

Daily Current Affairs



जनसत्ता



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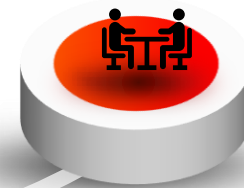
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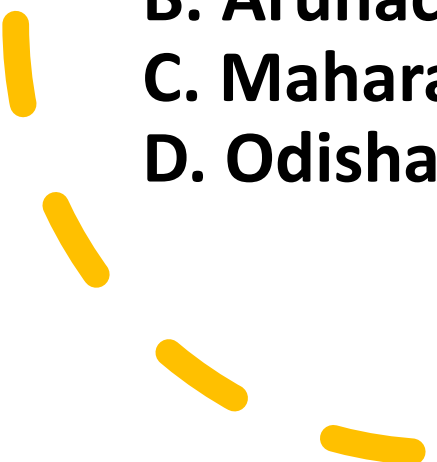


10 MCQ QUIZ

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 is overlaid in the center of the image.

Top 10 MCQ from the session for
every exam


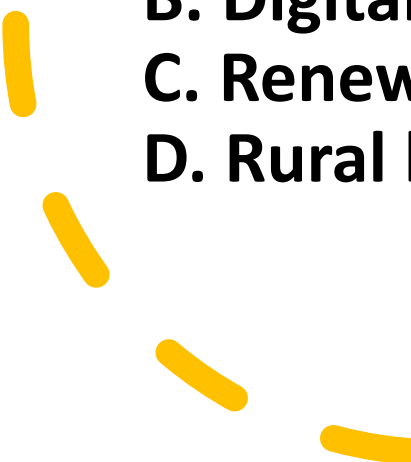
- What is the primary focus of the recently launched **Phewa Dialogue** between Nepal and China?
नेपाल और चीन के बीच हाल ही में शुरू किए गए फेवा संवाद का मुख्य उद्देश्य क्या है?
- **A. Regional prosperity and economic integration / क्षेत्रीय समृद्धि और आर्थिक एकीकरण**
- **B. Military cooperation and security alliances / सैन्य सहयोग और सुरक्षा गठबंधन**
- **C. Tourism development and cultural exchange / पर्यटन विकास और सांस्कृतिक आदान-प्रदान**
- **D. Infrastructure and energy projects / बुनियादी ढांचा और ऊर्जा परियोजनाएं**

- 
- Which Indian state has the highest forest cover as per the latest Forest Survey report?
नवीनतम वन सर्वेक्षण रिपोर्ट के अनुसार किस भारतीय राज्य में सबसे अधिक वन क्षेत्र है?
 - **A. Madhya Pradesh / मध्य प्रदेश**
 - **B. Arunachal Pradesh / अरुणाचल प्रदेश**
 - **C. Maharashtra / महाराष्ट्र**
 - **D. Odisha / ओडिशा**
- 

- The GST rate on **fortified rice kernels** has been reduced from 18% to what percentage?

पोषणयुक्त चावल कर्नेल्स पर जीएसटी दर 18% से घटाकर कितने प्रतिशत कर दी गई है?

- A. 5%
- B. 10%
- C. 12%
- D. 15%

- 
- The **SMILE programme** funded by ADB focuses on which key area?
एडीबी द्वारा वित्तपोषित **SMILE कार्यक्रम** का मुख्य ध्यान किस क्षेत्र पर है?
 - A. Logistics and supply chain resilience / लॉजिस्टिक्स और आपूर्ति श्रृंखला की मजबूती
 - B. Digital education infrastructure / डिजिटल शिक्षा बनियादी ढांचा
 - C. Renewable energy projects / नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा परियोजनाएं
 - D. Rural healthcare systems / ग्रामीण स्वास्थ्य देखभाल प्रणाली
- 

- Which of the following is **exempted from GST** as per the latest tax reforms?

नवीनतम कर सुधारों के अनुसार निम्नलिखित में से किसे जीएसटी से छूट दी गई है?

- A. Electric vehicles / इलेक्ट्रिक वाहन
- B. Gene therapy and long-range missiles / जीन थेरेपी और लंबी दूरी की मिसाइलें
- C. Sweetened popcorn / मीठा पॉपकॉर्न
- D. Fortified rice / पोषणयुक्त चावल

- What percentage of India's total geographical area is currently covered by green cover?

भारत के कुल भौगोलिक क्षेत्र का वर्तमान में कितने प्रतिशत हरित आवरण से आच्छादित है?


- **A. 20.17%**
- B. 21.76%**
- C. 25.17%**
- D. 26.41%**

- 
- What is the **carbon sequestration target** under India's green cover for 2030?

2030 तक भारत के हरित आवरण के तहत **कार्बन भंडारण लक्ष्य** क्या है?


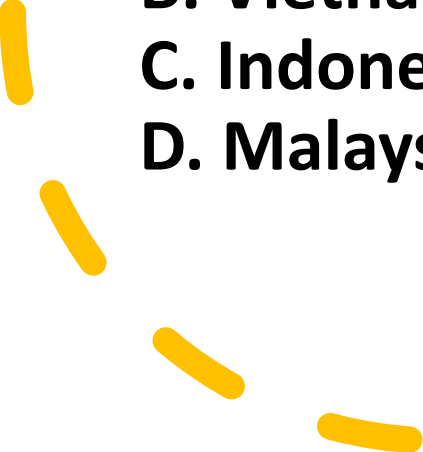
- **A. 2.29 billion tonnes**
 - **B. 2.5 billion tonnes**
 - **C. 3 billion tonnes**
 - **D. 3.5 billion tonnes**
- 

- The **INS Astradharini**, recently in the news, is best described as:
हाल ही में चर्चा में रहा **आईएनएस अस्त्रधारिणी**, किस रूप में सबसे अच्छी तरह वर्णित है?
- **A. Amphibious warfare ship / उभयचर यद्धपोत**
- **B. Torpedo launch and recovery vessel / टॉरपीडो लॉन्च और रिकवरी पोत**
- **C. Nuclear-powered submarine / परमाणु ऊर्जा चालित पनडुब्बी**
- **D. Aircraft carrier / विमानवाहक पोत**

- 
- Under the **VIRAASAT Sari Festival**, how many people are employed in India's handloom sector?

विरासत साड़ी उत्सव के तहत भारत के हस्तकरघा क्षेत्र में कितने लोग कार्यरत हैं?

- A. 2 million / 20 लाख
 - B. 3.5 million / 35 लाख
 - C. 4 million / 40 लाख
 - D. 5 million / 50 लाख
- 

- 
- Which country received the first batch of BrahMos supersonic missiles from India under a \$375-million deal?
375 मिलियन डॉलर के समझौते के तहत किस देश को भारत से ब्रह्मोस सुपरसोनिक मिसाइलों की पहली खेप मिली?
 - **A. Philippines / फिलीपींस**
 - **B. Vietnam / वियतनाम**
 - **C. Indonesia / इंडोनेशिया**
 - **D. Malaysia / मलेशिया**
- 

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Coming Soon!

Electricity and Magnetism

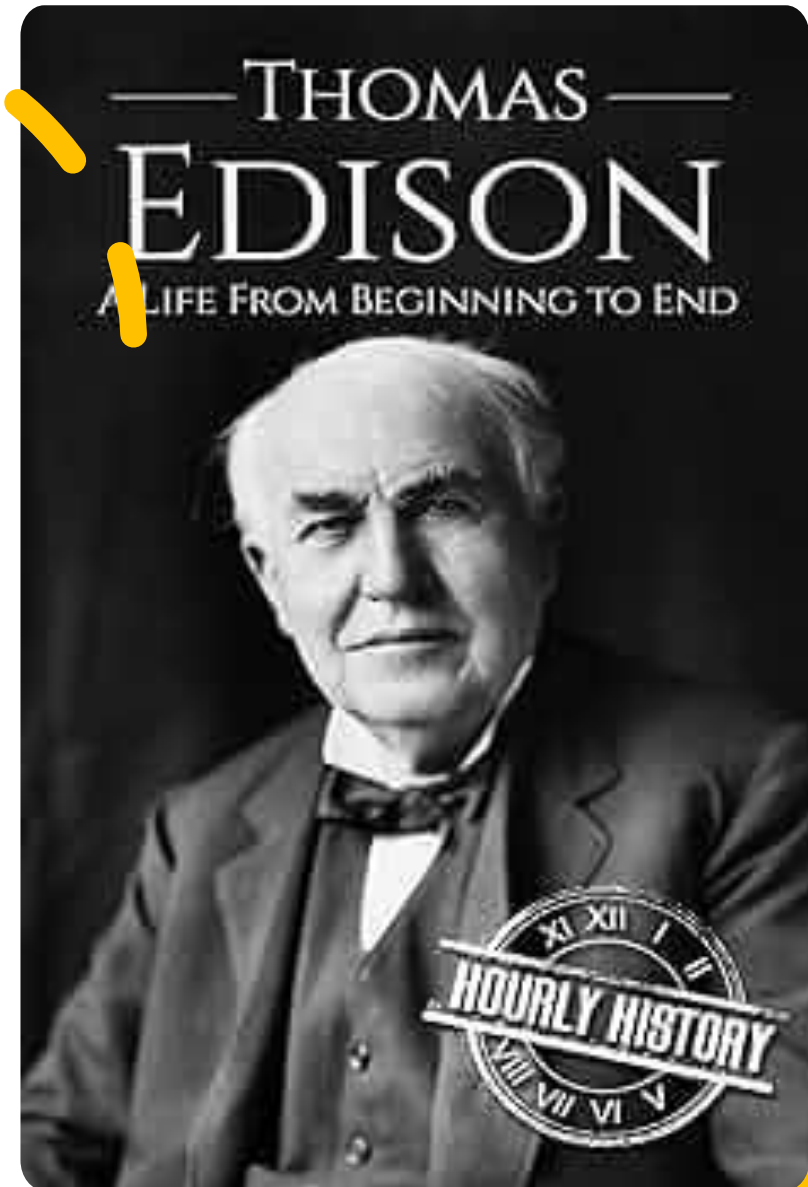
2024-12-13 at 9:00 AM

Starts In: 02:07:22

Coming Soon!

Thomas Edison, cited in *Various Biographies*


- “Genius is one percent inspiration, ninety-nine percent perspiration.” –





HIGH-LEVEL TRIP
Faishankar to begin six-day U.S. visit today
NEWS > PAGE 4

CHANGE IN RULES
Centre scraps 'no detention policy for Classes 5, 8
NEWS > PAGE 6



SRI LANKAN FAMILY'S CAUSE
'PM's silence on 13A due to lack of pressure'
WORLD > PAGE 14

DATA POINT
Denial of visas for Indians in Australia
It is linked to fraud, not housing crisis
OPINION > PAGE 5



CAUSING A FLUTTER
Raghu stuns Sathish, meets Mithun in final
SPORT > PAGE 17

INSIDE



'Some progress made on Gaza hostage deal'
JERUSALEM
Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Monday that "some progress" had been made in negotiations to secure release of hostages held in Gaza. > PAGE 14

House panel flags excess spending by four Ministries
NEW DELHI
The Public Accounts Committee in a report tabled during the Winter session of Parliament, revealed that the Ministries of Finance, Defence, Railways, and Chemical & Fertilizers spent ₹1,29,14,000 in excess of the 2023-22 Budget sanctioned by Parliament. > PAGE 5



Rahul Gandhi meets kin of Dalit man in Parbhani
MUMBAI
Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, met the family of Samarth Suraywansi, who died in judicial custody after being arrested in connection with a protest in Maharashtra's Parbhani. > PAGE 4

Suspected Khalistan operatives clocked down in Uttar Pradesh

The deceased were involved in a grenade attack at a police post in Punjab on Dec. 18; Punjab DGP calls encounter a 'breakthrough' against terror module; police suspect the man behind the Bakshiwalwa attack is linked to the British Army

Samaridhi Tewari
NEW DELHI

Three pro-Khalistan operatives linked to a recent grenade attack in Punjab were killed in an encounter in Pilibhit district of Uttar Pradesh, the police said. The three men killed in the joint-operation by Uttar Pradesh and Punjab police personnel were identified as Gurvinder Singh, 25; Varinder Singh, 23; and Jassanpreet Singh, 18. All were residents of Gurdaspur in Punjab.

Gaurav Yadav, Director General of Police, Punjab, said the encounter was a breakthrough against the "Khalistan Zindabad Force (KZF) terror module" sponsored by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). The deceased were involved in a grenade attack at the Bakshiwalwa police post in Gurdaspur on December 18, he added.

"The KZF had claimed responsibility for the act," Mr. Yadav said.



Terror trail: Police personnel and others at a hospital after the encounter in Pilibhit district of Uttar Pradesh on Monday. PTI

'British man linked'

Following reliable inputs that the accused had fled to Uttar Pradesh, a joint operation was launched. When confronted, the accused opened fire at the police party, prompting retaliation. In the exchange of fire, the trio sustained bullet injuries and were rushed for medical treatment. Deputy Inspector General of Police (Border Range), Satinder Singh of the Punjab Police, said. The police recovered two AK-47 rifles and two 3mm

Clock pistols from their possession. The police also suspect the mastermind of the Bakshiwalwa attack on December 18 to be a British Armyman. Jagjeet Singh, reportedly working in British Army and having assumed the identity of Parbh Nita, the chief of KZF, and was operated by Grewal-based Jaswinder Singh Mannu, a native of Agwan village in Kalanaur, Mr. Yadav said. "Varinder, who led the module, belonged to Agwan village, and was further controlled

by U.K. based Jagjeet Singh," the police said. "Investigation is under way to expose all connections and members of this terror module and more arrests and recoveries." Senior Superintendent of Police, Gurdaspur, Harish Dayama said.

A senior police officer from Punjab Police said one of the deceased accused was earlier working as a driver, while another had criminal cases against him. "Now, we shall investigate what their plan was in Pilibhit, if they were

planning to move towards another location, and who was sheltering them and helping them with logistics. It is an entire network that we need to crack down on," the officer said. Explaining the commonality between those suspected of Khalistan activities, another officer said, "They are usually men involved in criminal activities, from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, who are radicalised and involved in influencing youth. We are investigating these trends."

Bangladesh writes to India seeking Hasina's extradition

Bangladesh has sent India a note verbale seeking the extradition of its deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the adviser on foreign affairs to the interim government Touhid Hossain informed the media in Dhaka on Monday.

The confirmation came hours after Lieutenant-General Mohammad Jahangir Alam Chowdhury (retd.), adviser on home affairs, informed that the interim Government of India seeking the extradition of Ms. Hasina. The Ministry of External Affairs confirmed receiving the request.

"We have sent a letter to the Foreign Ministry seeking repatriation of Sheikh Hasina. The matter is being processed. We have an extradition treaty with India," he told presspersons in Dhaka.

Following the communication from Bangladesh, official spokesperson of Ministry of External Affairs, Randhir Jalwal said, "We confirm that we have received a note verbale from the Bangladesh High Commission today in connection with an extradition request. At this time, we have no comment to offer on this matter."

Dozens of cases

Ms. Hasina left Dhaka on August 5 and ever since has been living in exile in India. Soon after her departure, dozens of cases were filed against her and members of the erstwhile Awami League government by students and activists who



Sheikh Hasina

He faced the brunt of the police crackdown during the last weeks of her rule. Apart from the deaths in police crackdown between July and August 2024, Ms. Hasina is facing cases of kidnaping and deaths in encounter during her 16-year long rule. She is also facing inquiries over the Pilibhata killing case of 2009 and the killings in a rally of Hefazat-e-Islam. Several members of her Ministries and several other members of the armed forces who served under her are facing inquiries.

Arrest warrant

Bangladesh issued an arrest warrant against Ms. Hasina in October but the legal process is yet to unfold. The cases filed against her are expected to be heard in the coming months.

In 2015, India had extradited convicted killer Nur Hossain of the infamous Narayanganj seven-murders case. He was given a death sentence in 2022 by a Dhaka court.

That apart, the extradition of Prashanta Kumar Halder, accused of committing multiple financial frauds in Bangladesh, is pending. Mr. Halder remains wanted by the authorities in Bangladesh.

Benegal, guiding light of parallel cinema, bids farewell at 90

Shilpiti Mitra
MUMBAI

Filmmaker Shyam Benegal, a giant of Indian cinema and one of the guiding lights of the parallel cinema movement, passed away due to kidney-related ailments in Mumbai on Monday. He was 90.

His daughter, Pia Benegal, confirmed the news of his death to PTI. "He passed away at 6:38 p.m. at a local hospital in Mumbai Central. He had been suffering from chronic kidney disease for several years but it had gotten very bad," she said.

Mourning the *Ankur* director's death, Naseeruddin Shah shared over a text message: "It is impossible to describe in a few words what Shyam meant to me. I wonder what I would have become if he hadn't have faith in me when no one else did. He and Nira (Benegal's wife) were a huge support in my difficult

Kashmiri artisans give wings to the dodo

Made by locals in the Valley's *karthanas*, over 50,000 papier mache models of the bird, which became extinct in 1681 and was introduced to artisans by tourists two decades ago, have been shipped to markets in Europe and Mauritius this year

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

His Christmas, papier mache artisans in Srinagar have given wings to thousands of dodos, British bird that became extinct in 1681 within 80 years of its interaction with humans and exposure to depleting forests.

Reyaz Jan, in his 70s, who was giving final touches to a papier mache model of the bird at a *karthana* in Zaidibal area of Srinagar, says, "I was introduced to the shape and size of the bird from pictures. Of late, we download images. The shape and size of the bird is endearing. I fell in love with it at first sight. It's sad that the bird is no more seen anywhere."

Fast disappearing from people's memory, the *karthanas* and dodos, approximately three-feet tall, has a new

home in the papier mache world of Kashmir, which otherwise was mainly influenced by Persia, its motifs and figures.

