficiency, transparency and voter confidence. He, however, cautioned that while technology offers significant opportunities, it also brings challenges.

Will continue to support BJP, says Manipur JD(U) MLA

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Muhammad Abdul Nasir, Manipur's lone Janata Dal (United) MLA, said on Thursday that he would continue to support the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government in the State.

He affirmed his support a day after Kohetrimayim Biren Singh, the JD(U)'s former State president, wrote to Governor Ajay Kumar Bhabha announcing the withdrawal of support to the government headed by Chief Minister Nongthombam Biren Singh.

The JD(U)'s central leadership sacked the president hours after his "withdrawal" letter went viral. Mr. Nasir met JD(U) working president Sanjay

MDL-TKMS bid for P-751 submarine tender clears technical evaluation

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The multi-billion dollar deal for six advanced conventional submarines under project P-751 has crossed a major milestone with the bid by Mongron Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), Mumbai, and Germany's ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems (TKMS) having cleared the technical evaluation conducted by the Defence Ministry. The bid by MDL and TKMS along with Navantia of Spain has not cleared the evaluation.

The tender, valued at ₹43,000 crore for the deal was set a decade ago and given the technological upgrades since and factors like the inflation and currency fluctuations, the final cost is expected to see a major upward revision. "MDL confirms that the



commercial bid submitted by MDL has been processed by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) for further processing." The MDL said on Thursday that per requirements of the market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India. The compliance checks of the two bids received were completed in June last year as part of the field evaluation trials. The Request for Proposal (RFP) issued by the Defence Ministry for the program is titled 'Specifications

states that the first submarine should have indigenous content (IC) of 45% for the last and last submarine. The key determinant for the award of P-751 is the Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) module, which enhances the endurance and stealth of a submarine. The AIP module became the real determinant for qualifying the bids.

The design offered by TKMS, in partnership with MDL, is based on its highly successful Class 214 submarine, which is operational in the Indian Navy as S-88. Navantia has offered a submarine based on its new S80 class of two types, the first of which was launched in 2022 and commissioned in the Spanish Navy as S-81 'Isaac Peral' in 2023.

Indian Navy vessel finishes hydrographic survey of Mauritius

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Indian Navy's INS Sarvekshak completed the final phase of the hydrographic survey of Mauritius covering an extensive area of over 25,000 square nautical miles. The fair sheet of the survey, along with newly prepared nautical charts, were formally handed over to the Mauritian government on Thursday.

"The creation of a new nautical chart will enable Mauritius to develop its maritime infrastructure, resource management and coastal development plans. It reflects the enduring partnership between India and Mauritius in fostering maritime development and regional cooperation."

In addition, Captain Tribhuvan Singh, Commanding Officer of INS Sarvekshak called on Shri. Ahmed Youssif Abdul Razack Mohamed, Minister of Housing and Lands, Mauritius and discussed the details of survey operations undertaken.

Indian Navy hydrographic vessels regularly assist various countries in hydrographic surveys of their exclusive economic zones. "In line with India's SAGAR Initiative, the survey ships of the Indian Navy have conducted various joint survey operations with friendly foreign nations covering an area of 89,000 sq. km. in the last five years and have produced 96 charts," the Navy said last year.

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. Indian Navy's Role in Mauritius Hydrographic Survey

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The survey covered **over 25,000 square nautical miles**.

The **nautical charts and survey data** were officially handed over to **Mauritius President Dharambeer Gokhool**.

Benefits of the Survey for Mauritius

The new nautical charts will help Mauritius in:

- **Maritime infrastructure development**
- **Resource management**
- **Coastal development planning**

The survey strengthens India-Mauritius maritime cooperation.

- **India's Regional Maritime Cooperation**
- Indian Navy's **hydrographic vessels assist other countries** in surveying their **Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs)**.
- Under India's **SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) initiative**, Indian Navy ships have:
 - Conducted surveys covering **89,000 sq. km.** in the last five years.
 - Produced **96 nautical charts**.

IN BRIEF



BSF to hold talks with BGB in Delhi from February 16 to 20

The next round of biannual Director-General level talks between the Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) will be held in Delhi from February 16 to 20, the first time after the regime change in the neighbouring country, a government official said. The talks that were previously slated to be held in October 2024 were postponed due to the ongoing political situation in Bangladesh. The biannual talks were previously held in Dhaka. Fencing of border areas, trans-border crimes, and coordinated patrolling will be on the agenda of the talks, the official said. The BSF is also likely to raise the issue of attacks on minorities in the neighbouring country.

HPZ token case: accused is 'fugitive economic offender'

Rhupesh Arora, the key accused in the HPZ Token fake investment case involving about ₹2,200 crore, has been declared a fugitive economic offender by a court in Nagaland. The order under the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act was issued by a special court on Wednesday, based on a complaint by the ED. The ED had started a probe under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act on the basis of FIR registered by the Cyber Crime police, alleging that people were duped on the false promise of phenomenal returns on investing in crypto mining of Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies, for which an app-based denomination 'HPZ Token' was used.

Stung by Puja Khedkar scam, govt. amends Civil Services Exam Rules

Vijaita Singh NEW DELHI

Online submission of documents, such as educational, caste and physical disability certificates, has been made mandatory for candidates for the preliminary stage of the Civil Services Examination conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) government notification. Previously, documents were to be uploaded only when a candidate qualified for the main examination. On Wednesday, the Ministry of Personnel notified the Civil Services Examination Rules, 2025. The Ministry said 979 vacancies will be filled by this year's examinations which is the lowest in the past three years. The exams are held to recruit candidates for 23 services including the Indian Administrative Ser-



Puja Khedkar

vice, Indian Foreign Service and Indian Police Service. In the CSE 2023, around 10.1 lakh candidates applied, however, only 5.9 lakh candidates appeared for the examinations. The changes have been brought as Puja Khedkar was selected as a probationary IAS officer after she allegedly forged identity papers, misrepresented and falsified facts to obtain extra attempts and privileges. She produced a fake persons with benchmark disability cer-

States yet to use ₹70,744-cr. funds for welfare of workers

Since the implementation of the Building and Other Construction Workers Act in 2005, the Boards have collected ₹1,17,507.22 crore as cess but allocated only ₹67,669.92 crore for workers

A.M. Jeevesh NEW DELHI

The Union Labour Ministry said in a Right to Information (RTI) reply that the welfare Boards for Building and other construction workers of various States have not yet used the cess of ₹70,744.16 crore they collected from the employers for the welfare of the workers.

Since the implementation of the Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act in 2005, the Boards have collected ₹1,17,507.22 crore as cess from the employers and allocated ₹67,669.92 crore with the workers.

The Act passed in 1996, empowers the Construction Workers' Welfare Board constituted by State governments to levy cess from employers "at such rate not exceeding 2%, but not less than 1% of the cost of construction incurred by an employer."

As many as 5,73,48,723 workers have registered with 36 State Welfare Boards till September 30, 2024. There have been complaints that the Centre



Labour force: As many as 5,73,48,723 workers have registered with 36 State Welfare Boards till September 30, 2024. FILE PHOTO

and the State governments did not help the construction workers during the exodus to villages soon after the COVID lockdown announced in March 2020.

Cess evasion

Arka Rajpandit, national secretary, Construction Workers' Federation of India, who filed the RTI with the Ministry, said the documented points towards huge cess evasion by the builders and employers.

