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10 MCQ QUIZ

Exploitation of Domestic Workers

- 
- The Supreme Court (SC) of India has raised concerns over the exploitation and abuse of domestic workers in India due to the absence of a protective legal framework. It has directed the Centre to form an inter-ministerial expert committee to assess the need for a protective law.
- 

About: According to the ILO Domestic workers are those workers who **perform work in or for a private household or households.**

They provide **direct and indirect care services**, and as such are key members of the **care economy**.

Status of Domestic Workers in India: Women make up the majority of domestic workers in India, with **26 lakh of the 39 lakh workers being female**, according to 2019 government estimates.

12.6 million minors are employed as domestic workers (**86% are girls, and 25% are under 14 years old**).

What are the concerns of Domestic Workers India?

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graph TD; A[What are the concerns of Domestic Workers India?] --> B[Low Wage]; B --> C[Abuse]; C --> D[Sexual Harassment]; D --> E[Exploitation by Agencies];
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Low Wage

Abuse

Sexual Harassment

Exploitation by Agencies

- What Laws Govern Domestic Work in India?
- **No Dedicated Central Law:** Domestic workers are excluded from mainstream labor laws as "**workman**" and "**workplace**" definitions do not cover household work, often seen as "**unproductive**" women's labor.



Multiple attempts were made to pass a Central law to protect domestic workers, including the **Domestic Workers (Conditions of Employment) Bill of 1959** and the **Domestic Workers (Regulation of Work and Social Security) Bill of 2017**.

The 2019 National Domestic Worker Policy aimed to regulate agencies and ensure workers' rights, including wages, social security, and benefits. However, none of these proposed laws were enacted.

- **State Laws: Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Kerala** have implemented laws to protect domestic workers.
 - These states have established **specialized bodies** to oversee social security benefits, maternity care, education assistance, medical reimbursements, and minimum wages.

- **Global Protections:** In 2011, India voted in favor of **ILO Convention 189**, which aims to improve domestic workers' conditions by recognizing **domestic work as legitimate work** ensuring domestic workers enjoy the same rights as others. **However, India has yet to ratify the convention.**

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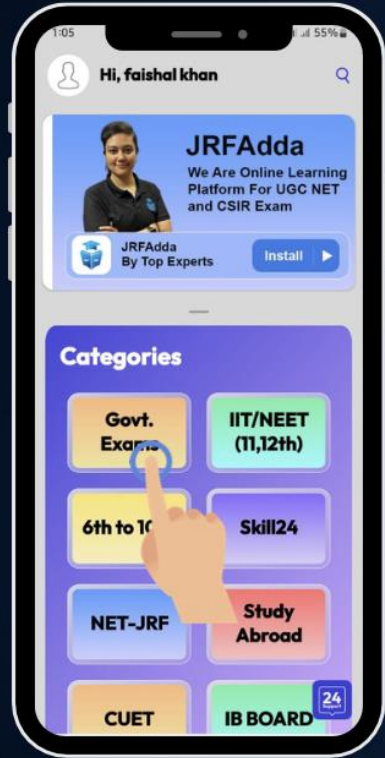
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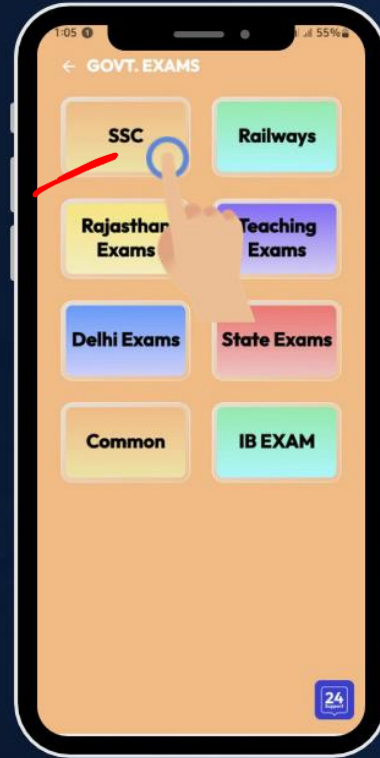
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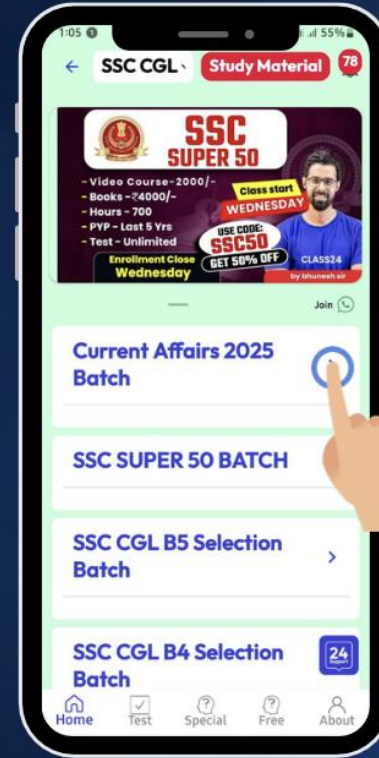
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UNANIMOUS DECISION
JMM passes resolution rejecting CAA and UCC

TELANGANA ASSEMBLY TO DISCUSS REPORTS TODAY
Telangana Assembly to discuss reports today

GRAMMY 2025
Top album for Beyonce; Lamar steals the show

INSIDE
10 T.N. fishermen arrested by Sri Lankan Navy

Himalayas in Arunachal losing glaciers: study

Do not reduce forest land for linear projects

Campaigning for Delhi Assembly election ends
Sativka Mahalan
Naga sadhus prepare to take the dip at the Sangam on Basant Panchami during Maha Kumbh.

Amid global meltdown, rupee breaches 87 against the dollar

Indian rupee slumps 49 paise on first day of trading after Trump imposes tariffs on Canada, Mexico, and China; Finance Ministry official hints Centre is unfazed by the currency's trajectory, terms it a global uncertainty that has to be dealt with

The Indian rupee slumped 0.6% or 49 paise to breach the 87 mark against the U.S. dollar on Monday, amid a meltdown for most emerging market currencies and stock markets across Asia and Europe on the first day of trading after President Donald Trump imposed higher tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China. The rupee, which had crossed the 86 mark vis-a-vis the dollar on January 20, closed at 87.04, slipping close to 87.3 during the day.



Testing new lows
The chart shows the value of the rupee against the U.S. dollar (INR) between November 2024 and February 2025. The rupee has reached a new low of 87.04 on February 4, 2025.