The dodos, which originally had grey or brown plumage, come in many colours in the papier mache form with their interaction with adorning its body.

"The floral prints symbolise how it was the depleting forest cover that resulted in the extinction of the bird," Mr. Jan says.

With a magical touch of yellow to the hooked tips and stout legs and dark grey to the rear curly feathers, Mr. Jan gives life to the dodo, albeit in papier mache.

Christmas orders

Besides dangling balls, jingles, crescents, Santas, stars and boxes, this year Kashmir has exported these dodos in large quantities.

Over 50,000 papier

The bird is a very recent addition to the craft, which has been practised in Kashmir for over 600 years now.

mache dodos have set their feet in markets of Europe and Mauritius in East Africa this year, just ahead of Christmas.

"Dodos were last seen in Mauritius. The bird is important to the place and its national emblem."

"There were tourists from Mauritius who visited Kashmir and introduced the bird around 1960-65 ago. There is no written record though of who exactly got it here. It's a very rare addition to the array of articles Kashmir produces in

paper mache," Mr. Jan said.

Thanks to those unknown tourists, the dodo has got wings and the demand for them is only growing with each passing day. Papier mache artisans of Kashmir are keeping the memory of dodos in their craft space is making them in their homes and exporting them to the place where it went extinct and elsewhere.

Mahmood Shah, who served as Director Handicrafts and Handloom in Kashmir till recently, said he told *The Hindu*.

paper mache," Mr. Jan said.

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Domestic food needs, says Joshi

A. M. Huseeb
NEW DELHI

On National Consumer Day, the Union Food and Consumer Affairs Ministry will launch Jago Grahak Jago App, Jagrahri App, and Jagrahri Dashboard to protect consumers from the dark patterns on the internet.

Talking to *The Hindu* on Tuesday, Union Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said the government's efforts are to balance between the interests of consumers and producers by Vice-President Jagdeep Thakhar on enhancing minimum support price, and said interest of consumers is served when there is abundant availability of food commodities produced by the farmers.

INTERVIEW ON
PAGE 5

Benegal, guiding light of parallel cinema, bids farewell at 90

Shilajit Mitra
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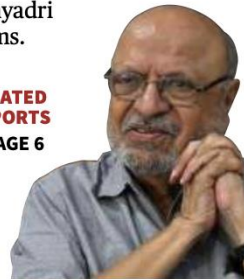
Mourning the *Ankur* director's death, Naseeruddin Shah shared over a text message: "It is impossible to describe in a few words what Shyam meant to me. I wonder what I would have become if he hadn't had faith in me when no one else did. He and Nira (Benegal's wife) were a huge support in my difficult

days. He did whatever he could with his life-right to the end. Not many people can claim to have done that."

Benegal, celebrated for poignant and hard-hitting films like *Ankur*, *Nishant*, *Mandi*, *Manthan* and *Zubeidaa*, examined the many fault lines of Indian society, tackling issues of feudalism and caste while ceaselessly experimenting with the cinematic form. His vast filmography boasts several masterpieces that altered the course of Indian cinema.

He also produced several of his own films under the banner of Sahyadri Films.

RELATED REPORTS
» PAGE 6



Shyam Benegal



Shyam Benegal at his office in Mumbai in 2010

Born	14 December 1934 Tirumalagiri, Hyderabad State, India (now in Telangana, India)
Died	23 December 2024 (aged 90) Mumbai, Maharashtra, India
Occupation(s)	Film director , screenwriter
Works	Full list
Spouse	Nira Benegal
Children	1
Relatives	Guru Dutt (cousin)
Awards	1976 Padma Shri 1991 Padma Bhushan 2005 Dadasaheb Phalke Award 2013 ANR National Award

Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha

In office

16 February 2006 – 15 February 2012

SOME OF BENEGAL'S BEST WORKS



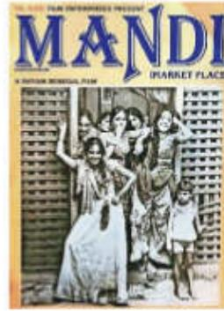
ANKUR (1974)
Shyam Benegal's directorial debut explores caste, class, and gender dynamics. After his marriage is delayed, Surya (Anant Nag) takes charge of his father's estate and starts an illicit relationship with Lakshmi (Shabana Azmi), a married poor Dalit woman



MANTHAN (1976)
It is an inspiring tale of the cooperative movement in rural India, focusing on dairy farmers' empowerment. Funded by contributions from farmers, it showcased the resilience of marginalised communities through collective action



BHUMIKA (1977)
Inspired by the life of Marathi actress Hansa Wadkar, the film explores a woman's quest for independence amid societal expectations and personal turmoil. Smita Patil delivered a solid performance as the protagonist torn between her roles as an artist, wife & mother



MANDI (1983)
Mandi is a satirical take on politics, power, and morality set in a brothel. The film highlights the hypocrisy of society while addressing issues like urbanisation and women's agency. Shabana Azmi and Smita Patil deliver memorable performances



BHARAT EK KHOJ (1988)
This 53-episode Indian television series, based on Jawaharlal Nehru's *The Discovery of India* (1946), explores India's rich history, cultural diversity, and philosophical heritage from ancient times to the Independence



SURAJ KA SATVAN GHODA (1992): Based on the novel *The Sun's Seventh Horse* by Dharamvir Bharati, the film revolves around a storyteller unravelling three interconnected love stories from his past, exploring the complexities of human relationships & social hierarchies



SARDARI BEGUM (1996)
Sardari Begum is a tribute to the life and struggles of a classical singer navigating societal constraints and personal aspirations. The film explores themes of art, individuality, and gender dynamics in a patriarchal setup



ZUBEIDAA (2001)
It tells the tragic story of a free-spirited woman trapped by societal norms and personal dreams. Featuring Karisma Kapoor as the titular protagonist, the National Award-winning film is a poignant exploration of love, sacrifice, and ambition

- **Early Life and Influences**

- Born in Hyderabad, Shyam Benegal drew inspiration from his cousin, Satyajit Ray, and the works of Guru Dutt.
 - हैदराबाद में जन्मे, श्याम बेनेगल ने अपने चचेरे भाई सत्यजीत रे और गुरु दत्त के कार्यों से प्रेरणा ली।
- Believed in portraying meaningful cinema rather than focusing on entertainment.
 - मनोरंजन के बजाय अर्थपूर्ण सिनेमा दिखाने में विश्वास किया।

Contributions to Indian Cinema

Pioneering the Indian New Wave

- Focused on social realities, addressing issues like marginalization in films such as *Ankur* (1974) and *Manthan* (1976).
- सामाजिक वास्तविकताओं पर ध्यान केंद्रित किया, *अंकुर* (1974) और *मंथन* (1976) जैसी फिल्मों में हाशिए के मुद्दों को उजागर किया।

Champion of Voiceless Stories

Highlighted struggles of farmers, sex workers, and marginalized groups without resorting to hyperbole.

- किसानों, यौन कर्मियों, और हाशिए के समूहों के संघर्षों को बिना अतिरंजना के उजागर किया।

Cinematic Innovation

Merged idealism with satire, as seen in *Kalyug* and *Bhumika*.

- आदर्शवाद और व्यंग्य को मिलाया, जैसा कि *कल्युग* और *भूमिका* में देखा गया।

Used music not decoratively but as a storytelling device.

- संगीत को सजावट के रूप में नहीं बल्कि कहानी कहने के उपकरण के रूप में उपयोग किया।

Legacy and Impact

Mentorship and Creativity

- Introduced talent like Shabana Azmi and Naseeruddin Shah, urging actors to go beyond their comfort zones.
- शबाना आज़मी और नसीरुद्दीन शाह जैसे प्रतिभाओं को पेश किया, और अभिनेताओं को उनकी सीमाओं से परे जाने के लिए प्रेरित किया।

Documenting History

Films like *The Making of Mahatma* and *Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose* captured historical narratives with depth.

- *द मेकिंग ऑफ महात्मा* और *नेताजी सुभाष चंद्र बोस* जैसी फिल्में ऐतिहासिक कहानियों को गहराई से प्रस्तुत करती हैं।

Advocacy for Diversity

Strongly advocated for pluralism, stating that “we are constitutionally bound to protect minorities.”

- विविधता के लिए दृढ़ता से वकालत की, यह कहते हुए कि "हम संवैधानिक रूप से अल्पसंख्यकों की रक्षा करने के लिए बाध्य हैं।"

Notable Works

Ankur, Nishant, Manthan, Bhumika, The Discovery of India.

- अंकुर, निशांत, मंथन, भूमिका, द डिस्कवरी ऑफ इंडिया।

Shyam Benegal's films remain timeless, reflecting the changing contours of Indian society while challenging the norms of his time.

श्याम बेनेगल की फिल्में कालातीत हैं, जो भारतीय समाज की बदलती रूपरेखा को प्रतिबिंबित करती हैं और अपने समय के मानदंडों को चुनौती देती हैं।

IN BRIEF

Rainath Singh pays tributes to ex-Haryana CM O.P. Chautala

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday visited Teja Khera in the Sirsa district and paid tributes to former Haryana Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala, who passed away last week. Mr. Singh reached the Chautala family farmhouse in the Teja Khera village and met the departed Indian National Lok Dal (INDL) chief's sons Abhay Singh Chautala, who is an INLD leader and Ajay Singh Chautala, who heads the JJP party. He also met O.P. Chautala's younger brother and former Haryana Minister Ranjit Singh Chautala and offered condolences to the Chautala family. O.P. Chautala died in Gurugram on Friday. He was 89.

Shiv temple reopens in U.P. Muslims shower flowers

A Shiv temple in Ladhawala, a predominantly Muslim locality under the jurisdiction of Gorwal police station in Muzaffarnagar, was reopened on Monday with a Huraz and Muslims showering flowers on a procession by Hindus. The Shiv temple was built in 1971. However, during the communal tensions triggered by Ayodhya incident in 1992, Hindu families from the locality migrated, taking the temple's idols with them. Since then, the temple had remained closed. City Magistrate Vikas Kashyap confirmed that the reopening was conducted peacefully.

Leaders of ruling, Opposition parties in J&K join protesters over reservation policy

Peerzada Ashiq SRINAGAR

Cutting across party lines, several mainstream leaders, including national-level leaders, including National Conference (NC) MP Aga Syed Ruhullah and Opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) leader Ilteja Muttqi, joined hundreds of students on Monday to protest outside the residence of J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah in Srinagar to seek rationalisation of reservation quotas. An online protest has been gathering momentum in Kashmir for many months over the new reservation policy approved during Central rule in the Union Territory. Aggrieved general category students and job aspirants allege that the new reservation policy under the J&K Reorganisation Act increased the reservation quota of Scheduled Tribes by 20% by including Paharis, and in-

Numbers now



creased the OBC quota to 8%. At present, the quota for reserved category in J&K has risen to over 60% and the open category has reduced to less than 40%, aggrieved students said. Joining the protesters in Srinagar despite being from the ruling party, Mr. Ruhullah said, "We are not against reservation to any community that requires government hand-holding because of being disadvantaged. However, any irrational reservation deserves justice." The NC MP said reservation should be done as per the population ratio or follow the Supreme Court ruling capping reservation at 50%. Leaders of the PDP and incarcerated MP Engineer Rashid-ud-Awami Richard Party (AIP) also joined the protest in Srinagar. Unemployment rate has touched over 35% in J&K. We want equitable distribution and an end to students' distress in J&K," said Ms. Muttqi. AIP legislator

Nitish embarks on first phase of 'Pragati Yatra' to showcase his work

Bihar CM announces several development projects in West Champaran; he will cover six districts till Dec. 28 before returning to Patna; second leg of the yatra to begin from Gopalganj on Jan. 4

Amarnath Tewary PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar embarked on the first phase of his 'Pragati Yatra' from Valmikinagar in West Champaran district on Monday to showcase the State's development over 20 years of his government.

He announced several development projects, and will hold review meetings with officials.

Mr. Kumar will cover six districts till December 28, and kickstart the second leg of the yatra from Gopalganj on January 4. He is scheduled to visit the neighbouring East Champaran district on December 24, the adjoining districts of Sheohar and Sitamarhi on December 26; Muzaffarpur on December 27; and Vaishali on December 28, before returning to Patna.

Elaborate arrangements have been put in place for the Chief Minister's yatra, with 500 police personnel, and ISO officials and magistrates deployed to ensure safety and security.



CM Nitish Kumar visits a stall during his 'Pragati Yatra' in West Champaran on Monday. Minister Vijay Chaudhary is also seen. ANI

Mr. Kumar was to embark on a 'Mahila Samwad Yatra' from December 15 but following a jibe on the yatra's name from Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad, and his younger son and leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly Tejashwi Yadav, the name was changed to Pragati Yatra. Mr. Yadav had criticised the alleged expenditure of ₹225 crore from the State exchequer on the yatra, terming it a "sheer waste of public money".

When the new yatra was announced, Mr. Yadav, while speaking to journalists in Madhepura on December 17, remained critical.

"Due to his habit, character, conduct and fickleness, Nitish Kumarji has changed the name of the same yatra in a fortnight. This shows how mentally disturbed and unstable he has become," he said.

The yatra is being undertaken by a tired Chief Minister and retired officials to extort money from district-level officers by threatening them with transfer," said Mr. Yadav, currently in the midst of his 'Karvaktara Samwad' (dialogue with party workers) Yatra across Bihar.

The CM has no itinerary planned for Christmas on December 25.

BJD alleges discrepancies in voting patterns in Odisha polls

Satyasundar Barik BHUBANESWAR

Six months after facing its first electoral defeat since its inception, the BJP-led NDA Dal (BJD) on Monday raised serious concerns over alleged discrepancies in the voting patterns observed during the general and Assembly elections in Odisha. The party's claims came after the regional party said in an analysis of the voting data submitted to the Election Commission of India (ECI).

"The ECI's conduct of election is always expected to be fair and transparent. However, BJD has identified some serious discrepancies in the data provided by the various returning officers, vis-a-vis the data provided by the ECI," the party said in a memorandum submitted to the ECI on Monday.

The party said there were massive differences in votes polled in a booth and the total votes counted from the same electronic voting machine (EVM). "How is this possible? This should not be the case as the total number of votes counted by the returning officer cannot vary from the report of votes polled by the presiding officer especially when EVMs are used," the party said.



Biju Janata Dal MP coming out of the Election Commission office in Bhubaneswar on Monday.

and the total votes counted from the same electronic voting machine (EVM). "How is this possible? This should not be the case as the total number of votes counted by the returning officer cannot vary from the report of votes polled by the presiding officer especially when EVMs are used," the party said. "The variance in these cases is quite high and is high enough to possibly impact the final outcome of the election in a booth

EC has succumbed to BJP govt's pressure, says Tamil Nadu CM

The Hindu Bureau CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK president M.K. Stalin on Monday said democracy was facing its gravest threat under the BJP-led Union government with the reckless amendment of Section 93(2)(a) of the Conduct of Election Rules, which he alleged would kill transparency in the election process.

The move to amend the rule follows a recent direction to the Election Commission of India (ECI) by the High Court of Punjab and Haryana High to furnish all documents related to the process. Assembly elections, including closed-circuit television (CCTV) camera footage from a polling booth. The Union government brought in this amendment to prevent public inspection of election documents, including CCTV camera footage, that are destroying one of the basic features of the Constitution, Mr. Stalin said in a social media post.

"The BJP-led Union government has already launched the 'Maa-Bahin Maan Yojana' (mother-sister respect scheme) under which they would ensure ₹2,500 every month.



M.K. Stalin

has raised serious concern (sic)," Mr. Stalin alleged. He added that it was "shocking" that the EC, instead of fighting for institutional integrity, had "willingly succumbed to the pressure of Prime Minister Modi's government" in "defacing" the free and fair election process.

He appealed to all political parties, including those part of the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA), to come forward and "counter this undemocratic assault on free and fair elections."

CM reviews progress of development work in Rajasthan

The Hindu Bureau JAIPUR

Infrastructure development works and the tasks identified in the industrial sector in this year's budgetary announcements are being implemented in Rajasthan ahead of the 2025 State Budget. Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel Khushoo reviewed the progress of works here on Monday, while directing the officials to formulate time-bound action plans.

The State Assembly's budget session is likely to begin in January-end and the budget presentation will take place in the first week of February 2025. Assembly Speaker Vasudev Devnani met Governor Harbhau Kishanrao Bagde in this connection recently.

"Full accountability" Mr. Sharma said the development works would be completed with full accountability and transparency to ensure the State's progress. He identified water and power supply, upgradation of stone clusters, development of industrial areas and the installation of plants for treatment of polluted water as some of the important works which should be completed on time.

While reviewing the implementation of announcements made for 32 departments of the State government, the Chief Minister said all of them would submit their progress reports regularly. He asked the Public Works Department officials to issue tenders for identical works simultaneously in order to save time and start the public utility works promptly. Mr. Sharma said the Brahmani river dam project would ensure the availability of sufficient water in southern and western Rajasthan, for which the Water Resources Department would speed up the work.

Delhi govt. reassessing conjugal visits in prisons after initiative halted in Punjab

Souham Rocky Singh NEW DELHI

The Delhi government is reassessing a proposal to permit conjugal visits for prisoners in the city's jails after a pilot project in Punjab was suspended a few months after its launch. Considering Punjab's experience, the Delhi Chief Minister has sought further inputs from the Law Department on the feasibility of implementing such a project, according to Delhi government standing counsel Anuj Aggarwal. The Chief Minister has also sought to know whether schemes are being implemented in other States. Conjugal visits, also referred to as 'private family visits', involve allowing prisoners to spend private time with their legal partners or spouses, including intimate relations, within the confines of a prison.