"For instance in Maharashtra, the total accumulated cess for 19 years is ₹19,489.25 crore. This means that the State had collected ₹19,489.25 crore till September 30, 2024. There have been complaints that the Centre

he said. The data show that Maharashtra spent ₹12,683.18 from the cess it collected in the past 19 years, followed by Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh that provided ₹7,921.42 and ₹7,826.66 crore to the workers.

Mr. Rajpandit said if the cess collected under the Code on Social Security, the cess collection process will be diluted as it has provisions for self-assessment by the employer of cess and the code reduced the rate of cess and interest.

"Secondly, the Building and Other Construction Workers Act mandated the provision of free temporary accommodation, drinking water and latrines to workers. The Codes change these statutory entitlements to facilities that the Union government has to provide. Hence, there is no right to workers to these facilities if not provided by the employers."

"Our observation is that, except Kerala, most of the State governments and Union Territory administrations are not implementing Building and Other Construction Workers Act. Stipulated benefits are being curtailed," Mr. Rajpandit said.

DGCA suggests phased implementation of new norms for pilots from July

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) informed the Delhi High Court on Thursday that the revised rest and duty norms — proposed by the aviation regulator for pilots last January and strongly opposed by airlines — could be implemented in a staggered manner starting on July 1.

The court has given the DGCA three weeks to submit an affidavit, where the regulator will specify which provisions will be implemented by July 1 and which remaining provisions will come into force from the Winter Schedule starting in the last Sunday of October. The DGCA's January 2024 proposal, which was scheduled to be



Air India and Air India Express agreed to implement the new norms to 48 hours from June.

enforced from June 1, 2024, was widely welcomed by pilots amid concerns over rising fatigue. However, it faced stiff opposition from airlines and its implementation was subsequently deferred indefinitely following a writ petition from pilot bodies, which sought the court to hold talks between airlines and various

'New MGNREGS wage payment system not significantly better'

Sobhana K. Nair NEW DELHI

There is no statistically significant difference either in timely payment of wages or in payment rejections between the Aadhaar-based Payment System (ABPS) and the standard bank account-based method, according to a study published in the latest edition of the Indian Journal of Labour Economics.

Researchers analysed 3.14 crore Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) transactions totalling ₹4,602 crore, made in 2021-22 across 10 States.

The Union government made the Aadhaar-based system mandatory from January 1, 2024, arguing that it boosts efficiency, savings, and transparency. Many workers, however, have repeatedly complained that their wage payments have been misdirected due to the ABPS.

The study analysed the percentage of payments processed within seven and 15 days across the two payment types. The difference between the time taken to process payments was marginal. It found that 36% of account-based payments were processed within seven days compared to 39% of ABPS payments. Many problems with account-based payments, can be resolved locally through the block-level computer operator. "The rejections due to ABPS are centralised and harder to resolve," the study said.



The rejections due to ABPS are centralised and harder to resolve, the study said.

led by Suguna Bheemarasetti, Anuradha De, Rajendra Nayanan, Parul Saboo, and Lavanya Tamang. All the authors are affiliated with IIT Bombay, a consortium of activists and academics.

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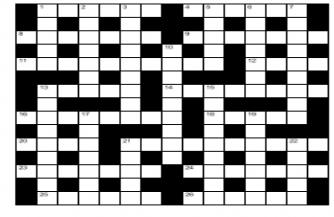
Tripura unit of CPI(M) plans State conference

Syed Sajid Ali AGARTALA

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) in Tripura is preparing to hold its 24th State conference which is organised once in every three years. Ahead of the conference, the party convened State committee meeting on Thursday which was attended by former Chief Minister and Politburo member Manik Sarkar.

Party State secretary and Leader of the Opposition Jitendra Chaudhary stated that the upcoming conference would be crucial in determining the party's future course of action. The event will also extensively discuss organisational activities and political issues. The last one occurred in the past three years.

THE CROSSWORD + 14390



- Across
1 Introduces small pastries (6)
4 Challenge the purpose (6)
8 Estates held by veteran chessman (7)
9 Mother's old and injured (7)
11 Choices in Sweden politics (10)

- 12 Apes destroyed plants (4)
13 Mixture for repairs in the middle with gateau essentially (5)
14 Went hungry around noon, with leading edge-house being closed (8)
16 New readers take time to get engaged (8)
18 Say, people from Emirates are mostly sailors (5)
20 Investigates the boarding-house (4)
21 Award given to nurse and civil engineer at meeting (10)
23 Treadle broken, so changed (7)
24 Set rice, cooked and delivers (7)
25 Governing body leaders speak English, no alternate to engage (6)
26 Snatches small ducks (6)
Down
1 Suggestion to cycle in hell (5)
2 Say, Sagittarians could be weapon handlers (7)
3 Matter resolved with specialist's medication (9)
5 Boycotts import of primarily exotic plants (5)
6 Questions pastor and the French model (7)
7 Youngsters enter false age inside cockpit (9)
10 Certain to confess taking the book (9)
13 Traces of cocaine and some LSD in raves (9)
15 Saint had people get Times report (9)
17 Each authoritarian is oriental (7)
18 Plant a top mole initially in a country (7)
19 Sneaked agent into Connecticut (5)
22 Sides of screw damaged (5)

SUDOKU

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

Solution to previous puzzle
8 7 1 3 4 2 1 9 3 8 4
1 3 4 6 5 7 2 9
6 9 1 7 2 4 6 3 8 5
7 6 4 8 3 1 2 9 5
2 3 4 9 4 3 8 7 6 5 3 1 4 2 3
1 5 2 9 4 7 8 6 3

FAITH

Thiruvadaikkazhi kshetra
Thiruvadaikkazhi is known as the Thiruchendur of Chola Nadu, said T. Rajarathinam in a discourse. It is 6 km from Thirukkadavur. Arunagirinatha has sung six verses in his Thiruppugazh in praise of the Murugan of Thiruvadaikkazhi. It is the place where Soodanar attained moksha. Soodanar's son Hiranyasuran told his father about the greatness of Murugan and advised him to release the deers. But Soodanar paid no heed to his son's words. When Murugan fought against Soodanar, Hiranyanar did not desert his father, but joined his forces. But he was unable to face Veerabahu, the chief among Murugan's warriors. So Hiranyan assumed the form of a fish and hid in the ocean in Tharangambadi. After killing Soodanar, Murugan killed Hiranyan at Thiruvadaikkazhi. Soodanar composed Thiruvaitaippa in praise of the Thiruvadaikkazhi Murugan. The sacred tree of this temple is the Kura (webera corymbosa). Under this tree is a ball of mud. Aradhana is offered to this tree first during ardhajama puja, because Murugan did penance under this tree. This tree usually grows on hill slopes, which makes the tree in Thiruvadaikkazhi very special, since this kabhera tree is not on a hill. The Shiva here is called Pappavina. In inscriptions, Murugan of this temple is called Thirukkurathudaiyar. The magizham tree in this temple is the sacred tree for Lord Sivabera. Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai wrote Thiruvadaikkazhi Murugan Pillai Tamil in praise of the deity of this kabhera. Thiruvadaikkazhi has a special place in the hearts of devotees, because both Shiva and Murugan are enshrined here.

Stung by Puja Khedkar scam, govt. amends Civil Services Exam Rules

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Online submission of documents, such as educational, caste and physical disability certificates, has been made mandatory for candidates for the preliminary stage of the Civil Service Examination conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), a government notification has said.