Trump pauses tariffs on Mexico; no change for Canada and China

Associated Press WASHINGTON

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said on Monday after a conversation with U.S. President Donald Trump that the planned tariffs are on hold for a month, a statement confirmed by the White House. Mexico will reinforce the northern border with 10,000 members of the National Guard immediately to stop drug trafficking from Mexico to the United States, in particularentanyl, Ms. Sheinbaum posted on X. "The United States commits to work to stop the trafficking of high powered weapons to Mexico," the Mexican President added that the two countries would continue talks on security and trade and that "the tariffs are put on pause for a month from now." The pause added to the drama as Mr. Trump's tariffs against Canada and China are still slated to go

SC to wait for CFSL report on alleged Biren audio

The Supreme Court on Monday decided to wait for a report from the Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL) on the veracity of audio recordings allegedly "establishing complicity" of Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh in the ethnic violence in the State which led to many deaths. A Bench of Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar was informed by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that the Union government had sent the content handed over to it by the petitioner, Kuki Organisation for Human Trust, to the CFSL. Mr. Mehta said the government had requested individuals who had uploaded material on Twitter (now X) to share the original recording. "Please examine all this," Chief Justice Khanna said. Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for the petitioner, submitted that "Truth Labs report of the audio recording established the 'complicity' of Chief Minister Biren Singh in the ethnic violence in Manipur."



Naga sadhus prepare to take the dip at the Sangam on Basant Panchami during Maha Kumbh. SANDEEP SAXENA REPORT ON PAGE 6

Sangam beckons
Delhi for a decade. The BJP is contesting 68 seats, after giving two seats to its NDA allies JD(U) and the LJP. Meanwhile, several parties from the INDIA bloc lent their support to the AAP instead of the Congress. While the BJP held nearly 200 rallies over the past few days with Chief Ministers of several BJP-run States chipping in, the AAP's campaign revolved around Mr. Kejriwal addressing a minimum of three rallies a day for the past fortnight. The AAP leader, while accepting that there was work yet to be done, asked for a third term, pitching employment and saving the middle class.

Amid global meltdown, rupee breaches 87 against the dollar

Indian rupee slumps 49 paise on first day of trading after Trump imposes tariffs on Canada, Mexico, and China; Finance Ministry official hints Centre is unfazed by the currency's trajectory, terms it a global uncertainty that has to be dealt with

Vikas Dhoot
NEW DELHI

The Indian rupee slumped almost 0.6% or 49 paise to breach the 87 mark against the U.S. dollar on Monday, amid a meltdown for most emerging market currencies and stock markets across Asia and Europe on the first day of trading after President Donald Trump imposed higher tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China. The rupee, which had crossed the 86 mark vis-à-vis the dollar on January 10, closed at 87.11 after slipping close to 87.3 during the day.

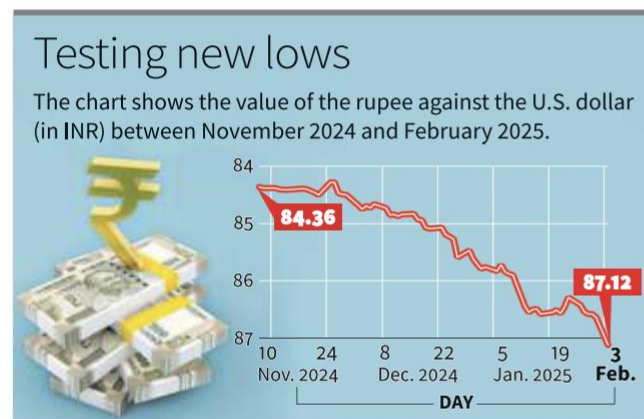
A top Finance Ministry official signalled the government was unfazed by the currency's trajectory, terming it a global uncertainty that has to be dealt with and stressing that India does not believe in using "exchange rate policy"

to push trade and the key is to manage volatility, not to attain a specified level for the currency.

'Dollar Index is high'

"What is happening over the last couple of months is that the dollar is appreciating. The Dollar Index is pretty high, and against all currencies... it is not just the emerging markets, but even with the developed countries. Today, the Dollar Index has picked up again and is above 109," Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth told *The Hindu*. The index had risen over 1% through the day, to 109.7.

"As per our policy that we know the Reserve Bank of India follows, is to take care of the volatility at any level of dollar. At any level, if the dollar is appreciating, that means our imports become a little costlier, but our exports



become competitive," he noted. "However, India has never used exchange rate policies to promote exports. That is not our policy. That's not a sustainable way to keep growing so we believe in strengthening our export competitiveness through better quality," Mr. Seth emphasised, adding that India can only envisage ways to handle the uncertainty that any move by the U.S. to raise tariffs will trigger.

"Each country takes a decision which it assesses to be in their best interest as a sovereign entity, just as we decide what we feel is the best interest of India and Indian people. In sovereign decision-making, there is nothing wrong, because this is the assessment of that particular country. The only things in our hand is – how do we deal with that uncertainty?" the Secretary said.

"What happens in the

rest of the world whether the global growth rate is X or Y – that is given to us, we have to deal with it that and in spite of that factor, we have to do what we have to do. If there's this headwind, it means we must have a more powerful engine to move forward. That is what we try to do," Mr. Seth explained.

The government's focus, he said, is on making India more self-reliant by developing competitive advantages where it doesn't have them. "This is a nuanced approach and we should be clear about it. Second, we should not create cost disadvantages through the tariff policy or through our regulations, and clean up those areas. So this Budget again tries to clean up those areas," he pointed out.

EDITORIAL
» PAGE 8

The Indian rupee slumped 0.6% or 49 paise to breach the 87 mark against the U.S. dollar on Monday.

- भारतीय रुपया सोमवार को अमेरिकी डॉलर के मुकाबले 87 के स्तर को तोड़ते हुए 0.6% या 49 पैसे गिर गया।

The fall came amid a meltdown in emerging market currencies and stock markets across Asia and Europe.