Notably, India lacks a specific policy framework governing the conjugal rights of prisoners. Earlier this month, during the hearing of a 2018 public interest litigation (PIL) plea seeking the same, arrangements for providing conjugal visitation rights to prisoners lodged in the city's jails, the Delhi High Court was informed that the Delhi government is re-evaluating the issue based on the outcomes of the initiative in Punjab. In September 2022, Ludhiana Central Jail had introduced the 'Parivar Mitha Family Visit' programme, which allowed inmates to have face-to-face meetings with loved ones in specially designated rooms, also known as 'visiting rooms'. "We informed the court that conjugal visits in Punjab jails were suspended shortly after being introduced due to various rea-



A plea before the Delhi High Court has sought conjugal visitation rights for the inmates of Delhi's jails. GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

sons, including security concerns," said Mr. Aggarwal. "When women come to visit the facility, it is not feasible to conduct a thorough body check. This makes it challenging to ensure that no prohibited items are being concealed," he said. In October last year, the Director General of Prisons had submitted the proposal to the Delhi go-

vernment to consider alternatives in implementing conjugal visits in Delhi's overcrowded prisons, which already struggle to manage 1,200 daily visitors or 'mulakats'.

Legal precedents Legal precedents have established that prisoners have a right to conjugal visits. In 2014, the Punjab and Haryana High Court allowed a couple lodged in a prison precincts in order to bear a child. It held that "the right to procreate that survives incarceration". On November 1, 2018, the Madras High Court had permitted a life convict to go on two weekly visits to his wife following a plea by his wife that she was unable to have conjugal relations. In July last year, Justice S.M. Satharman of the Madras High Court requested the Tamil Nadu go-

vernment to consider alternatives to allow conjugal visits for inmates lodged in jails. "The government then assured the High Court that the proposal would be taken up with the Union Ministry of Home Affairs for further consideration. However, more than a year later, there has been no progress on the matter. According to a government source, jail authorities had highlighted in the

proposal to consider alternatives to allow conjugal visits for inmates lodged in jails. "The government then assured the High Court that the proposal would be taken up with the Union Ministry of Home Affairs for further consideration. However, more than a year later, there has been no progress on the matter. According to a government source, jail authorities had highlighted in the

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vernment to consider allowing prisoners to have conjugal relations with spouses within the prison precincts.

'Denial of basic rights'

Advocate and social activist Amit Sahni, who had filed the PIL plea before the Delhi High Court, said conjugal visitation rights are not provided by jail authorities in the national capital though most prisoners, over 85%, fall under the sexually active age group of 21-50.

He emphasised that the denial of conjugal visits is a denial of basic human rights to the spouse of the prisoner, who is "punished without any wrongdoing".

In 2019, the DG (Prisons) had filed an affidavit in response to the PIL plea, stating that "the State of Delhi grants temporary leave to convicts and prisoners in the form of facili-

ties such as parole and furlough for maintaining family and social ties, and therefore the purpose of conjugal relations between the prisoner and his/her spouse, while in prison, is served during the leave period".

Experts argue that a law and a policy framework are necessary to regulate conjugal visits. "It would be necessary to make a law and frame rules for such visits, particularly when there are various riders and impediments with regard to outsiders even touching inmates or making any kind of physical contact," said S.D. Singh, an advocate in the Supreme Court.

He emphasised that the legislature must recognise conjugal visits as an "important legal right by enacting a law, enabling its implementation with and without court orders".

Key Points

Proposal Reassessment

- Delhi government is reassessing a proposal to permit conjugal visits in prisons.
- The move follows a pilot project in Punjab, which was suspended due to various issues.
- Inputs are being sought from the Law Department for feasibility and from other states with similar programs.

- **Conjugal Visits Definition**

- Also called "private family visits," they allow prisoners to spend private time with their spouses, including intimate relations, within designated areas.

- **Pilot Project in Punjab**


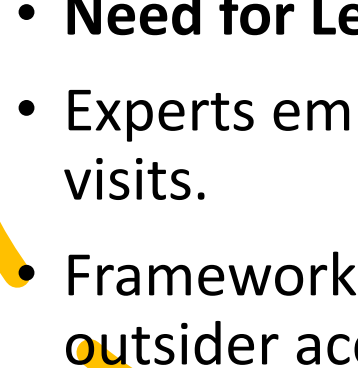
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- Suspended after a few months due to security concerns and operational challenges.

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- **Legal Precedents**

- Courts have established prisoners' rights to conjugal visits:
 - Punjab and Haryana High Court (2014): Recognized the right to procreation during incarceration.
 - Madras High Court (2018): Granted parole for conjugal rights.

- 
- Advocates argue denial of such visits violates basic rights of prisoners and their spouses.
 - **Operational Challenges in Delhi**
 - Overcrowded prisons with over 1,200 daily visits already strain resources.
 - Security concerns include potential smuggling of prohibited items.
 - **Need for Legal Framework**
 - Experts emphasize the necessity of a clear law and rules to regulate conjugal visits.
 - Framework needed to address impediments like physical contact restrictions and outsider access.
- 

- **Broader Implications**

- Recognizing conjugal visits is seen as a step toward acknowledging the rights of prisoners to family life.
- Legislative recognition of conjugal visits is highlighted as essential for human rights.

NETFLIX

MAAMLA LEGAL HAI

**OFFICIAL
TRAILER**





Showing the way: Shyam Benegal's works will continue to be admired, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

End of a glorious chapter: President

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, filmmakers Shekhar Kapur and Hansal Mehta, and actors Manoj Bajpayee, Akshay Kumar, and Kajol paid rich tributes to Shyam Benegal, remembering the director as someone who ushered in a "new kind of cinema". President Murmu said the passing of Benegal marks the end of a glorious chapter of Indian cinema and television. "He started a new kind of cinema and crafted several classics. A veritable institution, he groomed many actors and artists. His extraordinary contribution was recognised in the form of numerous awards including Dadasaheb Phalke Award and Padma Bhushan. My condolences to the members of his family and his countless admirers," she wrote in a post on X.

Mr. Modi said he was "deeply saddened" by the death of Benegal. "His works will continue to be admired by people from different walks of life. Condolences to his family and admirers. Om Shanti," he said. Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi called Benegal "a visionary filmmaker" who brought India's stories to life with depth and sensitivity.

Filmmaker who gave a voice to the voiceless, held dear the idea of India

Shyam Benegal experimented with form and technique, broke every boundary to document the changing contours of Indian society and kept evolving with times, be it farmers or sex workers, his protagonists questioned the social order with searing intensity without resorting to hyperbole

Anil Kumar
NEW DELHI

A peerless filmmaker who gave voice to the voiceless and documented the idea of India through his rich oeuvre, Shyam Benegal passed away on Monday in a Mumbai hospital at 90. One of the foremost oarsmen of the Indian New Wave, reality never escaped from Benegal's focus.

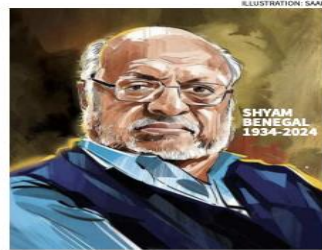
In 1970s, when Bollywood was looking for post-political justice through the angry Young Man, Benegal captured the silent resistance of the marginalised in feudal India with *Ankur* (1974), *Misham* (1975), and *Manthan* (1976).

Be it farmers or sex workers, his protagonists questioned the prevailing social order with searing intensity without resorting to hyperbole for the Dada Saheb Phalke Award winner saw cinema as a medium that can reflect the very act of living. Starting as an ad filmmaker, Benegal consistently experimented

with form and technique and kept evolving with times. His range of subjects remain unrivalled as Benegal broke every boundary to document the changing contours of Indian society. Budgets were never a constraint for his vision. Born to a photographer father in Hyderabad, Benegal discovered very early that there is nothing in the human experience that can't be depicted through the medium.

He grew up watching the works of Guru Dutt, his second cousin, but the real inspiration came from Satyajit Ray's *Pather Panchajali*. Like Ray, his films always found a theatrical release. He believed that the audience always stood for meaningful cinema.

From idealism to satire Music was integral to his cinema but not as a decorative device. The strains in *Rhumerik*, *Mandi*, and *Sardari Begum* scryed through the staccato myths of society and leave a mark on his early works were rooted in idealism, satire gradually found its way in films like *Welcome to Sajjangpur* and *Well Done*.



Ka Sarwan Ghoda. He brought crowd funding to Indian cinema much before it became a fad and made classics like *Manthan*, *Antarnad*, and *Sushman*. His touching trilogy woven around Muslim women, *Sardari Begum*, *Mammi*, and *Zubeida* brought

him back to the top billing in the 1990s.

Strong team of creatives He forged a strong team to document the changing contours of Indian society. He had a strong team of creatives with Govind Nihalani, Shama Zaidi, and Vanraj Bhatia to realise vision and introduced us to powerhouse talent like Shabana Azmi, Naseeruddin Shah, Rajit Kapoor, Salim Ghouse, and Rajeshwari Sachdev. All through, he challenged actors to go beyond their comfort zone. He had Smita Pathi and Amol Palekar in *Rhumerik*, Karisma Kapoor in *Zubeida*, the actors found a new life in Benegal's hands.

Someone who didn't wear his ideology on his sleeve, in *The Making of Mahatma*, he introduced us to Gandhi's psyche before he became the Mahatma and with equal passion documented the life of Subhas Chandra Bose in *The Forgotten Hero*. His objective gaze came through in *Bharat Ek Khoj*, an adaptation of Jawaharlal Nehru's *The Discovery of India* where he captured the spi-

rit of India. It was his most comprehensive work that has withstood the test of time. Not to forget *Samidhan* where he introduced the Constitution to young Indians. Behind that hard exterior, Benegal carried a gentle soul who would go the extra mile to make his actors feel comfortable. Humble to the core, he would always be ready to take criticism in his stride. Age didn't diminish his passion. In 2023, he came up with an engaging biopic of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Alive to the times, as the head of the committee formed to suggest changes in the working of Central Board of Film Certification, he suggested far-reaching changes. A strong advocate of the pluralist identity of India, when Aamir Khan spoke about growing intolerance in Indian society, Benegal had said, "You can and you should and you must raise your voice against intolerance. We are constitutionally bound to protect our minorities."

Centre scraps 'no-detention' policy for Classes 5, 8; lays stress on remedial measures

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Centre has done away with the "no-detention" policy for Classes 5 and 8, paving the way for schools to hold back students who are unable to clear year-end examinations.

The Ministry of Education has published a gazette notification dated December 16, titled "Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Rules, 2024", which states that if a child fails to fulfil promotion criteria in Classes 5 or 8 in the regular examination, they can be held back. In the Rules, the Ministry also emphasised the need for remedial measures for such students to close learning gaps.

While the Right to Education Act, 2009 has been amended to scrap the no-detention policy as early as



Students who are unable to fulfil the promotion criteria can still opt for a re-examination in two months

they shall be detained. "At the same time, no student should be expelled from school until Class 8," said Union School Education Secretary Sanjay Kumar. The Rules further state that if a child fails to fulfil the promotion criteria, as notified from time to time, they shall be given additional instruction and opportunity for re-examination within a period of two months, from the date of declaration of results. If the child fails to clear the re-exam, they should be held back.

When the child is held back, the class teacher shall guide the child as well as the parents, if necessary, and provide specialised inputs after identifying the learning gaps at various stages of assessment. Mr. Kumar further stated, "We also want the learning outcomes of the students to be better."

Amit Shah warns of disruptive powers of fake news in society

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Monday that "divisive forces are still active in the country today" emphasising that disinformation, misinformation, 'malinformation', and fake news had the power to disrupt the social fabric of the society with the help of new technology.

Mr. Shah spoke on the need to develop an intelligence coordination strategy with friendly nations to detect anti-India organisations and networks, and this strategy "must include offensive measures as well". He mentioned that merely sharing information is not enough and it should be ensured that vital intelligence was received from those nations as well. He also highlighted the need to take prompt and decisive action against



Amit Shah

hoax calls and fake emails, as enemies of the country were successfully creating an atmosphere of fear and terror among the public through these means. The Home Minister stressed that to reduce the spread of propaganda to zero, the country should have "strategy, technology, and readiness in place". He said that a country where social unity did not exist could not progress in any meaningful way. Mr. Shah delivered the 57th Intelligence Bureau Centenary Endowment Lecture on Monday.

Senior Naxal leader Prabhakar Rao held in Chhattisgarh

The Hindu Bureau
RAIPUR

A senior Naxal leader, carrying a reward of ₹25 lakh on his head, was arrested by the police in Kanker district of Chhattisgarh on Sunday.

Prabhakar Rao, alias Balmuri Narayan Rao, 57, was in charge of logistic supply, mainly weapons, to Maoist cadres in the conflict zone of Bastar, the police said in a statement. He was also the in-charge of Mobile Political School or MPOPS in the active Raipur district and he was arrested in the blockade operation conducted by the police under the Anti-garh police station area of Kanker district on Sunday. He did not reveal the further details of the operation and confidentiality.

The police statement added that Rao was the cousin of top Naxal leader Ganapati.

11 detained for a year on ship off the Odisha coast released

The Hindu Bureau
BHUBANESWAR

More than a year after remaining confined aboard a ship anchored in the high seas off Odisha's Paradip coast following the seizure of cocaine valued at ₹20 crore, 11 of the 21 crew members of *MV Debi* have been released.

The sailors had been stranded onboard as the Indian Customs Department continued its investigation.

As per the Customs, the 11 crew members, including six Vietnamese nationals, were allowed to disembark the ship. They will have to comply with the regulations of the immigration department. The Asia Pacific Shipping Company, a Vietnamese firm that owns the Panama-registered vessel, will have to ensure proper maintenance of the ship with 11 new crew members.

Crossword puzzle grid with clues: Across 1. Plug of TV set remained loose (3); 3. Surprises mother, finally cuts long hair (5); 9/2. Seem promising but ultimately disappoint with tale for detective novel (7,7); 11. Raw food consumed in a puerile manner (10); 12. Lounge in flames! Save boy (4).

Sudoku puzzle grid with clues: 14. Act foolishly, repent getting drunk at premiere (7); 16. Sore about husband cuddling secretary, start to take brave course of action (7); 17. Musical instrument over keel-shaped structure (7); 18. Party hosted by gal on fancy boat (7); 21. Parched! Reel in but don't drink water (finally) (4); 22. Fearless guards taunt criminals at centre to engage in a decisive gunfight (5,2,3); 25. Entranced by demure American on trip (9); 26. Stopped in English retro joint to have a little drink (5); 27. What welder might do to arouse sudden anger (4,4,3).

Sudoku puzzle grid with clues: 1. See 9 Across; 2. A seedy spot's going berserk around island - be careful! (4,4,2); 4. Revolving drunkard tackling couple of fine upper-class people (3); 5. Join forces with heroin-smuggling rascal (9); 6. Fantasy of steamy threesome (4); 7. Northern rogue in a rage, delivering ultimately pure ecstasy (7); 8. Match price to secure revolutionary diamonds for top collector (13); 10. Generous doctor! He operated without remuneration finally (6,7); 13. Popularity of new dinner sets (10); 15. The rat scurried into apartment over unsafe structure (9); 16. Folk tale character acting upset about protecting immature girl (3,4); 20. Egg-shaped cavity in gemstone, not soft (7); 25. Renovate retreats surrounding lake, becoming more decrepit (10); 26. Wish hot guy removes top (4).

FAITH: Christ's certitude on mercy. Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. It is believed that the saviour, Lord Jesus Christ, through his expiatory and redemptive suffering, paid for the sins of the world. The Holy Bible proclaims that God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son, said Prof. Ramool Abbi. In his teachings, Jesus emphasises the importance of love, peace, humanitarianism, compassion and forgiveness. He proclaims that those who are poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the pure in heart and the peacemakers, the persecuted are blessed. The redeemer stated the importance of being meek, loving, kind, humble and ethical. He taught that to be meek is not to be submissive, passive or weak. To be non-violent is rather being powerful and not to retaliate and offer the other cheek is a divine quality. He stated that to meek to me all those who are burdened. Thus he reassured us of the eternal certitude, mercy and promise of the love of God. He had come to comfort the meek, the afflicted, oppressed and wretched. He assured the weary, the lost, those who struggled to cope with sorrow by his suffering. He benevolently showed us how to bear our cross, our trials and tribulations and resign to the will of the Lord. He showed us that true love lay in surrender and acceptance of suffering and surrender to the will of the Lord. Thus Jesus Christ through his birth and death assured us of hope, salvation and promise of the eternal love of the Lord. Through his life and death he taught us to cope with sorrow and suffering.

Centre scraps 'no-detention' policy for Classes 5, 8; lays stress on remedial measures

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Centre has done away with the "no-detention" policy for Classes 5 and 8, paving the way for schools to hold back students who are unable to clear year-end examinations.

The Ministry of Education has published a gazette notification dated December 16, titled "Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Rules, 2024", which states that if a child fails to fulfil promotion criteria in Classes 5 or 8 in the regular examination, they can be held back. In the Rules, the Ministry also emphasised the need for remedial measures for such students to close learning gaps.

While the Right to Education Act, 2009 had been amended to scrap the no-detention policy as early as



Students who do not fulfil the promotion criteria can sit for a re-examination in two months

2019, the Rules have been notified only now. "Since the National Education Policy (NEP) was announced in 2020, we waited for the National Curriculum Framework document which was published in 2023, before coming out with the Rules," a senior Ministry official said.

After all other options are exhausted, if there is a need to detain the student,

they shall be detained. "At the same time, no student should be expelled from school until Class 8," said Union School Education Secretary Sanjay Kumar.

The Rules further state that if a child fails to fulfil the promotion criteria, as notified from time to time, they shall be given additional instruction and opportunity for re-examination within a period of two months, from the date of declaration of results. If the child fails to clear the re-exam, they should be held back.