Previously, documents were to be uploaded only when a candidate qualified for the main examination.

On Wednesday, the Ministry of Personnel notified the Civil Services Examination Rules, 2025. The Ministry said 979 vacancies will be filled by this year's examinations which is the lowest in the past three years. The exams are held to recruit candidates for 23 services including the Indian Administrative Ser-



Puja Khedkar

vice, Indian Foreign Service and Indian Police Service. In the CSE 2023, around 10.1 lakh candidates applied, however, only 5.9 lakh candidates appeared for the examinations.

The changes have been brought as Puja Khedkar was selected as a probationary IAS officer after she allegedly forged identity papers, misrepresented and falsified facts to obtain extra attempts and produced a fake persons with benchmark disability cer-

tificate to gain reservation in the 2022 exam.

Ms. Khedkar could bypass the UPSC's gatekeeping by appearing in the exams 12 times as against the nine attempts that are allowed.

The alleged forgery and crime was revealed last June while she was posted for field training in Pune. Ms. Khedkar was subsequently discharged from service, faces criminal cases and is currently on bail.

Inquiry ordered


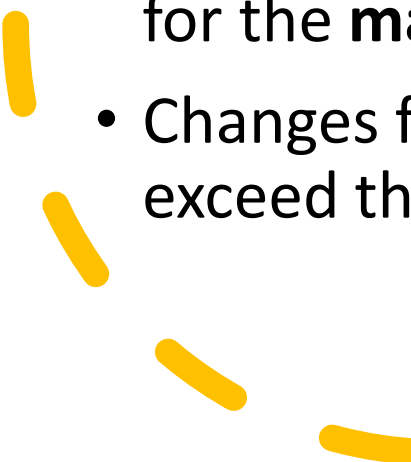
Following this, the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) initiated an inquiry against six officials, including a probationer, to re-examine their disability parameters.

The officials – five Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers and an Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer – got into the services by getting reserva-

tion benefits under the disability category.

The January 22 notification stated that candidates “shall be required to apply online and submit the requisite information and supporting documents towards various claims, such as date of birth, category [viz. SC (Schedule Caste)/ST(Scheduled Tribe) /OBC (Other Backward Classes (OBC)/ EWS (Economically Weaker Section) /PwBD/ Ex-Servicemen], educational qualification and Service preference, etc.” as may be sought by the commission. It added that “the failure to provide the required information and documents along with the registration and online application form will entail cancellation of candidature for the examination”.

Till now, the service and cadre preference were to be submitted after clearing the Mains examination.

- 
- **New Rules Introduced by UPSC (2025):**
 - Online submission of **education, caste, and disability certificates** is now **mandatory** at the preliminary stage of the Civil Services Examination.
 - **Previous Issues:**
 - Earlier, candidates were required to upload documents only after qualifying for the **main examination**.
 - Changes followed the **Puja Khedkar scam**, where she forged documents to exceed the nine-attempt limit and secure benefits under disability claims.
- 



- **Impact of the Scam:**

- Puja Khedkar joined as a probationary IAS officer using fraudulent claims.

- She was later **discharged** and is currently facing **criminal charges**.

- **Inquiry Ordered:**

- The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has initiated an investigation into the irregularities.



Updated Notification:

- Candidates must now submit:
 - Proof of **date of birth**.
 - **Caste category** (SC/ST/OBC/EWS).
 - Proof of **disability, education qualifications, and service preference**.
- Failure to comply will lead to **cancellation of candidature**.

CSE 2023 Data:

- 10.1 lakh candidates applied, but only 5.9 lakh appeared.

DHAKA

Bangladesh frees 178 paramilitary troops over deadly 2009 mutiny



Bangladesh released 178 former paramilitary troops on Thursday, nearly 16 years after their detention for a violent mutiny in 2009 that resulted in 74 deaths, including Army officers, detained members of the government of then-premier Sheikh Hasina. The troops had been acquitted of murder but faced charges related to explosives. **AP**

JENIN

Hundreds leave West Bank camp during Israeli raid, savs official



Hundreds of residents in the Jenin refugee camp have begun evacuating their homes on Thursday amid a large-scale Israeli military operation, Israeli forces reportedly ordered evacuations using loudspeakers, though the Army claimed it was unaware of any such orders. The operation has resulted in many casualties. **AP**

SEATTLE

Judge temporarily blocks Trump's order ending birthright citizenship



A federal judge temporarily blocked U.S. President Trump's executive order ending birthright citizenship for children born in the U.S. to undocumented parents. Citing the 14th Amendment, Judge John C. Goughnour ruled against the order, which was set to take effect on February 19, amidst lawsuits from 22 States. **AP**

WASHINGTON

U.S. calls Venezuela's Gonzalez Urrutia 'the rightful President'



The U.S. recognised Venezuelan Opposition leader Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia as the "rightful President," rejecting Nicolas Maduro's third term. In a call with Marco Rubio, Mr. Gonzalez emphasised restoring democracy and releasing political prisoners. The U.S. and allies have dismissed Mr. Maduro's election claims. **AP**

Putin is 'increasingly concerned' about status of Russia's economy

Domestic economic activity has become strained in recent months by labour shortages and high interest rates introduced to tackle inflation; Putin is ready to discuss ceasefire options but wants Russia's territorial gains in Ukraine to be accepted

Reuters

MOSCOW

President Vladimir Putin has grown increasingly concerned about distortions in Russia's wartime economy, just as Donald Trump pushes for an end to the Ukraine conflict, five sources with knowledge of the situation have said.

Russia's economy, driven by exports of oil, gas and minerals, grew robustly over the past two years despite multiple rounds of Western sanctions imposed after its invasion of Ukraine in 2022. But domestic activity has become strained in recent months by labour shortages and high interest



Steady talks: Vladimir Putin holds a meeting of supervisory board of the Agency for Strategic Initiatives in Moscow on Thursday. **AP**

rates introduced to tackle inflation, which has accelerated under record military spending.

That has contributed to the view within a section of the Russian elite that a negotiated settlement to the

conflict, Europe's biggest since the Second World War.

This week, he has said more sanctions, as well as tariffs, on Russia are likely unless Mr. Putin negotiates, adding that Russia was heading for "big trouble" in the economy. A senior Kremlin aide said on Tuesday Russia had so far received no specific proposals for talks.

"Russia, of course, is economically interested in negotiating a diplomatic end to the conflict," Oleg Vyugin, former deputy chairman of the Central Bank of Russia said in an interview, citing the risk of growing economic distortions as Russia turbocharges military and defence spending.

Mr. Vyugin was not one of the five sources, who all spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the situation in Russia.

Reuters has previously reported that Mr. Putin is ready to discuss ceasefire options with Mr. Trump but that Russia's territorial gains in Ukraine must be accepted and that Ukraine must drop its bid to join the U.S.-led NATO military alliance.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov acknowledged "problematic factors" in the economy, but said it was developing at a high rate and was able to meet "all military requirements" as well as all welfare and social needs.

Associated Press

WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump used an address on Thursday to the World Economic Forum to promise global elites lower taxes if they bring manufacturing to the U.S. and threatened to impose tariffs if they don't.

Speaking by video from the White House to the annual summit in Davos, Switzerland, on his third full day in office, Mr. Trump ran through his flurry of executive actions since his swearing-in and claimed that he had a "massive mandate" from the American people to bring change. He laid out a carrot-and-stick approach for private investment in the U.S.