- यह गिरावट एशिया और यूरोप में उभरती हुई बाजार मुद्राओं और स्टॉक बाजारों में गिरावट के बीच आई।

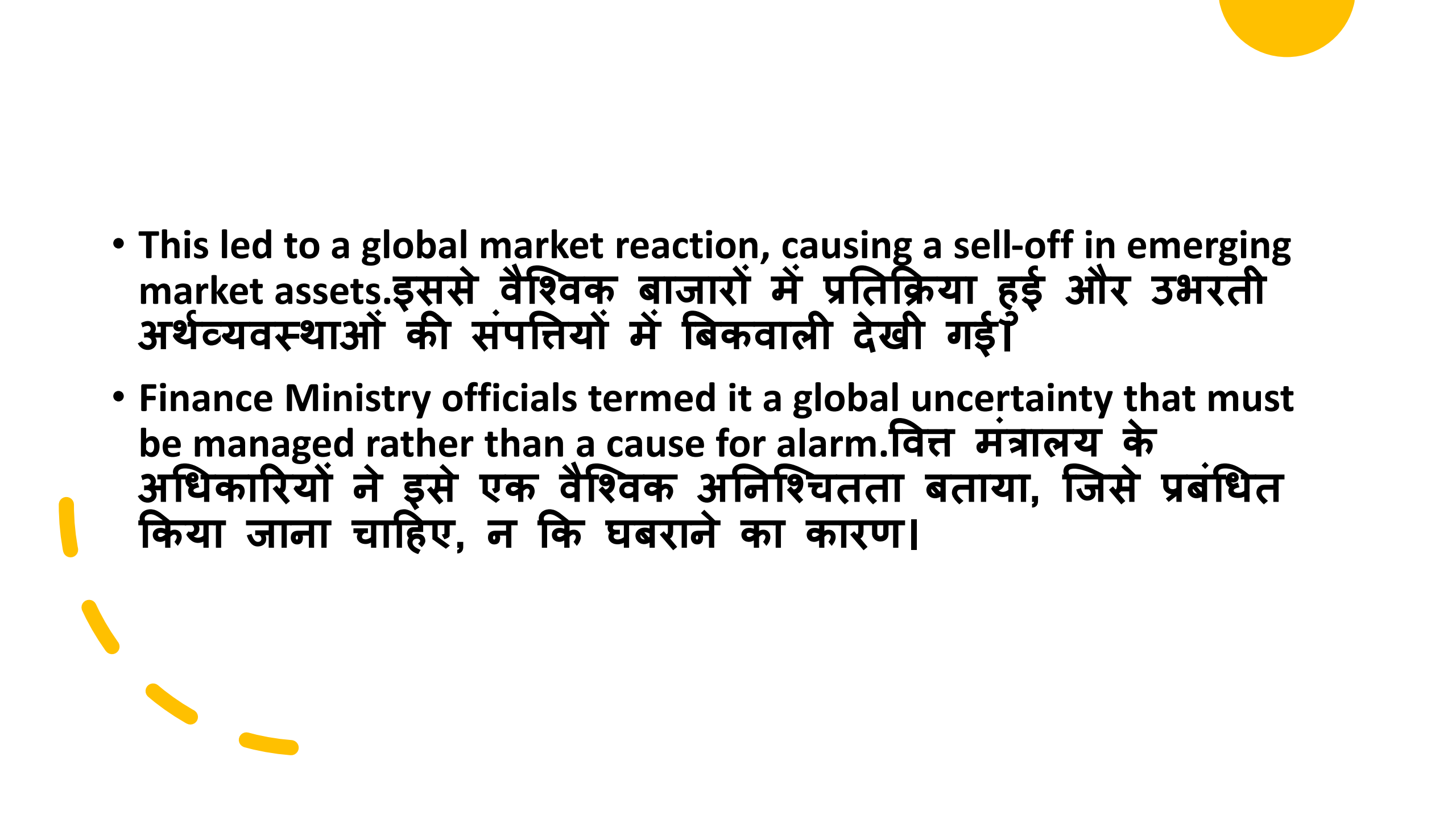
The rupee, which had crossed the 86 mark in January, closed at 87.11 after slipping close to 87.3 during the day.

- जनवरी में 86 का स्तर पार करने वाला रुपया, दिन के दौरान 87.3 तक गिरने के बाद 87.11 पर बंद हुआ।

Reasons for Rupee Depreciation | रुपये में गिरावट के कारण

One major trigger was U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to impose higher tariffs on imports from Canada, Mexico, and China.

एक प्रमुख कारण अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप का कनाडा, मैक्सिको और चीन से आयात पर ऊंचे टैरिफ लगाने का निर्णय था।

- 
- This led to a global market reaction, causing a sell-off in emerging market assets. इससे वैश्विक बाजारों में प्रतिक्रिया हुई और उभरती अर्थव्यवस्थाओं की संपत्तियों में बिकवाली देखी गई।
 - Finance Ministry officials termed it a global uncertainty that must be managed rather than a cause for alarm. वित्त मंत्रालय के अधिकारियों ने इसे एक वैश्विक अनिश्चितता बताया, जिसे प्रबंधित किया जाना चाहिए, न कि घबराने का कारण।

Economic Perspective & Government Stance | आर्थिक दृष्टिकोण और सरकार का रुख



Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth stated that India does not use exchange rates to promote exports.

आर्थिक मामलों के सचिव अजय सेठ ने कहा कि भारत निर्यात बढ़ाने के लिए विनिमय दरों का उपयोग नहीं करता है।

“We do not control the rupee value artificially; rather, we focus on export competitiveness.”

- "हम रुपये के मूल्य को कृत्रिम रूप से नियंत्रित नहीं करते; बल्कि हम निर्यात प्रतिस्पर्धा पर ध्यान केंद्रित करते हैं।"

The Dollar Index, which measures the strength of the U.S. dollar against global currencies, rose above 109.7.

- डॉलर इंडेक्स, जो वैश्विक मुद्राओं के मुकाबले अमेरिकी डॉलर की ताकत को मापता है, 109.7 से ऊपर चला गया।

-
- **Future Outlook & Policy Response | भविष्य की संभावनाएं और नीतिगत प्रतिक्रिया**
 - **The government aims to make India more self-reliant and strengthen its global trade position.**
 - **सरकार भारत को अधिक आत्मनिर्भर बनाने और वैश्विक व्यापार में इसकी स्थिति मजबूत करने की योजना बना रही है।**
 - **Efforts are being made to mitigate currency volatility through better regulations and policy frameworks.**
 - **मुद्रा में अस्थिरता को कम करने के लिए बेहतर नियमन और नीतिगत ढांचे के माध्यम से प्रयास किए जा रहे हैं।**
 - **India will focus on reducing trade disadvantages through strategic tariff policies.**
 - **भारत रणनीतिक टैरिफ नीतियों के माध्यम से व्यापारिक नुकसान को कम करने पर ध्यान केंद्रित करेगा।**




- **Conclusion | निष्कर्ष**

-  The rupee's depreciation to 87 against the dollar is a result of global economic factors, including U.S. trade policies.


- डॉलर के मुकाबले रुपये की गिरावट वैश्विक आर्थिक कारकों, विशेष रूप से अमेरिका की व्यापार नीतियों का परिणाम है।

-  The Indian government is focusing on improving export competitiveness rather than controlling the currency artificially.