When the child is held back, the class teacher shall guide the child as well as the parents, if necessary, and provide specialised inputs after identifying the learning gaps at various stages of assessment. Mr. Kumar further said, "We also want the learning outcomes of the students to be better."

- **Policy Change**

- The Centre has ended the 'no-detention' policy for Classes 5 and 8, allowing schools to hold back students who fail to clear year-end exams.
- Gazette notification titled "Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Rules, 2024" was issued on December 16.



- **Promotion and Detention Guidelines**


- Students failing promotion criteria will undergo remedial teaching and a re-examination within two months.
 - If they fail the re-exam, they will be detained. However, no child will be expelled from school until Class 8.
- 



- **Remedial Measures**

- Teachers are to identify learning gaps at different assessment stages.
- Parents will be involved in providing specialized guidance for detained students.

- **Historical Context**

- 
- The Right to Education Act, 2009, initially included the no-detention clause.
 - Amendments to scrap this policy were first introduced in 2019.
 - Implementation was delayed due to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the publication of the National Curriculum Framework in 2023.

- **Objective**
- The move aims to improve students' learning outcomes by bridging gaps in foundational skills through targeted interventions.



Envisioning India as a global skill supplier

In an address in August, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said that he was hopeful that India's skilled workforce will play a prominent role in the global job market. Global mega trends, such as demographic transitions, globalisation, technological advancements, and climate change, are significantly altering the demand for, and the supply of, international migrant workers. Amongst the various factors such changes, the skills of these workers are assuming centrality in public policy discourse.

Reviews of immigration policies respond to certain developments, such as an ageing society, digitalisation, declining fertility rates, and the need for economic diversification strategies to tackle the challenges of a global economy in environment, can be met only by welcoming international migrant workers with the relevant skills.

Can India rise to the occasion and bridge the skill gaps? Responding effectively to the skill needs of different destination countries is a complex task. Robust and evidence-based policy interventions are essential to facilitate skill-centred international labour migration outflows from India.

Fragmented policy structure
However, India still lacks a comprehensive policy architecture for international labour mobility. The policy interventions are fragmented and are often not based on evidence. The only data source for annual migrant labour outflows from India is the data on emigration clearances, which covers only those with an



S.K. Sankumar
Labour and migration analyst and former senior faculty, V.V. Giri National Labour Institute

educational attainment below matriculation and low skilled workers migrating to 18 select countries. Such data inadequacy stands as a major obstacle in formulating constructive policies. India's efforts to have mostly revolved around bilateral agreements on international labour mobility with different countries covering aspects such as work security, skills, protection, and welfare. These are primarily one-off exercises, not situated within a composite policy framework. Further, there are hardly any evaluations available on the outcomes of these pacts and the learnings from them.

India must design and operationalise a comprehensive national policy on international labour migration, with skill-centred migration anchored as one of the fundamental pillars. Such a policy should clearly set the road map for the different processes involved in transitioning India as the global skill capital.

The way forward
The critical step in this direction is to identify and anticipate the ever-changing skills in demand in the emerging global economy and the emerging skill gaps across different sectors and occupations. Organisations such as the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training are actively involved in skill forecasting for European countries using rigorous methodologies. Data and insights from regional and international skill-forecasting exercises, especially for the U.S., the U.K., and other countries, can help India respond to skill needs. This should be supplemented by big data analytics of real-time online job vacancies in destination countries for which India seeks to become the lead supplier of skills.

Once this is done, India's capacity to provide the requisite skill-centred mobility, and improve migration and development outcomes.

related to skill mobility and followed-up actions: introducing identified skills and competencies as a part of the curriculum in specific institutions; reorienting skill programs to India's emerging skill needs; creating customised international training geared towards destination countries; and so on. The priority must be to raise the quality of skill development to international standards. This calls for the convergence of the skill qualification systems of India and the destination countries. India also needs a review of the National Skills Qualification Framework to assess its effectiveness in aligning our qualifications with those of the major destination countries.

Considering that contemporary immigration policies encourage temporary, return migration is gaining prominence in international skilled migration flows. This is another area where India falls short: the optimum utilisation of return migrants' skills is one of the most neglected aspects of the country's migration policies. The best way to effectively reintegrate return migrants into the destination country and competencies they acquire in their key sectors and occupations, accredited by specialised skill certification institutions in those countries so that migrants can transition back effectively to the Indian labour market when they return.

Another pressing need is a skill-centred international labour migration information system, encompassing quantitative and qualitative indicators. Such a platform should regularly collate, generate, analyse, and report information and data on key indicators of skills and migration to enable evidence-based interventions. This will be pivotal in fostering skill partnerships between India and the principal destination countries, boosting skill-centred mobility, and improving migration and development outcomes.

The Naidu government has charted out ambitious plans to develop the district

STATE OF PLAY
Harceeh P.
harceehp@thehindu.co.in



The Andhra Pradesh government has made several development plans for Kurnool, known as a backward district and the gateway to the Eastern Ghats. It has proposed a drone hub, enhanced industrial activity with one-off exercises, not situated within a composite policy framework. Further, there are hardly any evaluations available on the outcomes of these pacts and the learnings from them.

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part of the government's ambitious plans to turn the State into a drone capital. The Andhra Pradesh government is also planning to draft a drone policy. Drones are especially useful in the healthcare and agriculture sectors, and during calamities, as the government had cut out during the recent floods in Vijayawada.

The government believes that attracting investors to set up units at the Orvakal node will reap dividends. Orvakal is located near the Kurnool airport, which will further propel growth in the district.

Historically, Kurnool was a stronghold of the TDP. However, this changed when Rajasekhara Reddy became Chief Minister. Later, N.T. Rama Rao's YSR Congress Party dominated the undivided Kurnool district from 2014 to 2019 Lok Sabha elections. In the 2024 elections, however, the National Democratic Alliance managed to flip Kurnool to its favour.

Given the TDP's dominance and as Mr. Naidu has highlighted his capability in transforming grand visions into reality in the past, it is anticipated that Kurnool may finally see a brighter future. The TDP government is also an advantage compared to the YSRCP government as the Bharatiya Janata Party is also part of the government in the State.

Indian visa denials linked to fraud, not housing crisis, in Australia

While students were blamed for the housing crisis, visa grant rates for Chinese students remain unaffected

DATA POINT
Sambhav Parthasarathy,
Vivekash Baidarkhanan,
Amitha Reji George.

Affordable homes are becoming increasingly scarce in Australia. The government attributed last year's sharp rise in immigration as a key factor that is contributing to the crisis. In response, it has implemented measures to restrict the inflow of students whose numbers skyrocketed last year, significantly outpacing the numbers of skilled migrants and other categories.

An Australian government department's analysis shows that 60% of international students live in apartments, 26% in detached houses, and the remainder in hotels or university housing. These numbers, read along with the unprecedented surge in international students in 2023, shed light on the acute housing crisis, particularly in Sydney and Melbourne, which attract most of these students.

Chart 1 illustrates the Rental Affordability Index in the greater capital areas of Sydney and Melbourne, where a higher index indicates better affordability. Rent affordability has plummeted in both regions, with the decline being much steeper in Sydney than Melbourne. This coincides with the sharp increase in student arrivals.

While the housing crisis, exacerbated by a surge in student numbers, provided a rationale for limiting student intake, a closer look reveals disparities in how these restrictions were applied. Students from certain countries, particularly India, were impacted disproportionately, while students from other countries, notably China, grew in number this year despite the restrictions.

Chart 2 depicts the visa grant rates for students from India, China, and all countries who applied for higher education and vocational education and training courses in Australia.

In Australia, China and India are shown separately because they form the top two shares of international students by a significant margin. The overall visa grant rate has dropped significantly from more than 90% before the pandemic to below 80% after, in line with the new tightening. The grant rate for Indian students dropped from nearly 90% to 65%. But for Chinese students, it has remained close to 95% even in recent years.

Is this disparity because Indian students are more concentrated in regions with acute housing crises, while Chinese students are not? Chart 3 shows that Chinese students outnumber Indian students in Melbourne (Victoria), where it is comparatively better. If the housing crisis was the primary factor for increased visa denials, Chinese students should have faced more rejections given their higher concentration in Sydney. So, what explains the higher denial rates for Indian students?

The answer might lie in another problem — mounting visa fraud. The Australian government's Department of Education says there is a higher proportion of “high-risk” student visa applications from India, Nepal, and Pakistan.

Chart 4 shows the visa processing time for Chinese and Indian students between April and July this year and last year. The numbers, provided a rationale for limiting student intake, a closer look reveals disparities in how these restrictions were applied. Students from certain countries, particularly India, were impacted disproportionately, while students from other countries, notably China, grew in number this year despite the restrictions.

Stricter down under

The data for the charts were sourced from the Australian Government's Department of Home Affairs, the Department of Education, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's Housing Dashboard, SGS Economics and Planning's 2024 Rental Affordability Index, and the National Housing Supply and Affordability Council's State of the Housing System 2024 report.

In the charts China and India are shown separately because they are the top two sources of international students. In the charts, data is as of October 31, 2024

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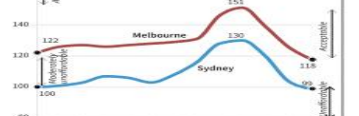


Chart 2 Number of students from India and China who began courses in New South Wales and Victoria over the period, K-1,000

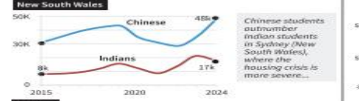


Chart 3 India and China students outnumber Indian students in Sydney (New South Wales), where the housing crisis is more acute. In Melbourne (Victoria), where it is comparatively better, Chinese students outnumber Indian students. In the chart, where it is comparatively better.

Chart 3 Visa grant rates for students from India, China, and all countries who applied for higher education and vocational education and training courses in Australia



Chart 4 Visa processing time in days for Chinese and Indian students between April and July in 2023 and 2024



Amitha Reji George is interning with The Hindu Data Team

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu
FIFTY YEARS AGO DECEMBER 24, 1974

An old Kerala musical instrument

Madras, Dec. 23: At the meeting of the Experts Committee held to-day in connection with the 48th conference of the Music Academy, Sri Chummar Choendal presented a paper on Nanthany, an old musical instrument of Kerala in vogue among Mannars (Vannar in Tamil) the washerman community. It was used as a tala and a sruti accompaniment for the recital of songs by Bhagavati. The instrument is 4.5 feet hollow wooden body, with two fibre strings and played with a plectrum made of horn. Although it has five frets only the middle and lower are pressed. The fibre strings produce two or three notes and the sruti provided is approximately one tenth of Nanthany seems to be a corruption for Nandharvi meaning "wood tower". It is in vogue chiefly in Central and North Kerala among Mannar Vannar and Perumannar communities during Bhagavati worship and other rituals.

There were references to this instrument in Malayalam works of the end of 14th century. The Oomanattu Sankunnal, 76, gave a demonstration on the instrument.

Sri Tine Krishna Venagar, speaking on the contribution to music of the Maharajas of Mysore, said the first Maharaja of Mysore who started the Navaratri festival for which Mysore became famous, was Raja Wodeyar (1578-1670). Chikka Devaraja Wodeyar (1673-1704) played the Kalavati Veena and composed the musical poem Gita Gopala in the style of Gita Govinda. Krishnaraja Wodeyar (1805-1940) encouraged many distinguished musicians. Sri Jayachandraraja Wodeyar was a scholar and composer who continued the patronage extended by Mysore Court.

A hundred years ago

Paris, Dec. 23: The anxiety regarding the forthcoming events in the Far East was voiced by Mr. Outrey, Deputy for Indo-China, in the course of the debate on colonial estimates in the chamber. Mr. Outrey said he apprehended one organisation of Bolshevism in the Far East. He knew that Japan had protected herself against the movement by an understanding with Mr. Changtsoon and Japan and area would certainly be saved from the wave of Bolshevism. But it was also certain that the wave would spread beyond China, and soon reach Indo-China, Burma, and India.

Stricter down under

The data for the charts were sourced from the Australian Government's Department of Home Affairs, the Department of Education, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's Housing Dashboard, SGS Economics and Planning's 2024 Rental Affordability Index, and the National Housing Supply and Affordability Council's State of the Housing System 2024 report

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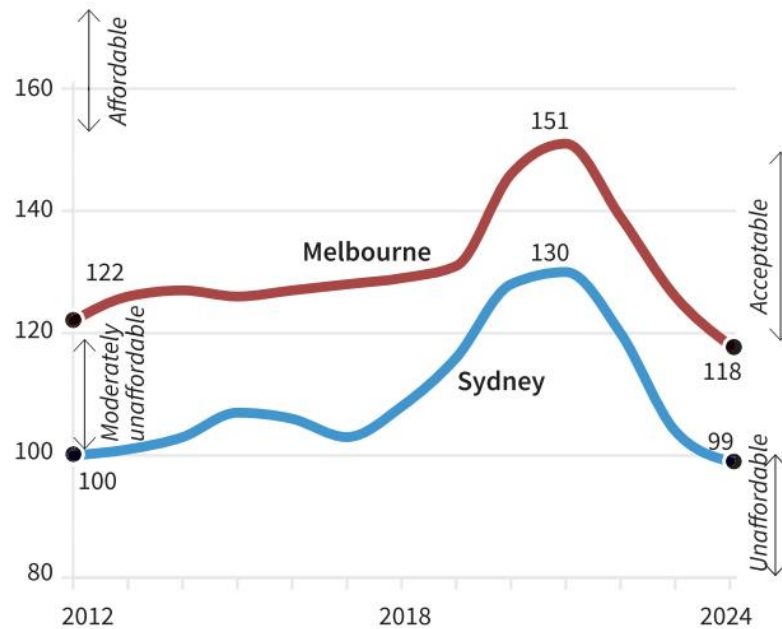


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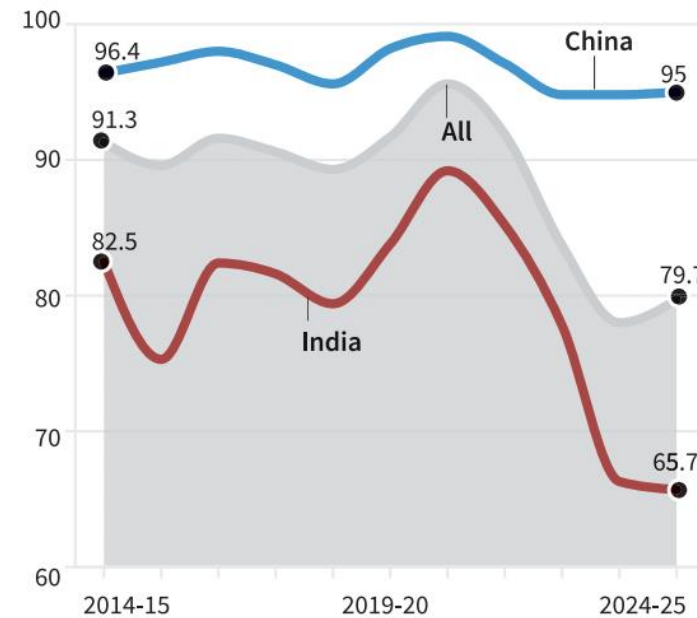