"Come make your product in America and we will give you among the lowest taxes as any nation



Donald Trump

said on Thursday that the kingdom wants to invest \$600 billion in the U.S. but that he would ask Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to increase it to \$1 trillion.

Mr. Trump, who promised to end the Russia-Ukraine war before taking office, said it remained a top priority, but he offered few clues for how he would do so.

"One thing very important: I really would like to be able to meet with President Putin soon and get that war ended," Mr. Trump told the Davos audience. "We really have to stop that war. That war is horrible."

Earlier in his address, Mr. Trump laid blame on the OPEC+ alliance of oil exporting countries for keeping the price of oil too high for much of the nearly three-year war.

Mr. Trump said he would have to pay a tariff — differing amounts — but a tariff, which will direct hundreds of billions of dollars and even trillions of dollars in our treasury to strengthen our economy and pay down debt, under the Trump administration."

Mr. Trump, who spoke on Wednesday to Saudi Arabia's crown prince, also

U.S. WHO exit jeopardises Africa, says health body

Reuters

DARAR

The U.S. plan to withdraw from the World Health Organisation (WHO) will squeeze Africa's health initiatives, the Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention said on Thursday, calling on African countries to find alternative sources of financing.

U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order on the WHO exit on Monday, shortly after his inauguration to a second term.

Potential impact
The concerns raised by Africa's leading public health officials are a sign of the potential impact of the U.S. decision on the UN agency's ability to fight diseases and respond to emergencies round the

Zimbabwe's Finance Minister expressed concern that the U.S. withdrawal could signal health aid cuts

globe without its biggest funder.

Africa CDC senior official Nqasho Ngongo said many countries had been relying on U.S. investment via the WHO to fund public health drives.

"We know the role that the WHO has played on the continent... to really improve the delivery of health programmes," Mr. Ngongo told a media briefing.

"The reduction or the cutting of [U.S.] funding is definitely going to affect the response. It is time for some of the African partner states to rethink the fi-

ancing of public health," he said.

Zimbabwe's Finance Minister on Wednesday expressed concern that the U.S. withdrawal could signal cuts in health aid to countries such as his that are most affected by HIV/AIDS.

Explore opportunities
Mr. Ngongo said once Africa CDC takes stock of the situation, it might explore funding opportunities with other non-African countries to compensate for the expected fall in WHO support.

While Mr. Ngongo does not expect Mr. Trump's order to have a big impact on Africa CDC, he expressed concern a joint action plan for the health body had been developing with the U.S. and that the exit could also now be at risk.

Momentary respite



Sun bakers: Hundreds of beachgoers cool off on Ipanema Beach as a heat wave hits Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on Wednesday. The city recorded a staggering perceived temperature of 62.3 degrees Celsius this month, the highest since records began. **AP**

S. Korea investigators recommend Yoon be charged with revolt

Agence France-Presse

SEOUL

South Korean investigators on Thursday recommended charging impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol with insurrection and abuse of power following a 51-day probe into his December 3 martial law declaration.

The Corruption Investigation Office (CIO) accused Mr. Yoon of conspiring with military commanders to disrupt the constitution-

al order and incite riots. Mr. Yoon, currently suspended from duties, declared martial law briefly before lawmakers voted it down.

He was arrested last week, becoming the first sitting South Korean President detained in a criminal investigation. His legal team has urged prosecutors to exercise a legitimate investigation. The case will now be handed to prosecutors, who have 14 days to decide on charges.

Anuja nominated for Best Live Action Short Film at 2025 Academy Awards

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

Anuja, a short film set in New Delhi, has on Thursday received a nomination for the Live Action Short Film category at the 97th Academy Awards. Directed by Adnan J. Graves and Sachitra Mattai, it competes against films like *A Lien* and *The Last Ranger*.

The nominations for 2025 Oscars, which were twice postponed earlier this month due to wildfires in Los Angeles, were announced by Bowen Yang



Decisive turn: The film tells the story of a gifted nine-year-old girl, Anuja, who must choose between education and factory work.

and Rachel Sennott. The film tells the story of a gifted nine-year-old girl, Anuja, who must choose between education and factory work alongside

her sister, impacting their futures. Produced by Ganeeet Monga and Mindy Kaling, it collaborates with the Sahaam Basak Trust to address child labour issues.

Additionally, *I Am Ready, Warden*, directed by Smriti Mundhra, is nominated in the Documentary Short Film category. Ms. Mundhra was earlier nominated for her film "St. Louis Superman" at the 2019 Oscars.

All We Imagine As Light is nominated for the Best Film Not in English Language at the 2025 BAFTA Film Awards.

The Oscars will take place on March 2 at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles.

Rubio picks Central America for his first trip

Agence France-Presse

WASHINGTON

Marco Rubio will pay his first trip as U.S. secretary of state to Central American nations including Panama, where President Donald Trump has threatened to seize the Panama Canal, a spokesperson said on Thursday.

Mr. Rubio, who is the first Hispanic and first fluent Spanish speaker to serve as the top U.S. diplomat, has vowed to put a top priority on Mr. Trump's goal of curbing migration from Central American nations.

State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce said Mr. Rubio would travel starting late next week to Panama as well as Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and Dominican Republic.

Pakistan passes Bill tightening control over social media

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Lower House of Parliament has passed a controversial Bill granting the government extensive controls over social media, including the ability to imprison users for spreading disinformation.

The Bill was expedited after Opposition lawmakers, protesting the law, staged a walkout. Critics argue it threatens freedom of speech, with human rights

activists claiming it expands executive power over both content and social media platforms.

The new law mandates that platforms register with a regulatory authority and criminalises disinformation, punishable by up to three years in prison and fines.

Despite widespread opposition, the ruling government defends the legislation as necessary to combat misinformation and hate speech.

Momentary respite



Sun baked: Hundreds of beachgoers cool off on Ipanema Beach as a heat wave hits Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on Wednesday. The city recorded a staggering perceived temperature of 62.3 degrees Celsius this month, the highest since records began. AFP

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🕒 THIS STORY IS FROM MARCH 19, 2024

Heat wave: Record index of 62.3C scorches Rio de Janeiro

A heat wave stifling Brazil set new records on Sunday, with Rio de Janeiro's heat index hitting 62.3 degrees Celsius, the highest in a decade, weather authorities said. The previous heat index record was set in November, when it hit 59.7C. Meanwhile, extreme rains were wreaking havoc in the south of the country and are forecast to continue next week, according to authorities.

AFP

Mar



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Mannan Community



The head of the Mannan community will participate in the Republic Day parade in Delhi as a guest of the Scheduled Tribes (ST) Development Department. He is the only tribal king in Kerala,

This marks the first time a tribal king will attend the parade.

About Mannan community

It is mainly settled in the buffer zone area of the **Idukki Wildlife Sanctuary** at Kozhimala, the hub of the tribe with 48 settlements ruled by a king.

- The king is an **integral part of the traditional functions and festivities of the community.**
- He wears a **turban or headgear** and **special dress** on such occasions and will be assisted by two Ministers and soldiers during the functions.

- They maintain their unique customs, rituals, and a strong reverence for their traditional kingship.
 - To sustain themselves, they cultivate basic crops, collect forest produce, and engage in manual labor or cattle breeding.
- Mannankoothu is a unique tribal art form performed by the Mannan community.
 - It narrates the story from the classic tamil poem Chilapathikaaram.