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- भारत सरकार मुद्रा को कृत्रिम रूप से नियंत्रित करने के बजाय निर्यात प्रतिस्पर्धा को सुधारने पर ध्यान दे रही है।

 Policy measures are being implemented to manage global uncertainties and strengthen India's economic stability.

- वैश्विक अनिश्चितताओं को प्रबंधित करने और भारत की आर्थिक स्थिरता को मजबूत करने के लिए नीतिगत उपाय लागू किए जा रहे हैं।
- 

Trump pauses tariffs on Mexico; no change for Canada and China

Associated Press

WASHINGTON

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said on Monday after a conversation with U.S. President Donald Trump that the planned tariffs are on hold for a month, a statement confirmed by the White House.

“Mexico will reinforce the northern border with 10,000 members of the National Guard immediately, to stop drug trafficking from Mexico to the United States, in particular fentanyl,” Ms. Sheinbaum posted on X. “The United States commits to work to stop the trafficking of high powered weapons to Mexico.”

The Mexican President added that the two countries would continue talks on security and trade and that “the tariffs are put on pause for a month from now.” The pause added to the drama as Mr. Trump’s tariffs against Canada and China are still slated to go





Donald Trump

into effect on Tuesday. Uncertainty remains about the durability of any deals and whether the tariffs are a harbinger of a broader trade war as Mr. Trump has promised more import taxes to come. Mr. Trump posted on social media that he spoke on Monday morning with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and would “be speaking to him again.” Both Canada and Mexico had plans to levy their own tariffs in response to U.S. actions, but Mexico is holding off for the moment.

‘CHINA WILL BE LAUGHING’

» PAGE 14



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- Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum stated on Monday that U.S. President Donald Trump has put planned tariffs on hold for a month. मैक्सिको की राष्ट्रपति क्लाउडिया शिनबाम ने सोमवार को कहा कि अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप ने नियोजित टैरिफ को एक महीने के लिए रोक दिया है।
 - This was confirmed by the White House. व्हाइट हाउस ने इस निर्णय की पुष्टि की।
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- **U.S.-Mexico Agreement | अमेरिका-मैक्सिको समझौता**
 - **Mexico will reinforce its northern border with 10,000 National Guard troops to stop drug trafficking, particularly fentanyl, into the United States.**
 - **मैक्सिको अपने उत्तरी सीमा क्षेत्र में 10,000 नेशनल गार्ड सैनिकों को तैनात करेगा ताकि अमेरिका में नशीली दवाओं की तस्करी, विशेष रूप से फेंटानाइल, को रोका जा सके।**
 - **In return, the U.S. has committed to working on halting the trafficking of high-powered weapons to Mexico.**
 - **इसके बदले, अमेरिका ने मैक्सिको में शक्तिशाली हथियारों की तस्करी को रोकने में सहयोग करने का वादा किया है।**

Impact on Trade & Tariffs | व्यापार और टैरिफ पर प्रभाव




President Sheinbaum added that the two nations would continue talks on security and trade.

- राष्ट्रपति शिनबाम ने कहा कि दोनों देशों के बीच सुरक्षा और व्यापार को लेकर बातचीत जारी रहेगी।

Tariffs on Mexico are paused for a month, but those on Canada and China will go into effect as planned.

- मैक्सिको पर टैरिफ एक महीने के लिए स्थगित कर दिया गया है, लेकिन कनाडा और चीन पर नियोजित टैरिफ लागू होंगे।

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- **Political Uncertainty & Future Trade War | राजनीतिक अनिश्चितता और संभावित व्यापार युद्ध**
 - **There is uncertainty about the durability of this agreement and whether this is a sign of a broader trade war.**
 - इस समझौते की स्थिरता को लेकर अनिश्चितता बनी हुई है और यह व्यापार युद्ध की ओर संकेत कर सकता है।
 - **Trump has promised more import taxes, adding further trade tensions.**
 - ट्रंप ने और अधिक आयात कर लगाने का वादा किया है, जिससे व्यापारिक तनाव बढ़ सकता है।
 - **Trump also held discussions with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who has vowed to respond with retaliatory tariffs.**
 - ट्रंप ने कनाडा के प्रधानमंत्री जस्टिन ट्रूडो से भी बातचीत की, जिन्होंने बदले में टैरिफ लगाने की बात कही है।

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- Conclusion | निष्कर्ष
 -  The U.S. has temporarily paused tariffs on Mexico in exchange for security commitments.
 - अमेरिका ने सुरक्षा प्रतिबद्धताओं के बदले में मैक्सिको पर टैरिफ अस्थायी रूप से रोक दिए हैं।
 -  However, trade tensions with Canada and China remain, with tariffs going into effect as planned.
 - हालांकि, कनाडा और चीन के साथ व्यापारिक तनाव जारी है और उन पर नियोजित टैरिफ लागू होंगे।
 -  Future trade relations remain uncertain as Trump hints at further tariffs.
 - भविष्य में व्यापारिक संबंध अनिश्चित बने हुए हैं क्योंकि ट्रंप आगे और टैरिफ लगाने का संकेत दे रहे हैं

Maharashtra makes Marathi compulsory in all official dealings

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit
MUMBAI

To promote the use of the Marathi language, the Maharashtra government on Monday issued an order making it compulsory for all officials of government, semi-government, local self-government, government corporations, and government-aided offices in the State to speak only in Marathi.

Even keyboards in all the offices will have to mandatorily have Marathi Devanagari alphabets, apart from Roman alphabets. Errant officials will face disciplinary action, the government said in its order.

"In all government, semi-government offices, local self-government bodies, government corporations, government-aided offices, it shall be compulsory to communicate with visitors (except foreigners and non-Marathi persons from outside the State) in Marathi language. Also, it will be mandatory to put up boards in front of the offices regarding the use of Marathi language and conversation in Marathi," the order issued by the Planning Department stated.

The communication in

Union government offices also will be in Marathi.

"Original proposals, all correspondence, comments, orders, messages in all government offices shall be in Marathi and all presentations and websites at office level shall be in Marathi. According to the trilingual formula of the Central government, it will be mandatory to have notice boards, name boards of officers, application forms in Marathi in all offices of the Central government in the State as well as in all banks etc." the order stated. It will be mandatory to issue advertisements of all government-sanctioned activities in Marathi language only.

Main objective
The Marathi Language Policy was approved by the Maharashtra Cabinet last year. It had recommended the use of Marathi in all public affairs to further the steps taken for the preservation, conservation, promotion, dissemination, and development of Marathi language. The main objective of the said policy is to establish Marathi language as the language of administration and employment in the next 25 years.