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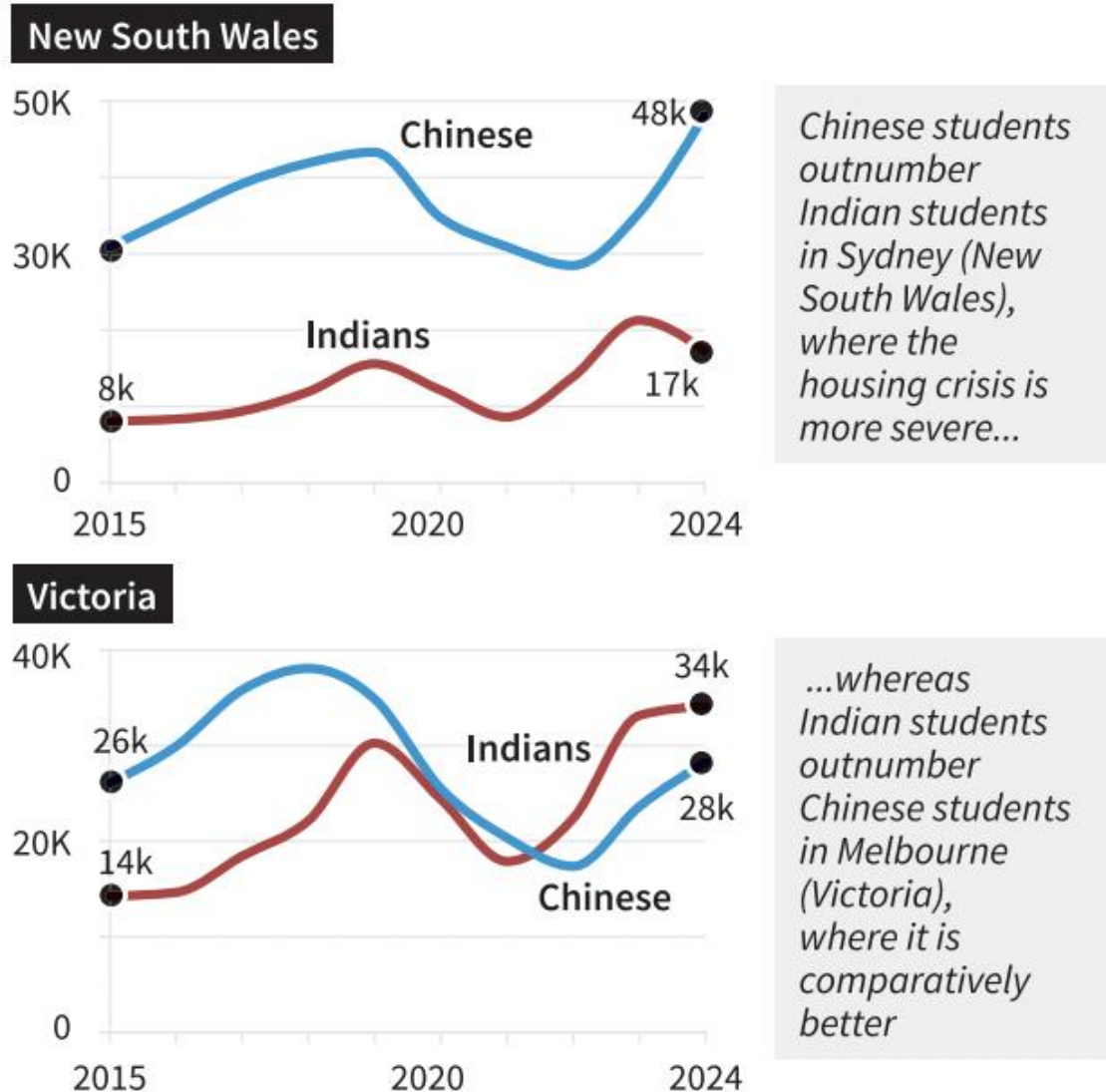
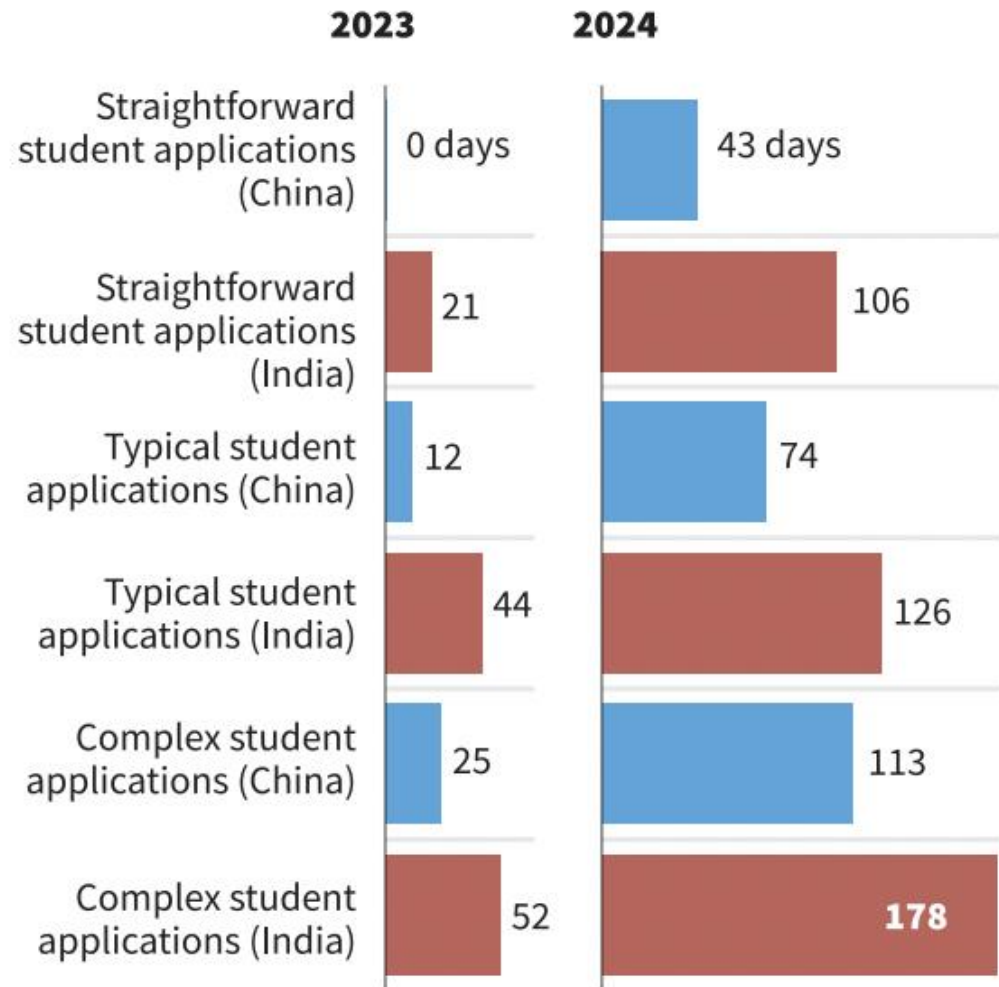


Chart 4: Visa processing time in days for Chinese and Indian students between April and July in 2023 and 2024



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Next & Content

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Manipur police recruits passing out from Assam Academy

2,000 Nearly 2,000 recruits of the Manipur police passed out from the Lachit Borpuhan Police Academy on Monday, strengthening the force in the violence-hit northeastern State, an official said.

Casualties suffered by North Korea in Russia-Ukraine war

1,100 More than 1,000 North Korean soldiers have been killed or wounded in Russia's war with Ukraine, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said on Monday. The new figure follows a report by Seoul's spy agency to MPs last week.

Police personnel to be deployed in Prayagraj for Maha Kumbh Mela

50,000 The 2025 Maha Kumbh Mela will see a strong force of 50,000 police personnel fanning out across Prayagraj to respond to potential terror threats, cyber attacks, rogue drones and human trafficking.

India's oil imports from West Asia in November

2.28 In billion barrels per day (bpd), India's November crude oil imports showed West Asia oil at a nine-month high while Russia accounted for its smallest share in three quarters. Refiners in India have been getting on cheaper Russian oil.

Highest-ever monthly traffic recorded in Lucknow Airport

6.29 In lakh. The Chaudhary Charan Singh International Airport has managed an all-time monthly high of passenger movement in November. Dubai, Muscat and Dammam were the top three international destinations.

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India's reliance on China for critical minerals

Does China have unparalleled dominance in the critical minerals sector? How was it able to do so? What are the minerals for which India is heavily dependent on China? Why has India not been able to excavate the lithium reserves found in Jammu and Kashmir?

EXPLAINER

Rakshit Shetty

The Ministry of Mines in 2023 identified 30 critical minerals deemed essential for the nation's economic development and national security. While the report highlighted India's complete import dependency for 10 critical minerals, it did not fully address a more pressing concern — the extent and nature of dependency on China.

Is China a dominant player?

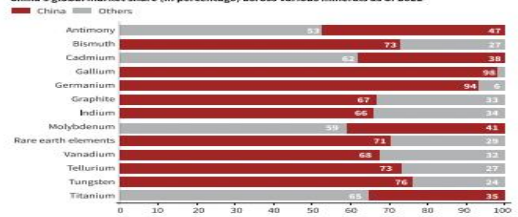
China's unparalleled dominance in critical minerals stems from its vast resource base and strategic investments across the value chain. As the world's largest mining nation, China has discovered 173 types of minerals, including 13 energy minerals, 59 metallic minerals, and 95 non-metallic minerals. Reserves of nearly 40% of these minerals, particularly copper, lead, zinc, nickel, cobalt, lithium, gallium, germanium, and crystalline graphite, increased significantly last year, supported by an exploration investment of \$19.4 billion. This led to the discovery of 132 new mineral deposits, including 34 large ones. China's dominance extends beyond reserves to include processing and refining, with control over 87% of rare earth processing, 58% of lithium refining, and 68% of silicon processing. Furthermore, China has strategically invested in overseas mining projects and built unparalleled midstream refining capabilities, raising supply chain vulnerabilities for countries including India, the U.S., and EU nations.

What about China's export controls? When it comes to China's approach to weaponising critical mineral exports, it is strategic and calculated. Beijing primarily targets minerals deemed critical by Western nations and their allies, especially those essential for

China, a leading player in critical minerals

China's dominance in critical minerals stems from its vast resource base and strategic investments across the value chain. As the world's largest mining nation, China has discovered 173 types of minerals

China's global market share (in percentage) across various minerals as of 2022



semiconductors, batteries, and high-tech manufacturing. However, China carefully balances these decisions against two constraining factors: it avoids controlling minerals which heavily depend on Western raw material imports, and it refrains from actions that could disrupt its domestic industrial enterprises of export-dependent sectors. This strategic calculus was evident in China's 2020 rare earth embargo against Japan, its recent restrictions on antimony, gallium, and germanium exports, and its December 2023 ban on rare earth extraction and processing technologies.

Is India dependent on China?

An in-depth examination of import data of 30 critical minerals spanning 2019 to 2021 reveals India's acute vulnerability to Chinese supplies, particularly for six critical minerals where dependency

exceeds 40%: bismuth (85.6%), lithium (82%), silicon (76%), titanium (50.6%), tellurium (48.8%), and graphite (42.4%). Bismuth, primarily used in pharmaceuticals and chemicals, has few alternative sources, with China maintaining an estimated 80% of global refining production. Lithium, crucial for EV batteries and energy storage, faces processing bottlenecks, despite alternative raw material sources, as China controls 58% of global refining. Silicon, vital for semiconductors and solar panels, requires sophisticated processing technology that few countries possess. Titanium, essential for aerospace and defence applications, has diversified sources but involves high switching costs. Tellurium, important for solar power and thermoelectric devices, is dominated by China's 60% global production share and finally graphite, indispensable for EV

batteries and steel production, faces supply constraints as China controls 67.2% of global output, including battery-grade material.

Why does India rely on imports?

Despite being endowed with significant mineral resources, India's heavy reliance on imports stems from several structural challenges in its mining and processing ecosystem. Many critical minerals are deep-seated, requiring high-risk investments in exploration and mining technologies — a factor that has deterred private sector participation in the absence of adequate incentives and policy support. The country's processing capabilities are also limited. This is particularly evident in the case of the recently discovered lithium deposits in Jammu and Kashmir, where despite the presence of 5.9 million tonnes of resources in clay deposits, India lacks the technical capability to extract lithium from such geological formations.

What is the way forward?

India has initiated a multi-pronged approach to reduce its dependency on China. The government has established KABIL, a joint venture of three banded companies, to secure overseas mineral assets. India has also joined strategic initiatives like the Mineral Security Partnership and the Critical Raw Materials Club to diversify its supply sources and strengthen partnerships. The country is also investing in research through institutions like the Geological Survey of India and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research while promoting recycling and circular economy practices to reduce virgin mineral dependency. Production-linked incentives for extracting critical minerals through recycling also seem promising. However, transitioning away from China will require sustained investment and long-term commitment to these various initiatives. *The writer is a research analyst at The Takshashila Institution.*

THE GIST

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Why has the MHA reimposed restrictions in three NE States?

What is the protected area regime? What did the Foreigners (Protected Areas) Order, 1958 stipulate? Did the ethnic violence in Manipur lead to imposing restrictions on movement and mobility?

Vishita Singh

On December 17, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) reimposed the Protected Area Regime (PAR) in the States of Manipur, Nagaland, and Mizoram to restrict and monitor the movement of foreigners. From now on, foreigners visiting the three States would have to seek prior permission and Protected Area Permits (PAP) from the government. The circular stated that the relaxation provided to the three States under the Foreigners (Protected Areas) Order, 1958 was being withdrawn with immediate effect.

What does the 1958 Order entail? The Order stated that no foreigners shall enter into or remain in any protected area except under and in accordance with a

permit issued by the Central government or any office authorised by the Central government. The permit shall include the following details — place of entry, place of residence and period of stay. The areas falling between the inner line and the international border of the following States and Union Territories were declared as Protected Areas — parts of Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, and the States of Uttarakhand and the whole of Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Sikkim (partly as protected areas and partly as restricted areas). Another Order in 1963 declared entire Andaman & Nicobar Islands and parts of Sikkim as "restricted area."

When was the Order first relaxed? The PAR was relaxed for the whole of Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland on December 30, 2010 in wake of an improved security scenario, and to

promote tourism. The relaxation was initially for a period of one year. It was subsequently extended for a duration of 1.2 years till 2022 when it was further relaxed for another five years till December 31, 2027. On December 17, the relaxation was withdrawn for the States.

Why was it withdrawn?

A copy of the circular accessed by *The Hindu* said that the matter was examined by the Ministry in "the backdrop of growing security concerns in border areas of these States." Manipur bordering Myanmar has been affected by ethnic violence between the tribal Kuki-Zo and the Meitei people since May 3, 2023. Chief Minister N. Biren Singh has attributed the ongoing violence in the State to "outsiders and foreign hands." After a military coup in Myanmar in February 2021, there was an influx of undocumented migrants — over 40,000

refugees took shelter in Mizoram and around 4,000 refugees are said to have entered Manipur. The migrants belonging to the Kuki-Chin-Zo ethnic group share ethnic ties with the communities in Myanmar and India. The migrants along a 1,643 km long border with Myanmar which passes through the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram, The Free Movement Regime (FMR) between the two countries, allowing movement of people living within 16 kms of the international border, was suspended by the MHA in January.

How does one obtain a PAP?

The permits can be secured from Indian missions, the MHA, district magistrates, resident commissioner of a State, Home Commissioners or Foreigners Regional Registration Officer (FRRO) among others. Like earlier, citizens of Afghanistan, China, Pakistan and foreign nationals having their origin in the three countries would continue to require prior approval from the MHA. All foreigners visiting these States will mandatorily register themselves with the Foreigners Registration Officer of the State or District they visit within 24 hours of their arrival. Myanmar nationals visiting the three States, who till now were excluded from the requirement of obtaining a PAP if they had an tourist visa or any other visa, should compulsorily register with the FRRO within 24 hours of their arrival.

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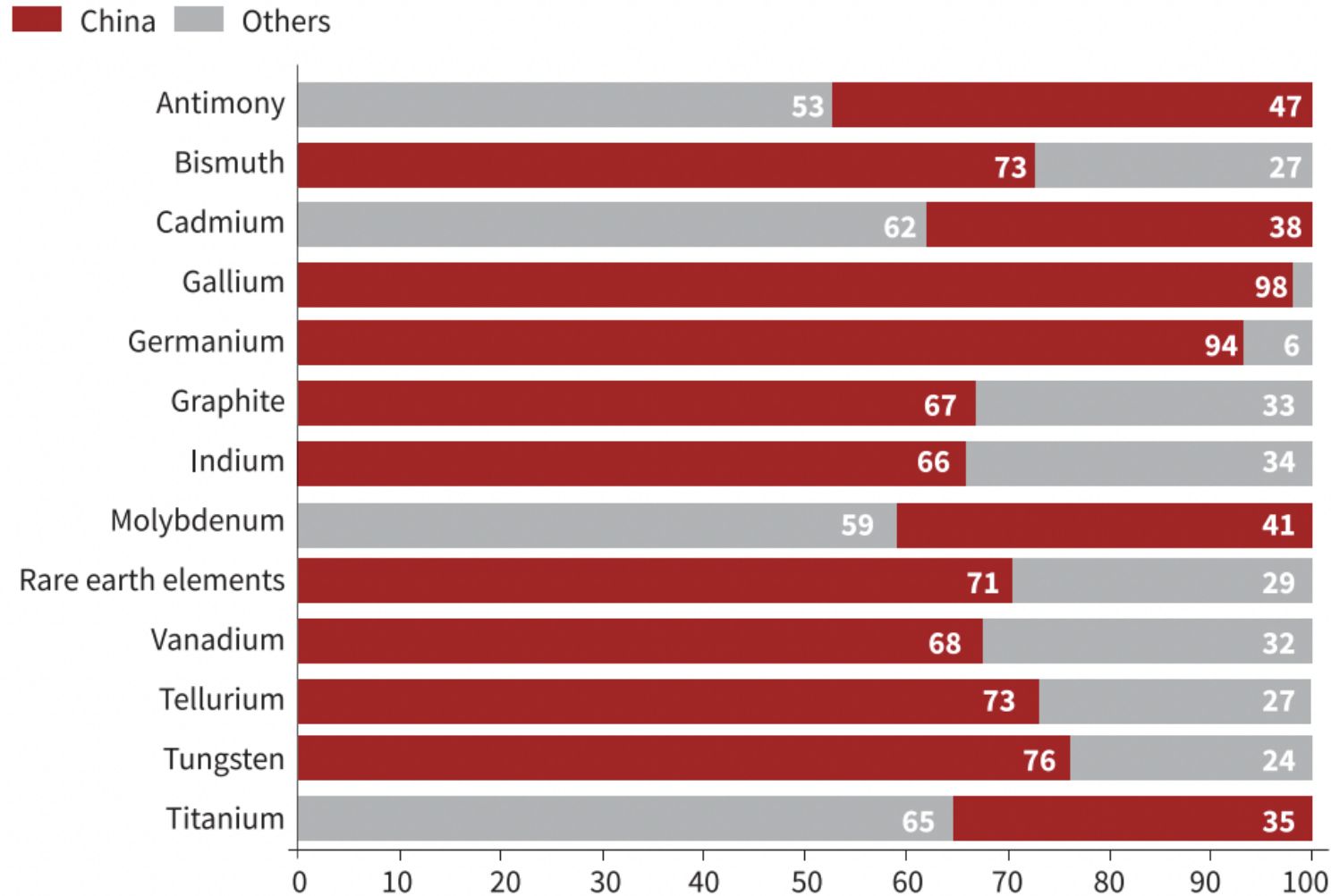
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EXPLAINER

Rakshith Shetty

The story so far:

The Ministry of Mines in 2023 identified 30 critical minerals deemed essential for the nation's economic development and national security. While the report highlighted India's complete import dependency for 10 critical minerals, it did not fully address a more pressing concern – the extent and nature of dependency on China.

Is China a dominant player?