An aerial photograph of a majestic, snow-covered mountain peak, likely Mount Everest, under a clear blue sky. The mountain's rugged, rocky ridges are partially covered in white snow, creating a stark contrast. The surrounding landscape is a vast, snow-covered plateau with distant mountain ranges visible on the horizon. The text "Mt Everest" is overlaid in a clean, white, sans-serif font in the center of the image.

Mt Everest

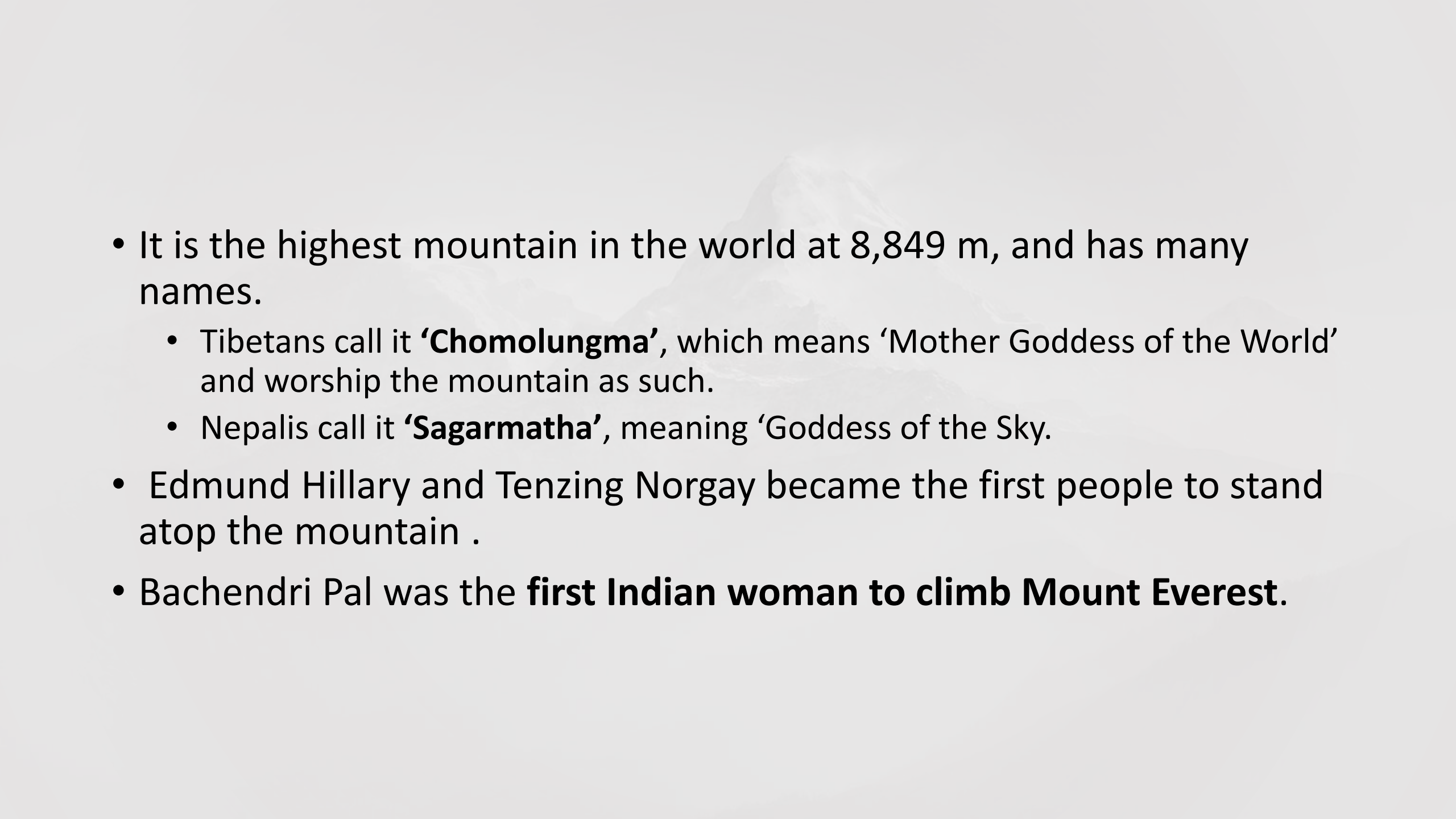
The government of Nepal is increasing the permit fees for climbing Mount Everest from USD 11000 to USD 15000, making it more expensive for mountaineers.



Mount Everest


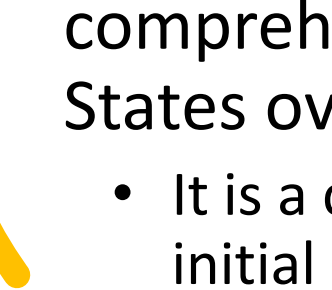


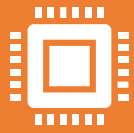
It is located between Nepal and Tibet.

- 
- It is the highest mountain in the world at 8,849 m, and has many names.
 - Tibetans call it '**Chomolungma**', which means 'Mother Goddess of the World' and worship the mountain as such.
 - Nepalis call it '**Sagarmatha**', meaning 'Goddess of the Sky.'
 - Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay became the first people to stand atop the mountain .
 - Bachendri Pal was the **first Indian woman to climb Mount Everest.**

Stargate Project



- 
- The United States has launched a significant initiative under the “Stargate Project” to strengthen its artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities.
 - **What is Stargate?**
 - Stargate is a **\$500 billion** initiative designed to establish a comprehensive **artificial intelligence (AI) infrastructure** in the United States over the next **four years**.
 - It is a collaborative effort between **OpenAI, SoftBank, and Oracle**, with an initial \$100 billion investment.
- 




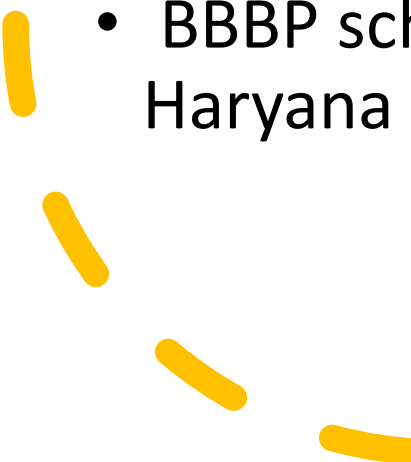
The project involves constructing **massive data centers** and campuses across the country to support the development and deployment of AI technologies at scale.



Stargate is envisioned as a critical step toward re-industrializing the United States and enhancing its technological capabilities.

10th Anniversary of BBBP and Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana



- 
- 22nd January 2025 marked the 10th year of the launch of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme and Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana.
 - Celebrations are planned from 22nd January to 8th March (International Women's Day) and include the launch of the Mission Vatsalya and Mission Shakti portals.
 - BBBP scheme was launched on 22nd January 2015, in Panipat, Haryana and SSY was launched as part of BBBP scheme.
- 

Integration with Mission Shakti:

The BBBP scheme is now integrated with Mission Shakti, a program for women's safety and empowerment, for implementation during the 15th Finance Commission (2021-2026).

Mission Shakti consists of two sub-schemes: Sambal (Safety and Security): Focuses on women's safety through initiatives like One Stop Centres (OSCs), Women Helpline (181), nationwide expansion of BBBP, and Nari Adalat for grievance redressal.

Samarthya (Empowerment): Empowers women through Shakti Sadans (relief and rehabilitation homes), Sakhi Niwas (safe accommodation for working women), and Palna (Creche facilities).