Manipur Congress appraises Governor of Biren's 'threat' against no-trust motion

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

The Manipur unit of the Congress on Monday alleged that Chief Minister Nongthombam Biren Singh threatened the MLAs against moving a no-trust motion against his government in the upcoming session of the 60-member State Assembly.

A Congress delegation led by former Chief Minister Okram Ibobi Singh led Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla at the Raj Bhavan in Imphal and handed over a memorandum.

Later, the Congress leaders told journalists that for the party appraised the Governor of the threat.

"There was an event organised by the BJP at its head office (in Imphal) on January 14. During that meeting, Chief Minister N. Biren Singh mentioned



Okram Ibobi Singh led the delegation that met Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla in Imphal.

that any MLA who moves a no-trust motion will not be able to stay in the house as he will be chased by the people," Mr. Ibobi Singh, the Manipur Congress Legislature Party leader, said.

He said Mr. Biren Singh's statement did not bode well of a Chief Minister. "The statement is uncivilised and unbecoming of a leader. Moving a no-trust

JMM passes resolution against CAA, NRC, UCA

A 50-point resolution was passed during party's 46th foundation day celebrations which among other things called for implementation of the Chota Nagpur and Santal Pargana Tenancy Acts

Amit Ibhelari
PATNA

The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) passed a resolution rejecting the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) during its 46th foundation day celebrations at the Gandhi Maidan in Dumka district of Jharkhand on Sunday night.

Party executive president and Chief Minister Hemant Soren attended the event along with his wife and Gandey MLA Kalpana Soren. A 50-point resolution was passed, which included the strict implementation of the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act and the Santal Pargana Tenancy Act. The budget presented in the sub-capital of Dumka to start the Chief Minister's camp office in a systematic and effective manner.

The resolution was passed that all the non-teaching staff of Sido Kanhu Murmu



Celebratory meet: Hemant Soren being felicitated by party workers on JMM's 46th foundation day, in Dumka on Monday.

University (SKMU) should be given the benefit of the seventh pay scale. It also demanded to give Central University status to the SKMU and to establish an agricultural university in Dumka.

Addressing the large gathering, Soren accused the Union government of neglecting Jharkhand. He pointed out that the Centre gets huge revenue from Jharkhand from minerals but Jharkhand gets nothing in return.

The resolution was passed that the Union government has nothing for the people

and work in tea gardens but they do not have tribal status. He appealed to tribal people living across the country to come and settle in Jharkhand. "They are not getting their rights. Wherever the tribal people are living in any corner of the country, you come here, we will settle you," Mr. Soren said.

In her speech, Ms. Soren reminded that the movement to get ₹1.36-lakh crore dues from the Centre will continue. "This land of Jharkhand is a land of agrition and struggle. Guruji Shibu Soren first started agitation against the money lending system and then fought a long battle for the demand of a separate Jharkhand. In the similar way, our agitation to get our dues will continue," Mr. Soren said.

He accused the Union government of hatching a conspiracy to send Mr. Soren to jail. Basant Soren, Dumka MP, said if the Centre does not agree to pay the dues of the Jharkhand government, he will even a single piece of mineral go out of the State.

Himalayas in Arunachal Pradesh lost 110 glaciers in 32 years: study

Rahul Karmakar

A new study has revealed that a section of the eastern Himalayas in Arunachal Pradesh lost 110 glaciers in 32 years.

The study by a quartet of researchers also found that these glaciers covering an area of 209.85 sq. km disappeared at a retreat rate of 16.94 sq. km during the study period from 1986 to 2020. The retreat exposed bedrock and created glacial lakes, threatening glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs).

The study by a quartet of researchers also found that these glaciers covering an area of 209.85 sq. km disappeared at a retreat rate of 16.94 sq. km during the study period from 1986 to 2020. The retreat exposed bedrock and created glacial lakes, threatening glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs).

The eastern Himalayas have been witness to a major GLOF — the 2023 Sikkim disaster that killed at least 55 people and destroyed a 1,200-megawatt hydropower project

as a reference. They found that the number of glaciers decreased from 756 to 646 during the 32-year long study period. The glacial cover during this period reduced by 309.85 sq. km from 588.23 sq. km, working out to a loss of a little more than 47%.

Most of the glaciers studied lie at an elevation of 4,500-4,800 metres above mean sea level.

The eastern Himalayan region is warming at a rate surpassing the global average, the study says. AP

The researchers used remote sensing and geographic information systems to map glacier boundaries, even in debris-covered areas, from Tawang to Lohit districts of Arunachal Pradesh. The study was published in the *Journal of Earth System Science*.

93% probability that voice in leaked tapes is of Manipur CM: lab

Abhinav Lakshman
NEW DELHI

Even as the Supreme Court awaits a forensic analysis of the audio tapes purported to implicate Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh for alleged role in the ethnic conflict in Jharkhand, an analysis conducted by Truth Labs Forensic Services, a private non-profit, has said that comparisons with samples of Mr. Singh's public speeches showed that there was a 93% probability that the voice in the leaked tapes was that of the Manipur Chief Minister.

The forensic report of Truth Labs said in its final opinion that auditory, spectrographic statistical, and likelihood analysis showed that the "voice of the speaker in both questions and standard recordings was identified to be one and the same with high probability."

The report said that the original audio tapes, purported to be that of Mr. Singh speaking in the Meitei language, was submitted as an audio-video recording file, "created using a pre-existing audio recording in order to add English subtitles".

Analysed for commonly uttered words and other words "were found to be similar with high probability".

Acoustic analysis
Under the acoustic analysis, some consistency of speech fluency, loudness, could be detected," also noted in the audio authentication section that "no abrupt changes were found in the time-domain waveform and spectrogram of the audio signals in the recordings".

A Manipur government source told *The Hindu* that there is "no need to comment on these findings "as it has nothing to do with CM N. Biren Singh".

The report noted that the original audio tapes, purported to be that of Mr. Singh speaking in the Meitei language, was submitted as an audio-video recording file, "created using a pre-existing audio recording in order to add English subtitles".

SC to hear on Feb. 12 pleas on CEC, EC appointments

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to hear on February 12 petitions challenging the legality of a new law dealing with the appointments of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners which gives the Centre a dominant role.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for petitioner NGO Association for Democratic Reform, said though the case was scheduled to be heard on 0.1 and 0.8 per cent, which is notably higher than the global increase of approximately 0.74°C over the last century. The warming trend is expected to continue, experiencing a temperature rise of 5-6°C and an increase in precipitation of 20-30% by the end of the century," the study said.

Fixing February 12, Justice Kanta, who headed the Bench, said it would endeavour to hear and decide the case on the same day.