China's unparalleled dominance in critical minerals stems from its vast resource base and strategic investments across the value chain. As the world's largest mining nation, China has discovered 173 types of minerals, including 13 energy minerals, 59 metallic minerals, and 95 non-metallic minerals. Reserves of nearly 40% of these minerals, particularly copper, lead, zinc, nickel, cobalt, lithium, gallium, germanium, and crystalline graphite, increased significantly last year, supported by an exploration investment of \$19.4 billion. This led to the discovery of 132 new mineral deposits, including 34 large ones. China's dominance extends beyond reserves to include processing and refining, with control over 87% of rare earth processing, 58% of lithium refining, and 68% of silicon processing. Furthermore, China has strategically invested in overseas mining projects and built unparalleled midstream refining capabilities, raising supply chain vulnerabilities for countries including India, the U.S., and EU nations.

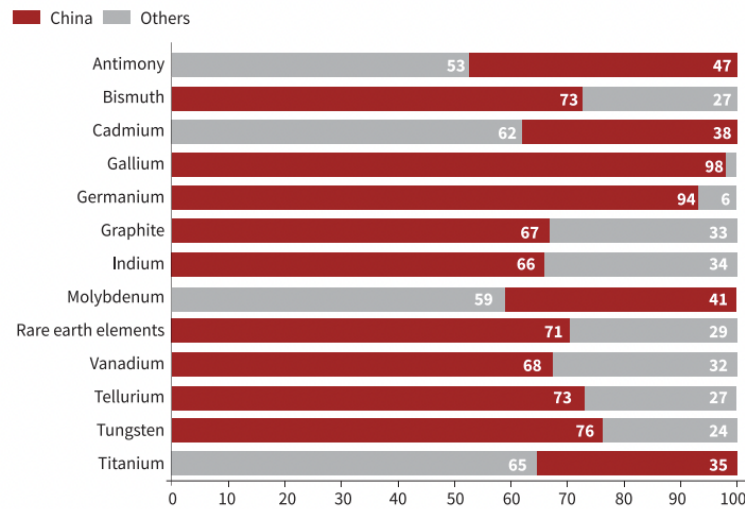
What about China's export controls?

When it comes to China's approach to weaponising critical mineral exports, it is strategic and calculated. Beijing primarily targets minerals deemed critical by Western nations and their allies, especially those essential for

China, a leading player in critical minerals

China's dominance in critical minerals stems from its vast resource base and strategic investments across the value chain. As the world's largest mining nation, China has discovered 173 types of minerals

China's global market share (in percentage) across various minerals as of 2022



semiconductors, batteries, and high-tech manufacturing. However, China carefully balances these decisions against two constraining factors: it avoids controlling minerals which heavily depend on Western raw material imports, and it refrains from actions that could disrupt its domestic industrial enterprises or export-dependent sectors. This strategic calculus was evident in China's 2010 rare earth embargo against Japan, its recent restrictions on antimony, gallium, and germanium exports, and its December 2023 ban on rare earth extraction and processing technologies.

Is India dependent on China?

An in-depth examination of import data of 30 critical minerals spanning 2019 to 2024 reveals India's acute vulnerability to Chinese supplies, particularly for six critical minerals where dependency

exceeds 40%: bismuth (85.6%), lithium (82%), silicon (76%), titanium (50.6%), tellurium (48.8%), and graphite (42.4%). Bismuth, primarily used in pharmaceuticals and chemicals, has few alternative sources, with China maintaining an estimated 80% of global refinery production. Lithium, crucial for EV batteries and energy storage, faces processing bottlenecks, despite alternative raw material sources, as China controls 58% of global refining. Silicon, vital for semiconductors and solar panels, requires sophisticated processing technology that few countries possess. Titanium, essential for aerospace and defence applications, has diversified sources but involves high switching costs. Tellurium, important for solar power and thermoelectric devices, is dominated by China's 60% global production share and finally graphite, indispensable for EV

batteries and steel production, faces supply constraints as China controls 67.2% of global output, including battery-grade material.

Why does India rely on imports?

Despite being endowed with significant mineral resources, India's heavy reliance on imports stem from several structural challenges in its mining and processing ecosystem. Many critical minerals are deep-seated, requiring high-risk investments in exploration and mining technologies – a factor that has deterred private sector participation in the absence of adequate incentives and policy support. The country's processing capabilities are also limited. This is particularly evident in the case of the recently discovered lithium deposits in Jammu and Kashmir, where despite the presence of 5.9 million tonnes of resources in clay deposits, India lacks the technological capability to extract lithium from such geological formations.

What is the way forward?

India has initiated a multi-pronged approach to reduce its dependency on China. The government has established KABIL, a joint venture of three State-owned companies, to secure overseas mineral assets. India has also joined strategic initiatives like the Minerals Security Partnership and the Critical Raw Materials Club to diversify its supply sources and strengthen partnerships. The country is also investing in research through institutions like the Geological Survey of India and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research while promoting recycling and circular economy practices to reduce virgin mineral dependency. Production-linked incentives for extracting critical minerals through recycling also seem promising. However, transitioning away from China will require sustained investment and long-term commitment to these various initiatives.

The writer is a research analyst at The Takshashila Institution.

- **Identification of Critical Minerals**
- Ministry of Mines (India) identified 30 critical minerals essential for economic development and security in 2023.
- The report highlighted India's dependency on imports for 10 of these minerals, with China being a dominant supplier.





- **China's Dominance in Critical Minerals**

- China is the world's largest mining nation, with 173 types of minerals discovered, including:


- 13 energy minerals, 59 metallic minerals, and 95 non-metallic minerals.
- Reserves include copper, lead, zinc, nickel, cobalt, lithium, gallium, germanium, and crystalline graphite.



- China controls over 87% of rare earth processing and 68% of silicon processing globally.




- **Export Strategy of China**

- Focuses on supply chain vulnerabilities by investing in overseas mining and refining projects.
 - Balances domestic consumption with export restrictions, especially in minerals like gallium and germanium.
- 



- **India's Dependency on Imports**

- India, despite having significant mineral resources, faces challenges such as inadequate mining technologies and limited private sector participation.
 - Lack of infrastructure has resulted in dependency, even for newly discovered lithium reserves in Jammu and Kashmir.
- 


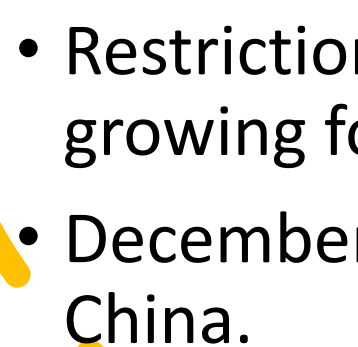


- **Steps Taken by India**

- **Formation of KABIL:** A joint venture of three state-owned companies to secure overseas mineral access.

- **Strategic Initiatives:**

- Minerals Security Partnership.
 - Critical Raw Materials Club to diversify supply chains.
- 

- 
- Investment in R&D through Geological Survey of India and CSIR to enhance mining technologies.
 - Promotion of recycling and circular economy for reducing dependency.
 - **China's Export Controls and Their Impacts**
 - Restrictions on gallium and germanium exports post-2010 signal a growing focus on controlling strategic resources.
 - December 2023 saw a ban on new rare earth extraction licenses in China.
- 



- **Future Outlook**

- Transitioning away from Chinese supply chains will require significant investment in mining, recycling, and research.
- Production-linked incentives and long-term partnerships are necessary to ensure mineral security.

IN BRIEF



Retail inflation for farm, rural workers eases in November

Retail inflation for farm workers and rural labourers slid to 5.35% and 5.47% in November compared with 5.96% and 6%, respectively, in October. The All-India Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL) and Rural Labourers (CPI-RL) registered a rise of 5 points each in November 2024, reaching levels of 1,320 and 1,331, respectively, the Labour Ministry said. The CPI-AL and CPI-RL were 1,315 points and 1,326 points, respectively, in October 2024.

Wipro names Ranjita Ghosh as global chief marketing officer

IT company Wipro said it has appointed Ranjita Ghosh as its new Global Chief Marketing Officer (CMO), effective February 1 next year. Ms. Ghosh takes the chair from Laura Langdon, who has decided to explore career opportunities outside Wipro, a company statement said. Previously CMO of Wipro's Asia Pacific, Middle East & Africa (APMEA) strategic market unit, Ms. Ghosh will now lead all marketing activities for Wipro across its geographies.

Honda, Nissan aim at closing merger talks in June: source

Honda and Nissan may unveil a pact to explore a merger by setting up a joint holding company, a person familiar with the talks said, with the aim of reaching a deal by June 2025. The consolidation would create the world's third largest auto group by vehicle sales after Toyota and Volkswagen as legacy carmakers face growing challenges from Tesla and China rivals. Honda has a market capitalisation of more than \$40 billion and Nissan about \$10 billion.

Adani to buy plane MRO firm Air Works

Adani Defence Systems & Technologies Ltd. (ADSTL) has signed a share purchase pact to acquire 85.8% stake in Air Works, India's largest private sector maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) company at an enterprise value of ₹400 crore, as per an exchange filing.

Creating a presence in the MRO sector is a commitment to building an integrated aviation services ecosystem that strengthens the backbone of India's aviation infrastructure," said Adani, director, Adani Airports, who was quoted as saying in a statement.

How to tax popcorn? India's formula sparks outrage against GST system

India's move to tax popcorn differently based on its sugar or spice content has drawn criticism from the Opposition. The move sparked social media outrage, with two terms of government economic advisers questioning the tax system introduced in 2017. The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council, chaired by the Finance Minister and including State representatives, announced that non-branded popcorn mixed with salt and spices would attract a 28% GST, pre-packaged and branded popcorn 12%, and caramel popcorn, categorised as a sugar confectionery, 18%.

'MFN not to hit India-EFTA pact'

The Switzerland government's decision to suspend the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status will not delay ratification and implementation of the four-nation EFTA-India Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA)

Press Trust of India NEW DELHI

The Swiss decision to suspend the most favoured nation clause in the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement will not delay the ratification and implementation of the already signed trade agreement between India and the EFTA bloc, Switzerland has said.

The Swiss government has suspended the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status, which could potentially impact Swiss investments in India and lead to higher taxes on Indian companies operating in



On track: MFN decision does not negatively hit investments from Switzerland to India, the Swiss government said.

the European nation. India and the four-nation European Free Trade Association (EFTA) signed the pact, officially dubbed as TEPA (Trade and Economic Partnership Agree- ment), in March. Its members are Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland. The agreement is yet to be implemented.

'ICAI panel probing alleged auditing lapses at Byju's case'

Press Trust of India NEW DELHI

Chartered accountants' apex body ICAI president Ranjeet Kumar Agarwal said its disciplinary committee is investigating alleged auditing lapses at the firm Byju's.

FRB had referred the matter to the disciplinary committee by Byju's has been referred to the disciplinary committee by the disciplinary directorate and investigation are going on, he told the media.

Specific details such as whether the director staff has prima facie found any

'ICAI panel probing alleged auditing lapses at Byju's case'



violations were not disclosed by him. Responding to queries, Mr. Agarwal also said the directorate has powers to either close a matter or recommend it for the consideration of the committee. Byju's matter has been sent to the committee, which is investigating it, he added.

"No, the decision will not delay the ratification and implementation of EFTA-India TEPA," the Embassy of Switzerland in India said in a response to PTI queries on Tuesday. The decision does not negatively hit investments from Switzerland to India. "The current suspension from the Swiss side of the application of the MFN clause under the protocol to double taxation agreement between Switzerland and India does neither affect trade ties between the two countries nor Swiss investments in India," it said.

India and the four-nation European bloc signed a free trade agreement under which New Delhi received an investment commitment of \$100 billion in 15 years from the grouping while allowing several products like Swiss watches, chocolates and cut and polished diamonds at lower or zero duties.

In 2023-24, India's imports from Switzerland stood at \$21.24 billion against \$1.52 billion exports, leading to a huge trade deficit of \$19.72 billion. India got about \$10.72 billion in foreign direct investments from Switzerland between April 2020 and September 2024. The Nifty Small cap index closed at 1,07,200.25, up 1,072.00 points. The Sensex gained 498.58 points, or 0.64%, to close at 78,540.17 led by gains in heavy-weight, IT and banking stocks. The NSE Nifty gained 166 points, or 0.7%, to 23,753.45 points. However, the Nifty Midcap 100 volumes were 22% lower vis-a-vis last 10-day average and lowest since October 11.

MARKETS

Table with 3 columns: Market, Monday, % Change. Includes US Dollar, Euro, and Brent oil.

NIIFT 50

Table with 3 columns: Stock Name, Price, Change. Lists various stocks like Adani Enterprises, Asian Paints, etc.

MARKET WATCH

Table with 3 columns: Stock Name, Price, Change. Lists various stocks like Reliance, Infosys, etc.

EXCHANGE RATES

Table with 3 columns: Currency, Rate, % Change. Lists USD, EUR, GBP, etc.

Switzerland's TIL to invest ₹20,000 crore in Vadnvan Port

The Hindu Bureau MUMBAI

Up to 2.06 lakh noise barriers have been installed along the 103-km stretch of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train Project site.

For every 1 km stretch, 2,000 noise barriers have been strategically placed on each side of the viaduct," said a spokesperson for the project.

2.06 lakh locally-made noise barriers put up on bullet train route

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

Less noise, more speed: Six factories have been built for indigenous production of the barriers. The barriers are designed to mitigate sound generated by the train and civil structures during operation of the barriers in residential and urban areas, taller noise barriers of 3 metre have been installed. These include an additional 1-litre translucent polycarbonate panel above the 2-

Chhattisgarh gets ₹15,184 crore worth investment proposals

The Hindu Bureau RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh attracted investment proposals of the face value of ₹15,184 crore at Investors Connect Meet in New Delhi on Monday. Data shared by the government showed a single company from the renewable energy sector had committed a substantial 7% of these proposals.

A total of ₹15,184 crore investment proposals have been received by top companies in various sectors like semiconductor, IT, electronics, food processing, etc.

Central Bank to focus on MSMEs, digital banking

The Hindu Bureau MUMBAI

Central Bank of India (CBI), on the occasion of its 14th Foundation Day, has introduced customised financial products for MSMEs, retail, salaried class, business persons and facilities for forex operations.

ReNew Power plans to invest ₹11,500 cr. in pumped storage and green hydrogen projects in the State

The Hindu Bureau RAIPUR

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The other major commitments included by the company include ₹1,134 crore investment proposal for the construction of the project, forecasting the crea-

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Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

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The Swiss government has suspended the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status, which could potentially impact Swiss investments in India and lead to higher taxes on Indian companies operating in



On track: MFN decision does not negatively hit investments from Switzerland to India, the Swiss government said. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

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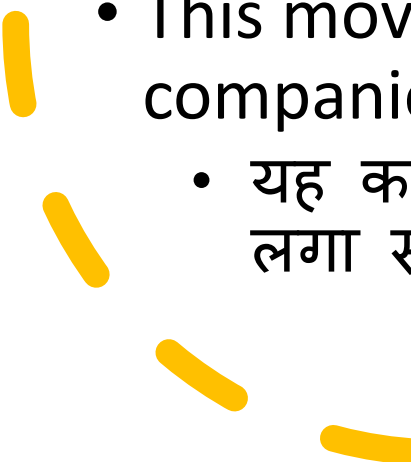
- **Background on MFN Suspension**

- Switzerland has suspended the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) clause in its Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement with India.

- स्विट्जरलैंड ने भारत के साथ दोहरे कराधान बचाव समझौते में "मोस्ट फेवर्ड नेशन" (MFN) धारणा को निलंबित कर दिया है।

- This move could potentially result in higher taxes on Indian companies operating in Switzerland.


- यह कदम स्विट्जरलैंड में काम करने वाली भारतीय कंपनियों पर अधिक कर लगा सकता है।





- **No Impact on India-EFTA Trade Pact**

- The Swiss Embassy clarified that this suspension will not delay the ratification or implementation of the EFTA-India TEPA (Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement).

- स्विस् दूतावास ने स्पष्ट किया कि यह निलंबन EFTA-भारत व्यापार और आर्थिक भागीदारी समझौते (TEPA) के अनुमोदन या कार्यान्वयन में देरी नहीं करेगा।
- 




- **About EFTA and TEPA**

- EFTA includes four nations: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.

- EFTA में चार देश शामिल हैं: आइसलैंड, लिक्टेन्स्टीन, नॉर्वे, और स्विट्जरलैंड।

- The pact aims to enhance trade ties by reducing tariffs and promoting investment.

- समझौते का उद्देश्य व्यापारिक संबंधों को बढ़ावा देना और निवेश को प्रोत्साहित करना है।





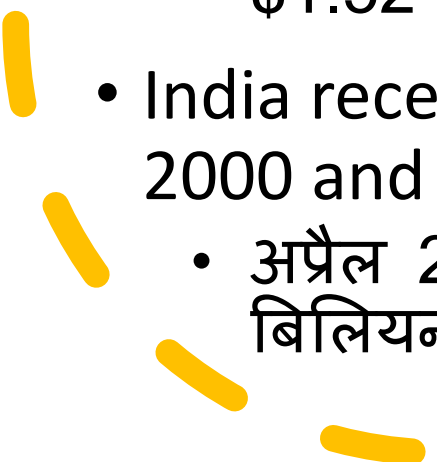
- **Trade and Investment Data**

- In 2023-24, India's imports from Switzerland were valued at \$21.24 billion, while exports stood at \$1.52 billion, leading to a trade deficit of \$19.72 billion.

- 2023-24 में भारत का स्विट्जरलैंड से आयात \$21.24 बिलियन और निर्यात \$1.52 बिलियन था, जिससे \$19.72 बिलियन का व्यापार घाटा हुआ।


- India received \$10.72 billion in FDI from Switzerland between April 2000 and September 2024.