Funding: BBBP is a centrally sponsored scheme with **100% funding by the Central Government** in all the districts of the country under **Sambal sub-scheme of Mission Shakti**.

District-level **financial aid** is allocated as per SRB i.e., **Rs 40 lakh (SRB \leq 918), Rs 30 lakh (SRB 919-952), and Rs 20 lakh (SRB $>$ 952).**

Achievements in 10 Years:

SRB: The national SRB improved from 918 in 2014-15 to 930 in 2023-24.

Education: Girls' Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in secondary education rose from 75.51% in 2014-15 to 78% in 2023-24.

Institutional Deliveries: Institutional deliveries increased from 61% in 2014-15 to 97.3% in 2023-24.

- Mission Vatsalya
- **About:** Mission Vatsalya aimed at **child protection and development** aligned with **SDGs**.
 - It emphasizes **child rights, advocacy, and awareness**, while strengthening the **juvenile justice system** to ensure "**no child is left behind.**"
-



Start Saving for a Bright Future of Girls Invest in Dreams with **Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana**

- For girls up to **10 years of age**
- Deposit of minimum **₹ 250**; maximum **₹ 1.5 lakh** per financial year
- Enjoy an **interest rate of 8.2%**
- Easily transfer the account across India between **Post Offices/ Banks**





Boreal Forests

- **Key Findings of the Study:**

- Boreal forests are **warming four times faster than the global average.**

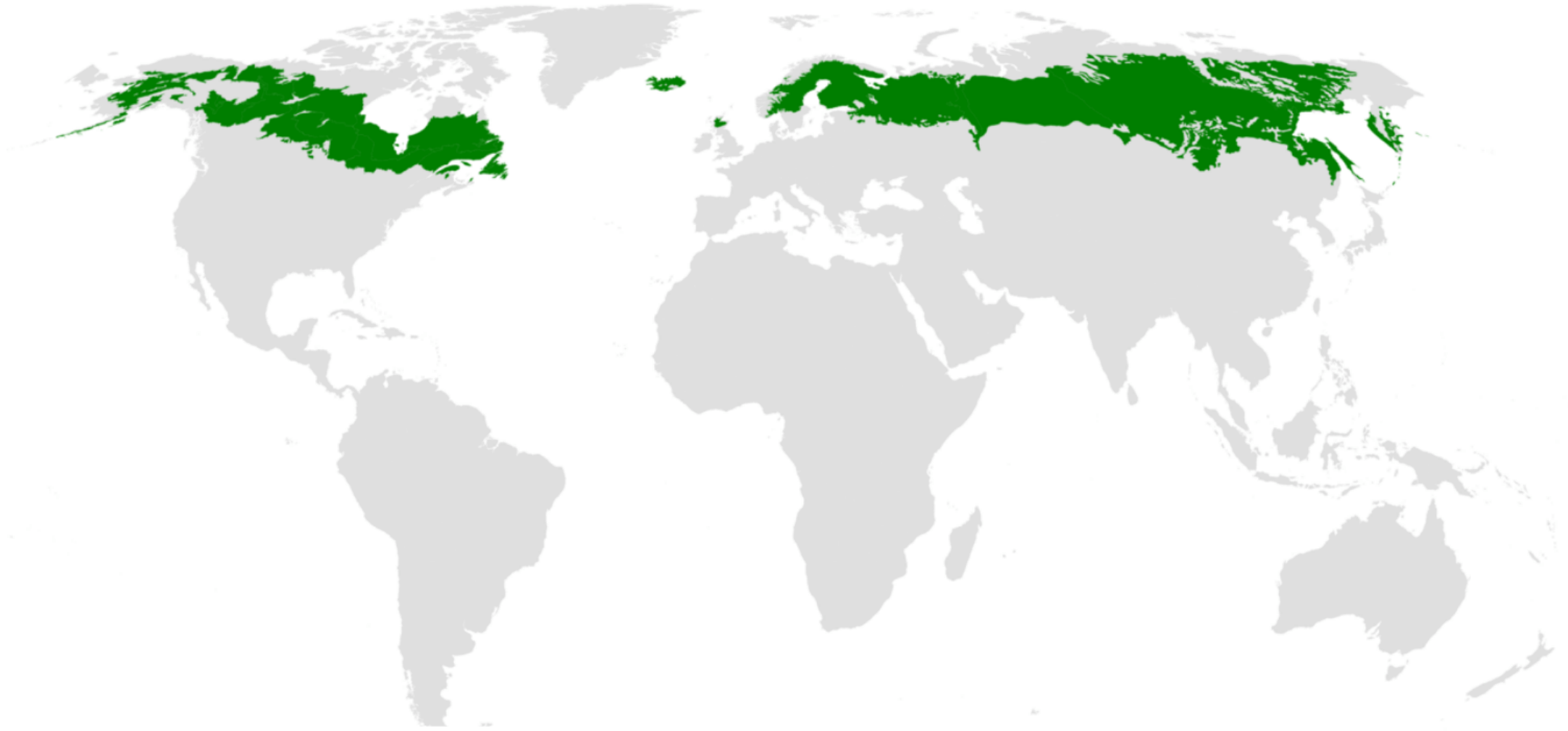
- Boreal forests are transitioning to an **open state (with sparse tree cover)**, reducing their **carbon storage capacity** and increasing **wildfire risks**, with tree density decreasing from south to north.

- **Boreal Forests:**

- The boreal forest (or "**taiga**") is the **world's largest land biome**, covering **30% of global forest area** and **10% of Earth's land surface**.
- The boreal ecozone principally spans **eight countries in the Northern Hemisphere** (Canada, China, Finland, Japan, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the US).
- Boreal forests are dominated by coniferous trees **like pine, spruce, and fir**, along with some broadleaf species such as **poplar and birch**.
- They thrive in **high-latitude** environments.
 - Contains **more surface freshwater than any other biome**, significantly impacting northern oceans and global climate.