2 crore people take Amrit Snan at Maha Kumbh Basant Panchami at Maha Kumbh

Press Trust of India
MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

The third Amrit Snan at the Maha Kumbh proceeded smoothly on Monday with lakhs of people taking a dip on the occasion of Basant Panchami, and Akharas resuming the grand processions curtailed last year when a stampede killed at least 30 people.

By 4 p.m., an estimated two crore devotees had taken the ritual dip at the Sangam, the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati according to the Uttar Pradesh government.

After the stampede that broke out at the Sangam on Monday, the State government mounted safety measures, with Chief Minister



Holy bath: Devotees take a dip at Sangam during the third Amrit Snan at the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj on Monday.

Yogi Adityanath directing officers to adopt a "zero-erosion" approach. The annual Mauni Amavasya dip, when crowd pressure built up at the Sangam, broke out at the Sangam in Lucknow since 3.30 a.m., they said. Deputy Inspector-General of Police (DIG), Maha

Kumbh, Vaibhav Krishna said that in light of the January 29 stampede, additional force had been deployed at all pressure points for crowd management.

"Everything is running smoothly today," Mr. Krishna said during a pre-dawn stroll in the Meera area. The government said that it expected a festival of around five crore pilgrims through Monday. Overall, since the beginning of the Maha Kumbh on January 13, 34.97 crore visitors have been recorded.

While Monday's is the second of three Amrit Snans, two more special bathing dates fall on February 12 (Machhi vratam) and February 26 (Malhashvrat), before the culmination of the world's largest spiritual congregation.

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday appointed an amicus curiae and issued formal notice to the State of Bihar on the plea challenging the appointment of State Public Service Commission Ravi Manubhai Parmar.

A Bench of Justices P.S. Narasimha and Manoj Misra appointed Advocate Vanshaja Shukla as the amicus curiae in the petition filed by advocate Brajesh Singh to declare the appointment of Ravi Manubhai Parmar as "illegal and void".

Mr. Singh argued that the appointment defied the mandate of Article 316 of the Constitution and "implicitly requires only a person with impeccable integrity about appointment as Chairman or Member



Legal battle: BPSIC Chairman Ravi Manubhai Parmar (right) is facing a plea against his appointment.

of Public Service Commission". Mr. Singh alleged Mr. Parmar was accused in a criminal case in connection with "large-scale scam and corruption" in the Bihar Mahadalla Vikas Mission and the

same is still pending adjudication before the Special Judge, Vigilance, Patna".

"This, apparently respondent case in connection with "large-scale scam and corruption" in the Bihar Mahadalla Vikas Mission and the

same is still pending adjudication before the Special Judge, Vigilance, Patna".

Himalayas in Arunachal Pradesh lost 110 glaciers in 32 years: study

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

A new study has revealed that a section of the eastern Himalayas in Arunachal Pradesh lost 110 glaciers in 32 years.

The study by a quartet of researchers also found that these glaciers covering an area of 309.85 sq. km disappeared at a retreat rate of 16.94 sq. km during the study period from 1988 to 2020. The retreat exposed bedrock and created glacial lakes, threatening glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs).

Glacial retreat, a key indicator of global climate change, is the process by which glaciers melt faster than new snow and ice can accumulate. The eastern Himalayas have been witness to a major GLOF – the 2023 Sikkim disaster that killed at least 55 people and destroyed a 1,200-megawatt hydropower project



Climate crisis: The eastern Himalayan region is warming at a rate surpassing the global average, the study says. AFP

on the Teesta River.

Authored by Vimha Ritse, Amenuo Susan Kulnu, and Latonglila Jamir of Nagaland University's Department of Environmental Science, and Nabajit Hazarika of the Guwahati-based Cotton University's Department of Environmental Biology and Wildlife Sciences, the study was published in the *Journal of Earth System Science*.

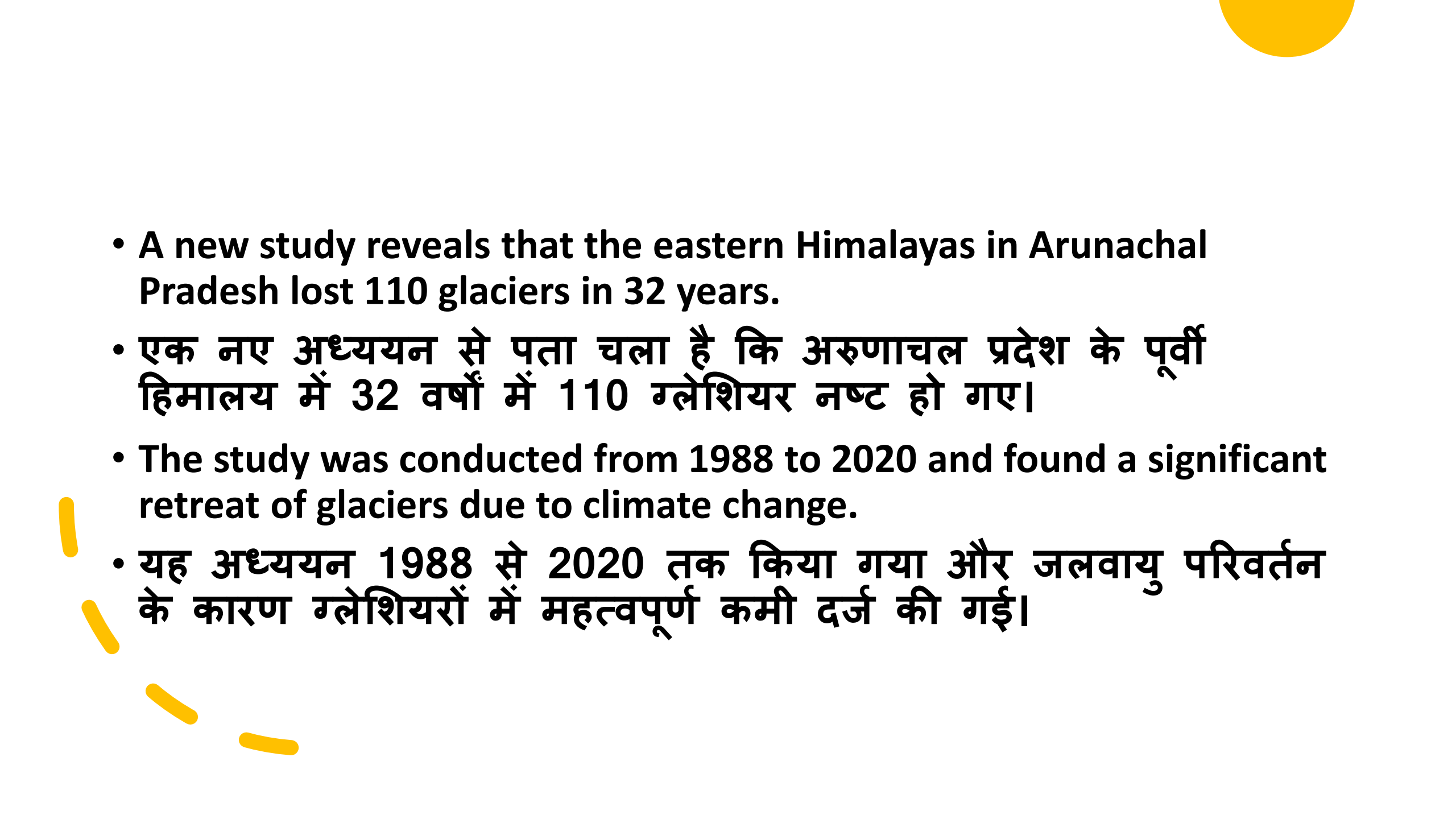
The researchers used remote sensing and geographic information systems to map glacier boundaries, even in debris-covered areas, from Tawang to Lohit districts of Arunachal Pradesh through West Kameng, Kurung Kumey, Upper Siang, and Upper Dibang Valley districts. They also used the Randolph Glacier Inventory of Global Land Ice Measurements from Space