- अप्रैल 2000 से सितंबर 2024 के बीच भारत ने स्विट्जरलैंड से \$10.72 बिलियन का प्रत्यक्ष विदेशी निवेश प्राप्त किया।





- **Sectoral Implications**

- The agreement allows duty-free or reduced-duty imports of Swiss watches, chocolates, and polished diamonds into India.
 - समझौता स्विस् घड़ियों, चॉकलेट और पॉलिश किए गए हीरों के आयात पर शून्य या कम शुल्क की अनुमति देता है।
 - The suspension of MFN does not negatively impact Swiss investments in India.
 - MFN के निलंबन का स्विट्जरलैंड के भारत में निवेश पर कोई नकारात्मक प्रभाव नहीं पड़ेगा।
- 

1. Historical and Economic Context

1. This is part of broader trade reforms to ensure better bilateral relations.

1. यह बेहतर द्विपक्षीय संबंध सुनिश्चित करने के लिए व्यापक व्यापार सुधारों का हिस्सा है।

2. Switzerland has been a key investor in India, especially in sectors like pharmaceuticals, precision instruments, and luxury goods.

1. स्विट्जरलैंड भारत में फार्मास्यूटिकल्स, सटीक उपकरण और लक्जरी सामान जैसे क्षेत्रों में प्रमुख निवेशक रहा है।

Here's a concise chart explaining the EFTA-India TEPA:

Category	Details
EFTA Members	Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein
India's Involvement	Aimed at enhancing bilateral trade and investment with EFTA countries.
Key Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Promote trade in goods and services.- Encourage investment flows.- Strengthen economic ties.
Negotiations Began	2008
Key Sectors	Pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, gems and jewelry, textiles, IT services, and more.
Trade in Goods	Focus on reducing tariffs and non-tariff barriers for better market access.
Trade in Services	Liberalization in sectors like IT, financial services, and healthcare.
Investment	Facilitation of cross-border investments and protection of intellectual property rights.
Market Potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- EFTA countries offer a high-income consumer base.- India offers a large and growing market.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Differences in regulatory standards.- Tariff preferences on sensitive products.
Current Status	Negotiations ongoing with discussions on key trade aspects.

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CIVIL SERVICES : INTERVIEW GUIDANCE
A RED initiative appears in today's edition of *The Indian Express*. These pages are an initiative of the marketing solutions team of The Indian Express Group and contain content paid for by advertisers. These pages should be read as an advertisement.

Delhi Govt to schools: Scan for kids of illegal migrants from Bangladesh
SOPHIA MATHEW
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 23
THE DELHI government on Monday asked schools to prevent enrolment of "illegal Bangladeshi migrant" children, and inform police and other authorities "in case of any doubt" about a student's citizenship status. "Schools must ensure strict admission procedures, verification of students' documentation to prevent illegal Bangladeshi migrant enrolment, implementation of greater scrutiny to detect and prevent unauthorised admissions of illegal Bangladeshi migrants in particular," said a circular signed by Deputy Director of Education (Schools) Sanjay Subhas Kumar. It was addressed.

BUSINESS AS USUAL
BY UNNVI
Mumbai
The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Monday said it will continue to maintain its accommodative monetary policy stance as it monitors the inflationary pressure.

A CM, a film star and a tragedy: Hyderabad post-script with twists
NIKHILA HENRY & SREENIVASA JANVALA
NEW DELHI, HYDERABAD, DECEMBER 23
IN HIS latest blockbuster *Pathan* 2, The Raju Aju's character creates a regime change over a slight to him by the sitting chief minister. In the past few days, a version of the script has been playing out in real life in Telangana, as the Telugu star finds himself in an unexpected standoff with Congress CM

DHAKA SENDS NOTE VERBALE SEEKING EXTRADITION Bangladesh tells India to send back Sheikh Hasina for 'judicial process'

MEA confirms diplomatic note from Dhaka: 'No comment at this time'

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 23
OVER FOUR months after former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina fled to India following massive protests that brought down her 10-year-old regime, Dhaka has sent a diplomatic note asking New Delhi to send her back. The development has the potential to impact bilateral ties — already under strain since Hasina's arrival on August 5 — and will need some deft diplomacy.



EXPLAINED
Space for refusal
THE INDIA-BANGLADESH extradition treaty has provisions for refusing requests, including if the offence is of "political nature", or an accusation has not been "made in good faith in the interests of justice", or military offences which are not "an offence under the general criminal law".

Bangladesh crisis dents sluggish recovery in India's tourist arrivals

SUKALP SHARMA
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 23
INDIA WAS already struggling with sluggish post-pandemic recovery in foreign tourists, arrivals in the first half of 2024, with volumes still trailing those of 2019, even as the number of outbound Indian travellers surpassed pre-Covid levels. Then

DROP IN TOURISTS FROM BANGLADESH

Period	Share in %
Aug 2024	15.6
Jan-Aug 2024	20.8
2023 (full year)	22.3

Of total foreign tourist arrivals
Source: Ministry of Tourism

'No-detention policy' ends for Classes 5 & 8 in central schools PM raises Germany Christmas market attack: 'Pains my heart'

ABHINAYA HARGOVIIND
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 23
THE CENTRE has scrapped the no-detention policy in schools governed by it including Kendriya Vidyalayas and Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas, allowing students of Classes 5 and 8 to be held back from the ongoing academic session. The decision will impact around 1,000 central schools, including Sainik Schools, which function under the Ministry of Defence, and Eklavya Model Residential Schools, under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. It comes five years after the Right to Education Act, 2009, was amended in 2019 to include a clause that allowed the "appropriate government" to decide on holding back children in Classes 5 and 8. Since then, many States and Union Territories (UTs) have already scrapped the no-detention policy. In a notification issued last week, the Ministry of Education amended the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules, 2010, to insert a section on detaining students in Classes 5 and 8. Barring these two classes, students in the remaining classes up to Class 8 cannot be detained. The rules now state that if a Class 5 or Class 8 student does not fulfil the promotion criteria in the regular examination at the end of the academic year, he/she shall be "given additional

AT CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF INDIA CHRISTMAS EVENT
PM raises Germany Christmas market attack: 'Pains my heart'
'Attempts to spread violence, cause disruption in society'



NIKHILA HENRY
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 23
CITING THE recent Christmas market attack in Germany and the 2019 Easter bombings in Sri Lanka, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday spoke out against the "attempts to spread violence and cause disruption in society". Speaking at the Christmas celebrations hosted by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI), Modi said: "The teachings of Lord Christ celebrate love, harmony and brotherhood. It is important that we work to make this spirit stronger. But it pains my heart when there are attempts to spread violence and cause disruption in the society. Just a few days ago, we saw what happened at a Christmas market in Germany. In 2019, churches in Sri Lanka were attacked. I went to Colombo to pay homage to those who lost their lives in the bombings. It is important to come together and fight such challenges". Talking about the message of hope in the Bible, Modi said: "Hope is a source of strength and peace... We are also guided by

GUNNED DOWN IN PILIBHIT 3 of Khalistan outfit linked to Punjab grenade attacks killed in encounter

KZF chief and a serving British Army soldier control module: Punjab DGP

JAGDEEP SINGH DEEP & MANISH SAHIL
MCHALI, LUCKNOW, DEC 23
THREE MEMBERS of the Khalistan Zindabad Force (KZF), who were allegedly involved in recent grenade attacks on police establishments in the border areas of Punjab, were killed in an encounter in Uttar Pradesh's Pilibhit district on Monday morning. The encounter was jointly conducted by police teams from Punjab and UP.



The three were identified as Gurvinder Singh (25), Varinder Singh alias Ravi (23), and Jashanpreet Singh alias Pratap Singh (18), all residents of Gurdaspur. In a post on X, Punjab Inspector General of Police Gaurav Yadav said the module was controlled by KZF chief Ranjeet Singh Nita and by one Jagjeet Singh, who was "serving in the

UK soldier on police radar is from Punjab family of Army men, fought in Afghanistan

MAN AMAN SINGH CHHINA
CHANDIGARH, DECEMBER 23
INVESTIGATIONS INTO the Ranjeet Singh Nita module of the Khalistan Zindabad Force (KZF) have led Punjab Police to a Sikh soldier of the British Army who has served in Afghanistan, and is now suspected to be behind the recent grenade attacks on police establishments in Punjab. Following the killing of three members of the KZF module in Pilibhit, Punjab DGP Gaurav Yadav, in a post on X, identified the British Army soldier as Jagjeet Singh, who goes by the adopted name of Fateh Singh 'Baag'. According to senior police officers, investigations have revealed that Jagjeet Singh comes from a military lineage in India, with roots in Tarn Taran district of Punjab. Several of his relatives, including grandfather, father and brother, have served in the British Army. "While we are clear that Jagjeet Singh was serving with the British Army at one point in

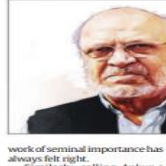


time, it is yet to be ascertained from British authorities whether he is still in service or not," a senior officer told *The Indian Express*. "Normally, we do not get a positive response from foreign agencies on such inquiries as they need to identify any involvement of any citizen of theirs who is working in a government establishment." DGP Yadav in his post, however, described Jagjeet Singh as "based in the UK and serving in the British Army".

Parallel cinema pioneer, took us to places where cinema rarely went

SHUBHRA GUPTA
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 23
SHYAM BENEHAL, filmmaker, raconteur, bon vivant, has passed away. He was 93. It is an irreplaceable loss. We have said a rare voice was again silent. We like to see it, through his 50 years of active filmmaking, full of passion and erudition. It was also one of the very few filmmakers who were their fame so lightly, with such elegance. It was a quality that marked all our conversations through the years, the late Bengali never once leaving us without another word, another recovery, and per-

haps he well enough to add to his extensive filmography, which began with the 1974 *Ankur*, and stretched all the way to the 2023 bio-pic of Bangladeshi Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, *Mujib: The Making Of A Nation*. The essence of Benehal's final film reminded one of an anti-establishment nation-building exercise he pulled off with his Bharat Ek Khoj, the 1988 Doordarshan series he wrote and directed, and on Jawahar Nehru's sipping. The *Discovery Of India*, it is an origin story which covers a staggering 5,000 years, from the birth of a subcontinent to the creation of an independent India. Calling it a



game-changer, an overused phrase glibly trotted out for anything and everything, has never felt like an exaggeration, because that is exactly what it did. At a time when formulaic lost-and-found multi-stories were ruling (Nasir Hussain's 1973 *Yadon Ki Barsoni*), and Amitabh Bachchan was beginning his Angry Young Man journey (his *Zanjeer*, also out in 1972), exploded out of the screens, *Ankur* was the seedling that pulled off with his Bharat Ek Khoj, the 1988 Doordarshan series he wrote and directed, and on Jawahar Nehru's sipping. The *Discovery Of India*, it is an origin story which covers a staggering 5,000 years, from the birth of a subcontinent to the creation of an independent India. Calling it a

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PREVIOUS CHAIRMAN COMPLETED TERM ON JUNE 1

Ex-SC judge V Ramasubramanian appointed new NHRC chairperson

Was part of several benches in key cases, including one that upheld demonetisation

AJOY SINHA KARPURAM
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 23

FORMER SUPREME Court judge V Ramasubramanian has been appointed as the 9th Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) for a tenure of three years until December 2027.

Justice Ramasubramanian was informed about the appointment through a letter signed by Ministry of Home Affairs Joint Secretary Niraj Kumar Bansod. "Respected sir, I enclose herewith the warrant signed by the Hon'ble President of India for the appointment as Chairperson, National Human Rights Commission in terms of Section 3(2)(a) of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993. You are requested to kindly join the Commission at the earliest," the letter states.



**Retired as
SC judge
on June 29,
2023**

Justice Ramasubramanian retired on June 29, 2023, after serving for over three years as a Supreme Court judge. During his tenure, he was part of several benches in important cases, including the five-judge bench that upheld the Centre's demonetisation scheme in 2023 and the decision to set aside an RBI circular that stated it would not provide services to individuals and businesses dealing with cryptocurrency.

His legal career began after he completed his LLB from Madras Law College in 1983. He practised at the Madras High Court for 23 years before he was

appointed as a judge of the same court on July 31, 2006.

At his own request, he was transferred to the High Court for the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh in April 2016 and remained in Hyderabad after the court was bifurcated and served as a judge of the Telangana High Court until he was appointed as the Chief Justice of the Himachal Pradesh High Court on June 22, 2019. Three months later, on September 23, he was elevated to the Supreme Court of India.

The previous NHRC chairman, Justice Arun Mishra, completed his term on June 1, 2024. It has since been functioning under the aegis of Acting Chairperson Vijaya Bharati Sayani. The NHRC is empowered to investigate allegations of human rights violations, either of its own accord or after receiving a petition from a victim (or

someone on their behalf). It may also intervene as a party in ongoing cases concerning human rights violations, make recommendations aimed at protecting human rights, and conduct or promote research in related fields.

Previous chairpersons also include former Chief Justices of India Ranganath Mishra (the first NHRC Chairperson), M N Venkatachaliah, J S Verma, A S Anand, S Rajendra Babu, K G Balakrishnan and H L Dattu.

Until 2019 only former Chief Justices of India could be appointed as NHRC chairperson. However, in July 2019, the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993, was amended to also allow former SC judges for the post.


Following Justice Mishra, Justice Ramasubramanian will now be the second NHRC chairperson to have never served as Chief Justice of India.

Aspect	Details
Establishment	1993, under the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993
Type	Statutory Body
Objective	Protection and promotion of human rights
Composition	- Chairperson: Retired Chief Justice of India (CJI)
	- Members: 4 (including one serving or retired Supreme Court judge, and one serving or retired High Court Chief Justice)
	- 2 Members with expertise in human rights
	- Ex-officio Members: Chairpersons of National Commissions (e.g., SC, ST, Women, Minorities)
Appointment	By the President on the recommendation of a high-level committee:
	- Prime Minister (Chairperson)
	- Home Minister, Speaker of Lok Sabha, Deputy Chairperson of Rajya Sabha, Leaders of Opposition in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, and Union Minister in charge of Human Affairs

Term	Chairperson and Members: 5 years or until the age of 70, whichever is earlier
Key Functions	- Inquire into complaints of human rights violations
	- Intervene in judicial proceedings involving human rights
	- Visit detention facilities and assess living conditions
	- Spread awareness about human rights
	- Promote research and policy suggestions
Limitations	- Recommends actions but decisions are not binding
	- Jurisdiction is limited to Union and State Governments (not private entities)
	- Cannot inquire into cases older than 1 year
Significance	- Acts as a watchdog for human rights in India
	- Provides policy input and reports to the government
Recent Initiatives	- Awareness campaigns on child rights, women's rights, and labor rights
Challenges	- Lack of financial and functional independence
	- Over-dependence on government



- **Appointment Details**


- Former Supreme Court judge V. Ramasubramanian appointed as the 9th Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).
 - Tenure: Three years, effective December 2023.
- 



- **Background and Judicial Career**

- Justice Ramasubramanian retired from the Supreme Court on June 29, 2023, after serving for over three years.

- Key roles:

- Part of the five-judge bench that upheld the Centre's demonetisation scheme in 2023.
 - Ruled on cases concerning the RBI's cryptocurrency services
- 

- Legal career began at Madras High Court, where he practiced for 23 years before being appointed a judge in 2006. Elevated to Chief Justice of Himachal Pradesh High Court in 2019 and Supreme Court later that year.








- **Role and Responsibilities of NHRC**

- Investigates human rights violations, recommends protection measures, and conducts research.
- Can intervene in court cases related to human rights and propose policy reforms.




- **Historical Context**

- NHRC Chairpersons have typically been former Chief Justices of India.
 - Justice Ramasubramanian is the second NHRC Chairperson to not have served as Chief Justice of India, after recent amendments to the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993.
- 
- 
- 



1. Significance

1. The appointment reflects the emphasis on judicial expertise and continuity in addressing human rights issues.
 2. NHRC continues to function under its revised mandate, ensuring adherence to human rights in a changing legal landscape.
- 



Panama Canal

- US President-elect Donald Trump has threatened to reclaim the Panama Canal, citing rising tariffs and concerns over sovereignty.
- **About**
- **Panama Canal**, is an **artificial 82-km waterways** formally inaugurated in **1914**.
- **It is connecting the Atlantic Ocean** with the **Pacific Ocean** by providing a shortcut through the **Isthmus of Panama**.



- The Panama Canal locks at each end lift ships up to **Gatun Lake**, an artificial freshwater lake 26 m above sea level created by damming up the **Chagres River** and **Lake Alajuela**.
- **Significance:** Nearly 6% of global trade (by value) passes through the canal, making it one of the world's most critical maritime trade routes.