Taiga and Boreal Forest Global Distribution

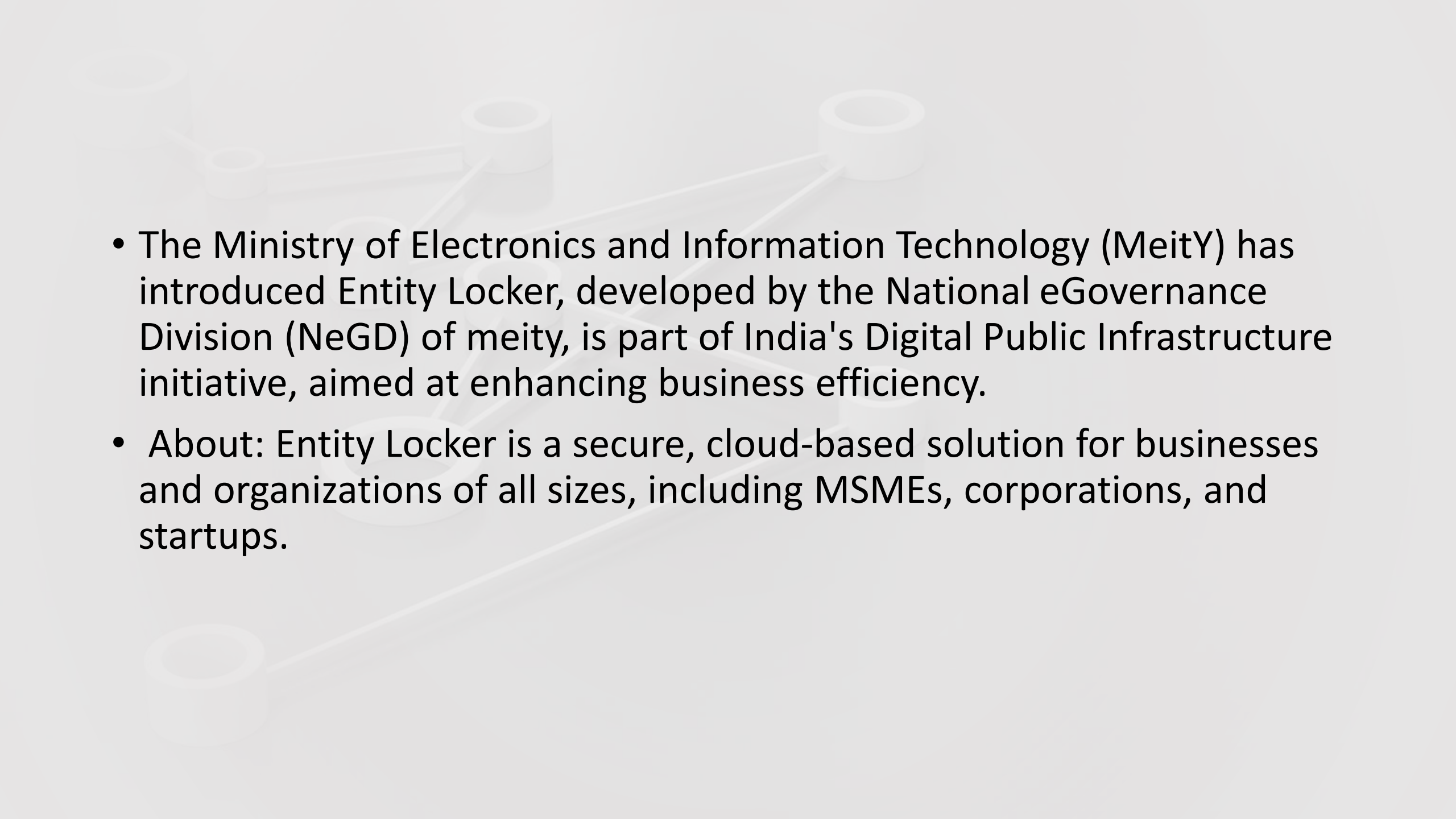
The taiga or boreal forest covers much of Canada, Alaska, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Estonia, and Siberia and parts of Scotland, Iceland, Mongolia, Japan, and Kazakhstan.



This biome does not occur in the Southern Hemisphere.

A glowing green padlock icon is centered on a dark blue background with a complex circuit board pattern. The padlock is rendered with a bright green, pixelated or particle-like texture, giving it a digital or futuristic appearance. The background consists of a dense network of thin, light blue lines and dots, resembling a circuit board or a data network. The overall aesthetic is high-tech and secure.

Entity Locker

- 
- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has introduced Entity Locker, developed by the National eGovernance Division (NeGD) of meity, is part of India's Digital Public Infrastructure initiative, aimed at enhancing business efficiency.
 - About: Entity Locker is a secure, cloud-based solution for businesses and organizations of all sizes, including MSMEs, corporations, and startups.

The platform enables real-time document access and verification through integration with government agencies like the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN), and Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), and other regulatory bodies.

Key Features:

Features encrypted cloud storage, digital signature authentication and Aadhaar-authenticated role-based access for secure, accountable document sharing



Dhanauri Wetland



- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Uttar Pradesh government to provide a detailed status report within four weeks regarding the notification of the Dhanauri Wetland, near the Jewar airport, as a wetland.



Location: Situated in **Dhanauri village** near Dankaur in Gautam Buddha Nagar district, Uttar Pradesh.

River Association: Though primarily a standalone wetland, it forms part of the **Yamuna River basin** ecosystem.

Features and Uniqueness:

Home to **217 bird species**, including **150 Sarus Cranes**, the state bird of Uttar Pradesh.

Recognized as an **Important Bird Area (IBA)** by **BirdLife International**.

During peak migratory seasons (November-March), it hosts up to **50,000 waterfowl**.

Documented by the **Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)** for its ecological significance.

A blurred photograph of a modern office interior. In the background, several people are seated around a long wooden table, engaged in a meeting. The scene is brightly lit by large windows, creating a soft, out-of-focus atmosphere. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

Top 10 MCQ from the session for
every exam

- According to a recent study, when did iron usage begin in Tamil Nadu?
- हाल ही में जारी एक अध्ययन के अनुसार, तमिलनाडु में लोहे का उपयोग कब शुरू हुआ?
- A. 1500 BCE
- B. 2000 BCE
- C. 3345 BCE
- D. 1000 BCE

- What scientific method was used to verify the iron findings in Tamil Nadu?
- तमिलनाडु में लोहे की खोज की पुष्टि के लिए कौन सी वैज्ञानिक विधि का उपयोग किया गया?
- A. Carbon Dating / कार्बन डेटिंग
B. Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS) and Optically Stimulated Luminescence (OSL) / एक्सीलेरेटर मास स्पेक्ट्रोमेट्री (AMS) और ऑप्टिकली स्टिम्युलेटेड ल्यूमिनेसेंस (OSL)
C. X-ray Diffraction / एक्स-रे विवर्तन
D. DNA Sequencing / डीएनए अनुक्रमण

- What did the High Court rule about the use of loudspeakers in religious places?
- उच्च न्यायालय ने धार्मिक स्थलों में लाउडस्पीकर के उपयोग पर क्या निर्णय दिया?
- A. Loudspeakers can be used at all times / लाउडस्पीकर का उपयोग हर समय किया जा सकता है
- B. Loudspeaker usage is not an essential part of any religion / लाउडस्पीकर का उपयोग किसी भी धर्म का अनिवार्य हिस्सा नहीं है
- C. Loudspeaker use must be allowed in all religious places / सभी धार्मिक स्थलों में लाउडस्पीकर के उपयोग की अनुमति दी जानी चाहिए
- D. Loudspeaker usage should be banned nationwide / लाउडस्पीकर के उपयोग पर पूरे देश में प्रतिबंध लगाया जाना चाहिए

- Which Indian state is actively promoting archaeological research on iron usage?
- कौन सा भारतीय राज्य लोहे के उपयोग पर पुरातात्विक अनुसंधान को सक्रिय रूप से बढ़ावा दे रहा है?
- A. Maharashtra / महाराष्ट्र
B. Tamil Nadu / तमिलनाडु
C. Karnataka / कर्नाटक
D. Gujarat / गुजरात

- Under the SAGAR initiative, how many square kilometers have been surveyed by Indian Navy hydrographic vessels in the last five years?
- सागर पहल के तहत, भारतीय नौसेना के हाइड्रोग्राफिक जहाजों ने पिछले पांच वर्षों में कितने वर्ग किलोमीटर का सर्वेक्षण किया है?
- A. 50,000 sq. km.
B. 70,000 sq. km.
C. 89,000 sq. km.
D. 1,00,000 sq. km.