as a reference.

They found that the number of glaciers decreased from 756 to 646 during the 32-year-long study period. The glacial cover during this period reduced by 309.85 sq. km from 585.23 sq. km, working out to a loss of a little more than 47%.

Most of the glaciers studied lie at an elevation of 4,500-4,800 metres above mean sea level.

“The eastern Himalayan region is warming at a rate surpassing the global average with temperature increase reported between 0.1° and 0.8°C per decade, which is notably higher than the global increase of approximately 0.74°C over the last century. The warming trend is expected to continue, experiencing a temperature rise of 5-6°C and an increase in precipitation of 20-30% by the end of the century,” the study said.

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- A new study reveals that the eastern Himalayas in Arunachal Pradesh lost 110 glaciers in 32 years.
 - एक नए अध्ययन से पता चला है कि अरुणाचल प्रदेश के पूर्वी हिमालय में 32 वर्षों में 110 ग्लेशियर नष्ट हो गए।
 - The study was conducted from 1988 to 2020 and found a significant retreat of glaciers due to climate change.
 - यह अध्ययन 1988 से 2020 तक किया गया और जलवायु परिवर्तन के कारण ग्लेशियरों में महत्वपूर्ण कमी दर्ज की गई।

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- The glaciers covered an area of 309.85 sq. km but shrank at a retreat rate of 16.94 sq. km per year.
 - ग्लेशियरों ने 309.85 वर्ग किलोमीटर क्षेत्र को कवर किया था, लेकिन वे प्रति वर्ष 16.94 वर्ग किलोमीटर की दर से पिघल रहे हैं।
 - The total number of glaciers declined from 756 to 646 in 32 years.
 - 32 वर्षों में ग्लेशियरों की कुल संख्या 756 से घटकर 646 हो गई।
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This represents a 47% reduction in glacial cover.



- यह ग्लेशियर कवर में 47% की गिरावट को दर्शाता है।

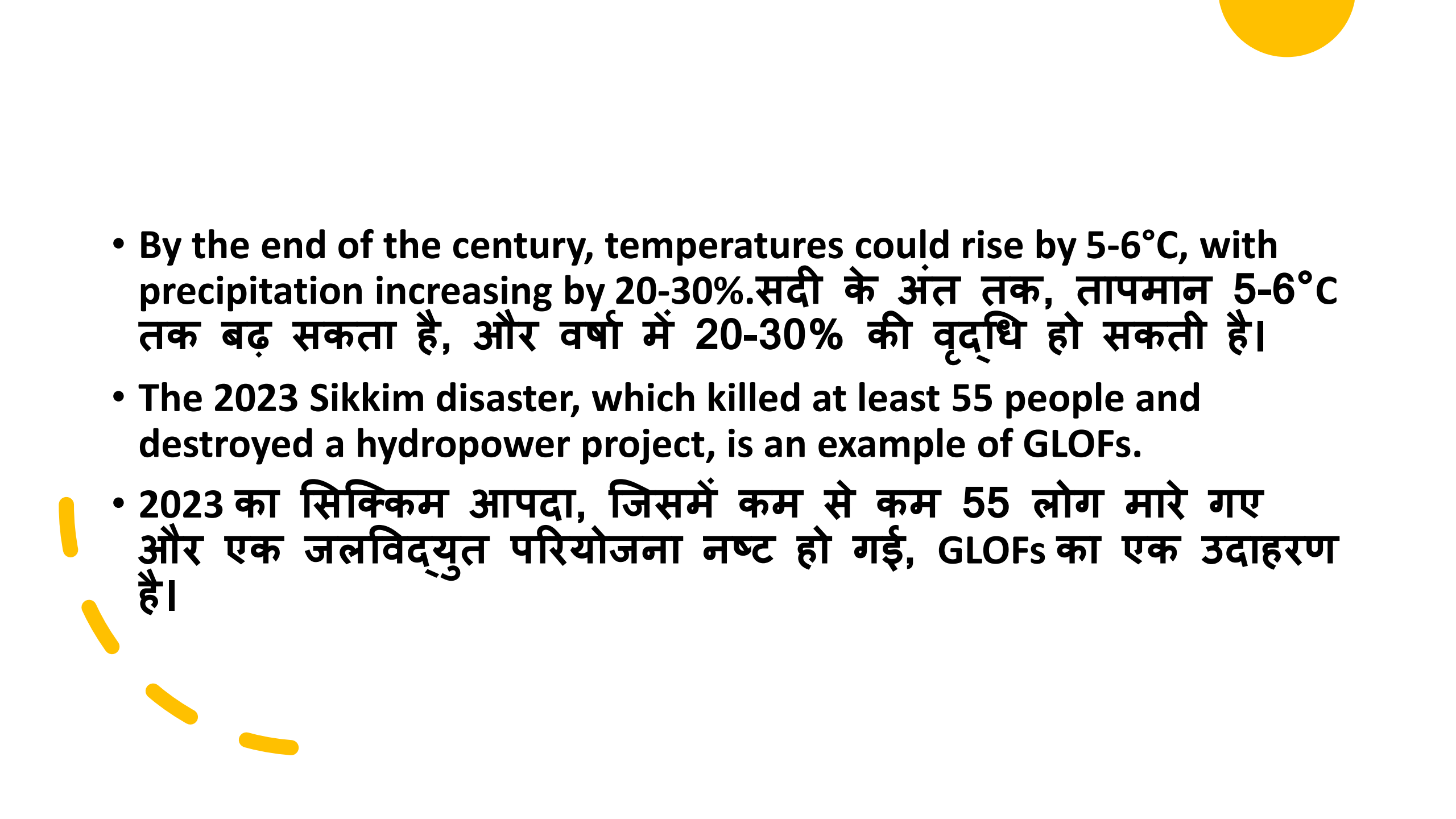
Glacial retreat is exposing bedrock and forming new glacial lakes, increasing the risk of glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs).