PANAMA CANAL

Panama canal accounts for
6 per cent of global trade



A ship covers a distance of
8,370 km
between New York
city and San Francisco
city via Panama Canal



Alternative route through
Cape Horn, the southern
tip of South America,
takes
22,500 km

--- OLD ROUTE — NEW ROUTE

Sagar Island




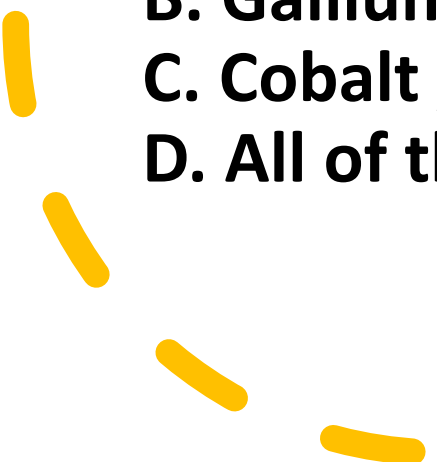
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- Sagar Island in West Bengal, where the Gangasagar Mela takes place every January, is experiencing severe climate change impacts.
 - **About Sagar Island**
 - Sagar Island, also known as **Ganga Sagar or Sagardwip**, is located in the Ganges delta on the continental shelf of the **Bay of Bengal**.
- 

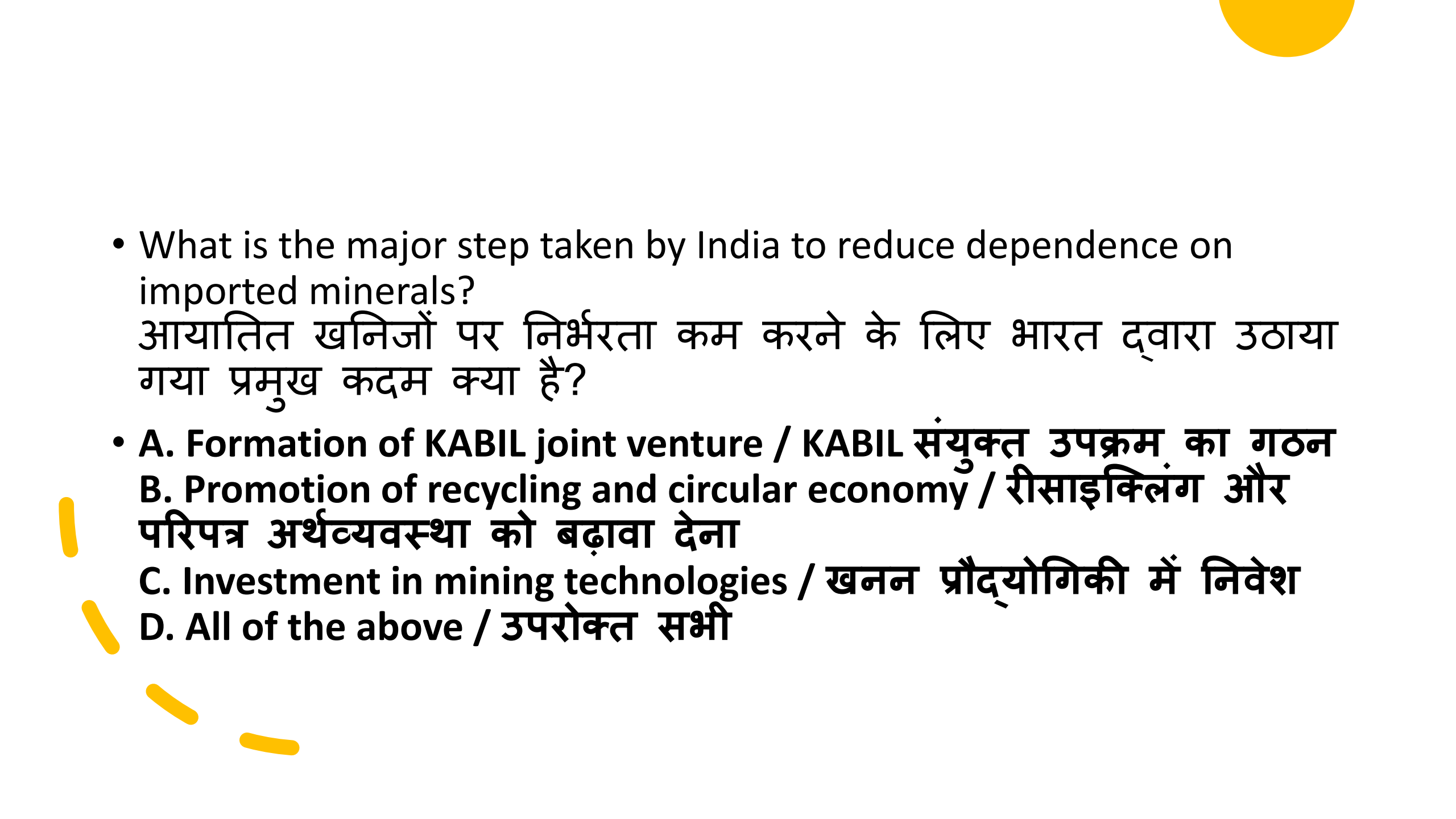
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- It consists of 43 villages and is separated from **Mahisani Island by the River Muriganga Batala.**
 - The island, along with Mahisani and Ghoramara, is classified under the sand group category.
 - It is a significant religious site for Hindus, especially during the Makar Sankranti festival, where pilgrims honor the Sun.
 - The Kapil Muni Temple on the island is a major pilgrimage center
- 

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 is the significance of the **Parivar Mulakat (Family Visit)** pilot project introduced in Punjab prisons?
ਪੰਜਾਬ ਦੀ ਜੇਲਾਂ ਮੈਂ ਸ਼ਰੂ ਕੀਏ ਗਏ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਮੁਲਾਕਾਤ (Family Visit) ਪਾਯਲਟ ਪ੍ਰੋਜੈਕਟ ਕਾ ਮਹੱਤਵ ਕੌਯਾ ਹੈ?
- **A. Promotes rehabilitation of prisoners / कैदियों के पुनर्वास को बढ़ावा देना**
- **B. Allows intimate family visits for prisoners / कैदियों के लिए अंतरंग पारिवारिक मुलाकात की अनुमति**
- **C. Reduces prison overcrowding / जेल में भीड़ कम करना**
- **D. Provides legal aid for prisoners / कैदियों के लिए कानूनी सहायता प्रदान करना**

- 
- Which mineral is India heavily dependent on imports for, as highlighted by the Ministry of Mines?
माइन मंत्रालय द्वारा उजागर किए गए किस खनिज के लिए भारत आयात पर अत्यधिक निर्भर है?
 - **A. Lithium / लिथियम**
 - **B. Gallium / गैलियम**
 - **C. Cobalt / कोबाल्ट**
 - **D. All of the above / उपरोक्त सभी**
- 

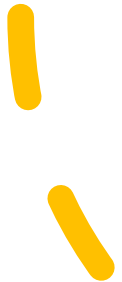

- 
- What is the major step taken by India to reduce dependence on imported minerals?
आयातित खनिजों पर निर्भरता कम करने के लिए भारत द्वारा उठाया गया प्रमुख कदम क्या है?
 - **A. Formation of KABIL joint venture / KABIL संयुक्त उपक्रम का गठन**
 - **B. Promotion of recycling and circular economy / रीसाइक्लिंग और परिपत्र अर्थव्यवस्था को बढ़ावा देना**
 - **C. Investment in mining technologies / खनन प्रौद्योगिकी में निवेश**
 - **D. All of the above / उपरोक्त सभी**

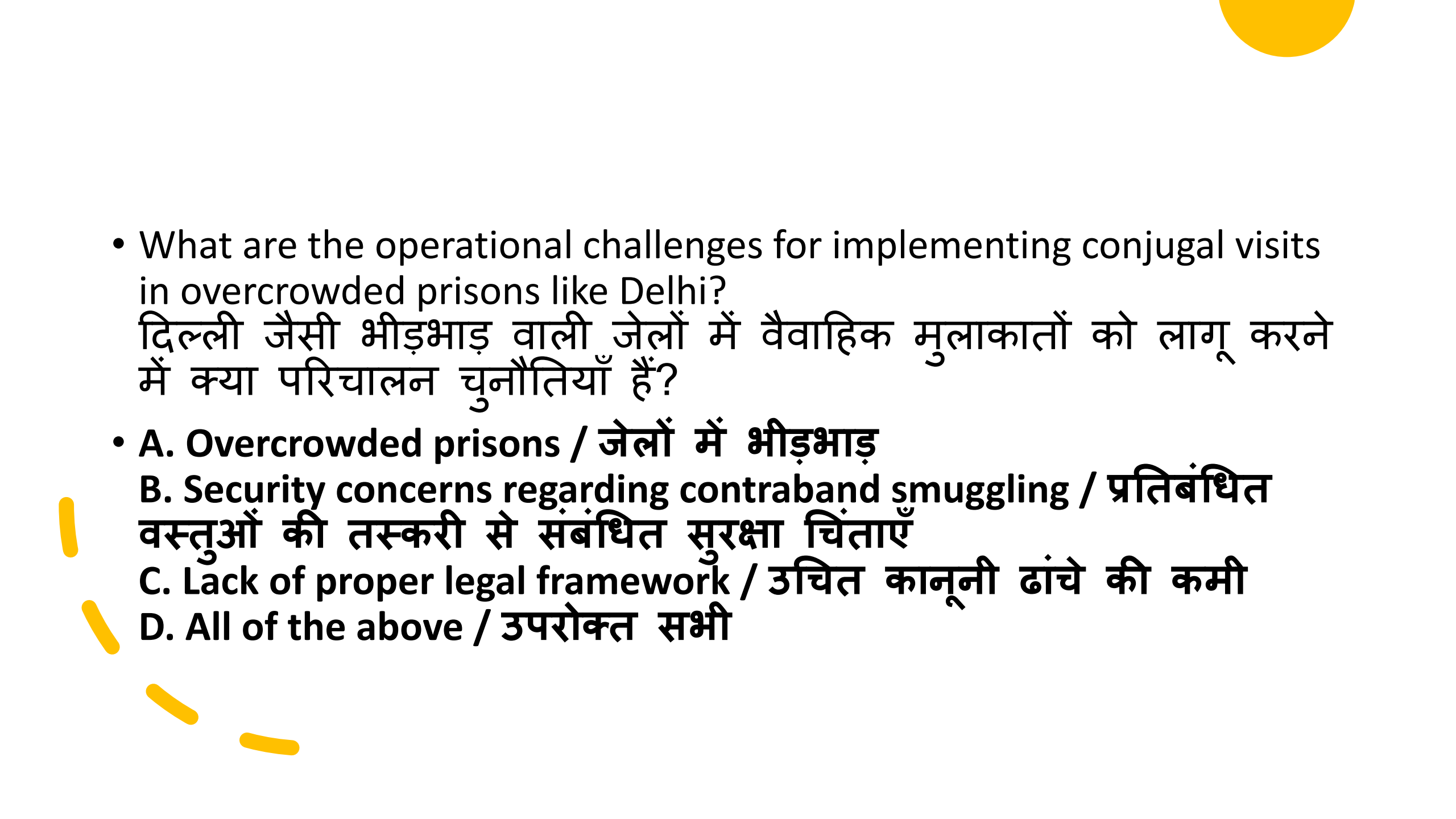
- Which historical monument is featured on the 75th anniversary commemorative stamp of India?
भारत के 75वें वर्षगांठ स्मारक टिकट पर कौन सा ऐतिहासिक स्मारक चित्रित है?
- **A. Gateway of India / गेटवे ऑफ इंडिया**
B. Qutub Minar / क़तुब मीनार
C. Red Fort / लाल क़िला
D. Charminar / चारमीनार



- 
- **The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Rules, 2024** now allow detention for students in which classes?

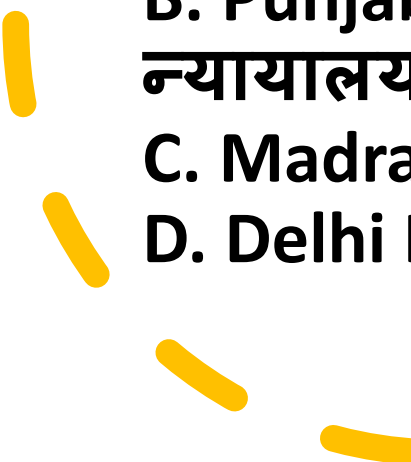
बच्चों के मुफ्त और अनिवार्य शिक्षा का अधिकार (संशोधन) नियम, 2024 अब किन कक्षाओं के छात्रों के लिए रोक की अनुमति देता है?

- 
- **A. Classes 1 to 4 / कक्षा 1 से 4**
 - **B. Classes 5 and 8 / कक्षा 5 और 8**
 - **C. Classes 6 and 7 / कक्षा 6 और 7**
 - **D. Classes 9 and 10 / कक्षा 9 और 10**
- 

- 
- What are the operational challenges for implementing conjugal visits in overcrowded prisons like Delhi?
दिल्ली जैसी भीड़भाड़ वाली जेलों में वैवाहिक मुलाकातों को लागू करने में क्या परिचालन चुनौतियाँ हैं?
 - **A. Overcrowded prisons / जेलों में भीड़भाड़**
B. Security concerns regarding contraband smuggling / प्रतिबंधित वस्तुओं की तस्करी से संबंधित सुरक्षा चिंताएँ
C. Lack of proper legal framework / उचित कानूनी ढांचे की कमी
D. All of the above / उपरोक्त सभी

- 
- Which court recognized the right to procreation during incarceration in 2014?

2014 में किस अदालत ने जेल के दौरान प्रजनन के अधिकार को मान्यता दी?

- **A. Supreme Court of India / भारत का सर्वोच्च न्यायालय**
 - B. Punjab and Haryana High Court / पंजाब और हरियाणा उच्च न्यायालय**
 - C. Madras High Court / मद्रास उच्च न्यायालय**
 - D. Delhi High Court / दिल्ली उच्च न्यायालय**
- 

-
- The **Most Favoured Nation (MFN)** suspension by Switzerland may result in:
स्विट्जरलैंड द्वारा सर्वाधिक अनुकूल राष्ट्र (MFN) निलंबन से क्या परिणाम हो सकता है?
 - **A. Increased taxes on Indian companies in Switzerland / स्विट्जरलैंड में भारतीय कंपनियों पर कर में वृद्धि**
 - **B. Delay in EFTA trade negotiations / EFTA व्यापार वार्ताओं में देरी**
 - **C. Improved FDI in India / भारत में एफडीआई में सुधार**
 - **D. None of the above / उपरोक्त में से कोई नहीं**

- What is the primary objective of the **Minerals Security Partnership** initiated by India?

भारत द्वारा शुरू की गई खनिज सुरक्षा साझेदारी का मुख्य उद्देश्य क्या है?

- A. Diversify mineral supply chains / खनिज आपूर्ति श्रृंखलाओं में विविधता लाना
- B. Invest in renewable energy projects / नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा परियोजनाओं में निवेश करना
- C. Promote sustainable mining / स्थायी खनन को बढ़ावा देना
- D. Build strategic mineral reserves / रणनीतिक खनिज भंडार बनाना

Word of the day

Requite:

make repayment for or return something

Synonym: repay

Usage: *She did not requite his love.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/requitepro

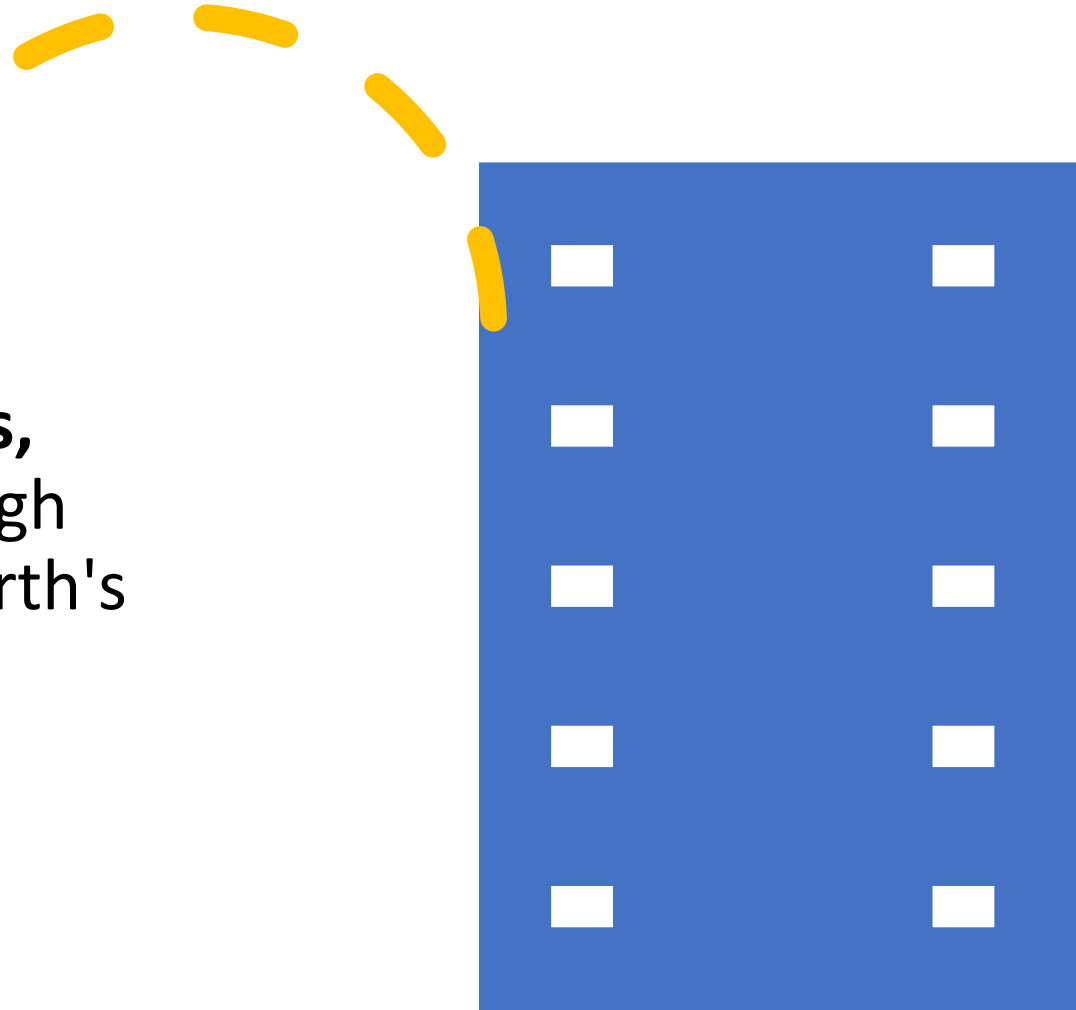
International Phonetic

Alphabet: /ɹɪ'kwaɪt/

Fun Fact

Myth 2: Space is a complete vacuum

- **Truth:** Space is not a perfect vacuum. It contains **particles, radiation, and fields**, although it's much less dense than Earth's atmosphere.



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