- What is the purpose of the newly introduced “Entity Locker” by MeitY?
- MeitY द्वारा पेश किए गए "एंटीटी लॉकर" का उद्देश्य क्या है?
- A. Secure, cloud-based storage solution for businesses / व्यवसायों के लिए सुरक्षित, क्लाउड-आधारित भंडारण समाधान
- B. A new banking system for startups / स्टार्टअप्स के लिए एक नई बैंकिंग प्रणाली
- C. A security software for government agencies / सरकारी एजेंसियों के लिए एक सुरक्षा सॉफ्टवेयर
- D. A biometric identity verification system / एक बायोमेट्रिक पहचान सत्यापन प्रणाली

- What is the primary concern about Boreal forests as per recent studies?
- हाल के अध्ययनों के अनुसार बोरियल जंगलों को लेकर मुख्य चिंता क्या है?
- A. They are warming four times faster than the global average / वे वैश्विक औसत की तुलना में चार गुना तेजी से गर्म हो रहे हैं
B. They are expanding rapidly into tropical areas / वे तेजी से उष्णकटिबंधीय क्षेत्रों में फैल रहे हैं
C. They are becoming less carbon-absorbent / वे कार्बन अवशोषण में कमी ला रहे हैं
D. Both A and C / दोनों A और C

- Which Indian wetland is awaiting notification from the Uttar Pradesh government?
- कौन सा भारतीय वेटलैंड उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार से अधिसूचना की प्रतीक्षा कर रहा है?
- A. Loktak Lake / लोकतक झील
B. Dhanauri Wetland / धनौरी वेटलैंड
C. Sambhar Lake / सांभर झील
D. Ropar Wetland / रोपड़ वेटलैंड

- What is the significance of the Stargate Project launched by the United States?
- संयुक्त राज्य अमेरिका द्वारा शुरू की गई "स्टारगेट परियोजना" का महत्व क्या है?
- A. It is a \$500 billion AI infrastructure initiative / यह एक \$500 बिलियन की एआई बुनियादी ढांचा पहल है
- B. It is aimed at space exploration / यह अंतरिक्ष अन्वेषण पर केंद्रित है
- C. It focuses on blockchain technology / यह ब्लॉकचेन तकनीक पर केंद्रित है
- D. It is a global defense initiative / यह एक वैश्विक रक्षा पहल है

- What anniversary was celebrated for Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) and Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana in 2025?
- 2025 में बेटी बचाओ बेटी पढ़ाओ (BBBP) और सुकन्या समृद्धि योजना की कौन सी वर्षगांठ मनाई गई?
- A. 5th anniversary / 5वीं वर्षगांठ
- B. 10th anniversary / 10वीं वर्षगांठ
- C. 15th anniversary / 15वीं वर्षगांठ
- D. 20th anniversary / 20वीं वर्षगांठ

Word of the day

Knavery:

lack of honesty; acts of lying, cheating, or stealing

Synonyms: trickery, mischief, deceit

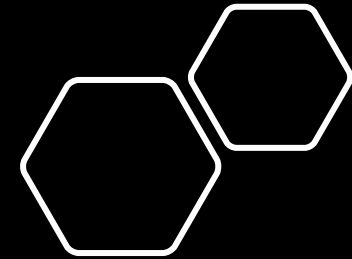
Usage: *She was punished for her knavery when she stole money from her friend.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/knaverypro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /neɪvəri/



For feedback and suggestions for



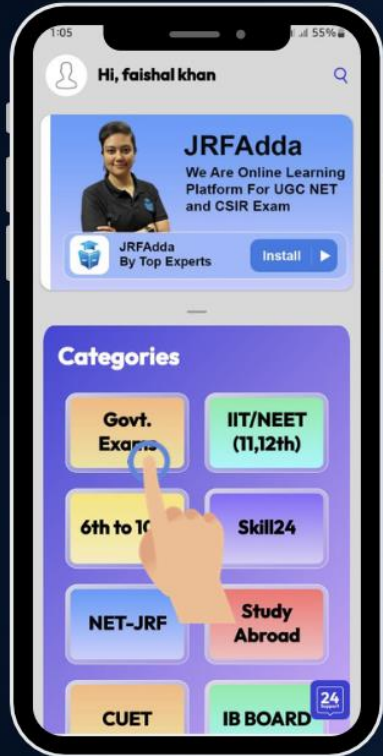
Fun fact



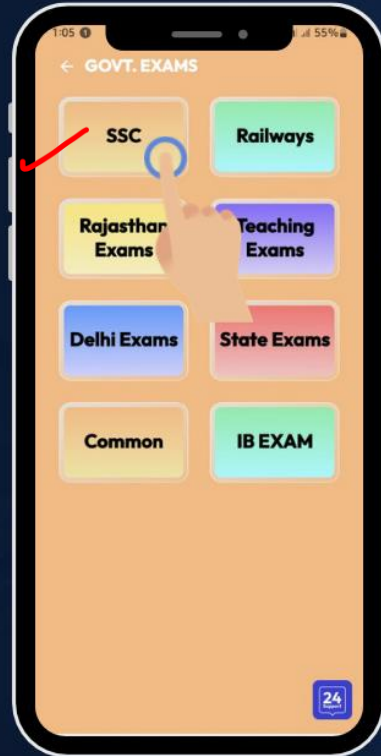
A close-up photograph of a person's hands playing a large, round drum. The drum has a wide, flat top and a decorated rim with colorful, intricate patterns in red, blue, green, and yellow. The person is wearing a blue and white vertically striped long-sleeved shirt. The background is blurred, showing other people and drums, suggesting a group performance or ceremony. The text "No Indigenous People" is overlaid in white, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

No Indigenous People

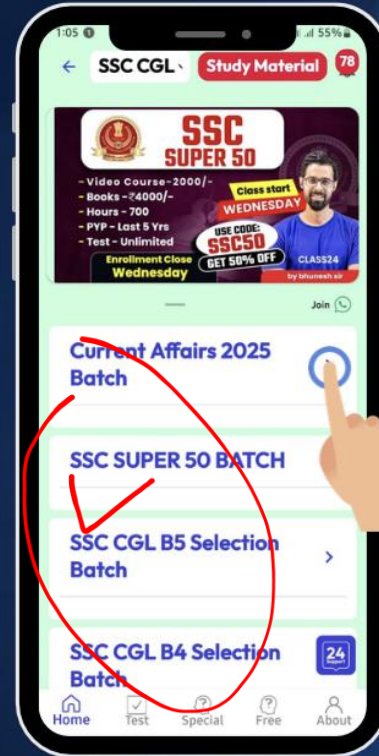
Step 1



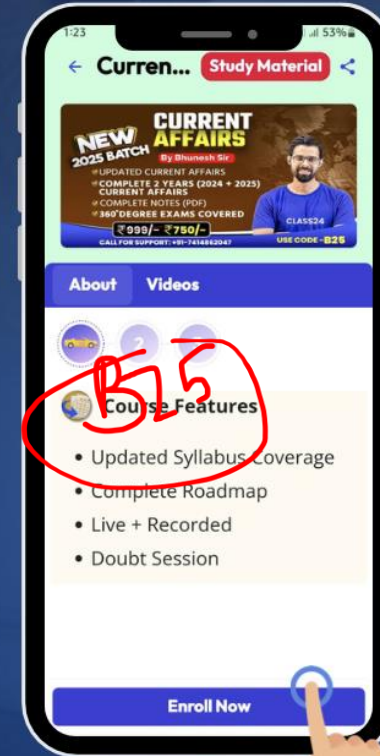
Step 2




Step 3



Step 4





Thank you
guys.