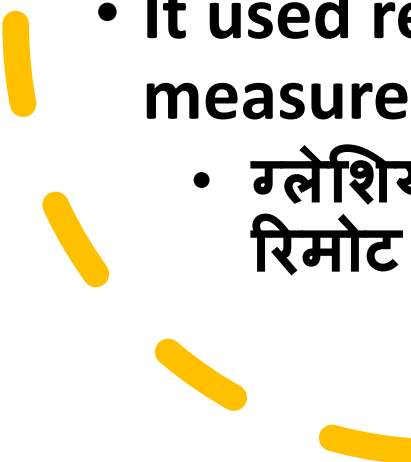
- ग्लेशियरों के पीछे हटने से चट्टानें उजागर हो रही हैं और नए ग्लेशियर झीलें बन रही हैं, जिससे ग्लेशियर झील विस्फोट बाढ़ (GLOFs) का खतरा बढ़ रहा है।

The study links this retreat to climate change and rising temperatures.

- अध्ययन इस कमी को जलवायु परिवर्तन और बढ़ते तापमान से जोड़ता है।

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- **Impact of Climate Change | जलवायु परिवर्तन का प्रभाव**
 - **The eastern Himalayas are warming at a rate faster than the global average.**
 - पूर्वी हिमालय वैश्विक औसत से तेज़ दर से गर्म हो रहे हैं।
 - **The temperature increase is reported between 0.1°C and 0.8°C per decade.**
 - तापमान में वृद्धि प्रति दशक 0.1°C से 0.8°C के बीच देखी गई है।
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- By the end of the century, temperatures could rise by 5-6°C, with precipitation increasing by 20-30%. सदी के अंत तक, तापमान 5-6°C तक बढ़ सकता है, और वर्षा में 20-30% की वृद्धि हो सकती है।
 - The 2023 Sikkim disaster, which killed at least 55 people and destroyed a hydropower project, is an example of GLOFs.
 - 2023 का सिक्किम आपदा, जिसमें कम से कम 55 लोग मारे गए और एक जलविद्युत परियोजना नष्ट हो गई, GLOFs का एक उदाहरण है।

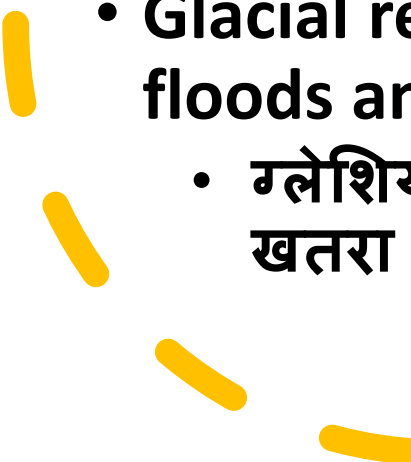
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- **Methodology of the Study | अध्ययन की विधि**
 - **The study was conducted by researchers from Nagaland University and Cotton University, Guwahati.**
 - इस अध्ययन को नागालैंड विश्वविद्यालय और गुवाहाटी के कॉटन विश्वविद्यालय के शोधकर्ताओं द्वारा किया गया।
 - **It used remote sensing and GIS to map glacier boundaries and measure ice loss.**
 - ग्लेशियर की सीमाओं को मैप करने और बर्फ के नुकसान को मापने के लिए रिमोट सेंसिंग और जीआईएस तकनीक का उपयोग किया गया।
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- The Randolph Glacier Inventory of Global Land Ice Measurements was also used for reference.

- संदर्भ के लिए रैंडोल्फ ग्लेशियर इन्वेंटरी ऑफ ग्लोबल लैंड आइस मेजरमेंट का भी उपयोग किया गया।

- **5. Future Risks & Concerns | भविष्य के खतरे और चिंताएं**

- Glacial retreat increases the risk of natural disasters such as flash floods and landslides.




- ग्लेशियरों के पिघलने से बाढ़ और भूस्खलन जैसी प्राकृतिक आपदाओं का खतरा बढ़ जाता है।
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Melting glaciers threaten water availability for millions of people who depend on Himalayan rivers.

- पिघलते ग्लेशियर हिमालयी नदियों पर निर्भर करोड़ों लोगों के लिए जल उपलब्धता को खतरे में डाल सकते हैं।

Urgent climate action is needed to slow down glacier loss and mitigate environmental risks.

- ग्लेशियरों के नुकसान को धीमा करने और पर्यावरणीय जोखिमों को कम करने के लिए तत्काल जलवायु कार्रवाई की आवश्यकता है।

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- Conclusion | निष्कर्ष
 -  The study highlights the severe impact of climate change on the Himalayas, urging immediate action.
 - यह अध्ययन हिमालय पर जलवायु परिवर्तन के गंभीर प्रभाव को उजागर करता है और तत्काल कार्रवाई की मांग करता है।
 -  With glaciers disappearing at an alarming rate, India needs stronger climate policies and disaster management strategies.
 - ग्लेशियरों के तेजी से गायब होने के कारण, भारत को मजबूत जलवायु नीतियों और आपदा प्रबंधन रणनीतियों की आवश्यकता है।
 -  Sustainable development, afforestation, and better water management are critical to mitigating future risks.
 - भविष्य के खतरों को कम करने के लिए सतत विकास, वनीकरण और बेहतर जल प्रबंधन महत्वपूर्ण हैं।

Green and clean India must formulate a critical minerals framework that is just and equitable

India has come a long way in its attempt to transition to cleaner forms of power in the past decade. This is partly reflected in the budgetary allocation to Ministry of New and Renewable Energy between fiscal years 2015 (Rs 1,535 crore) and 2025 (Rs 432,626 crore). But these allocations, other than in 2015 and 2022, have been underutilised, leading to lower revised estimates (REs). However, this does not fully reflect the clean energy journey. India entered a major leap with the PM-KUSUM scheme in 2019, a year ahead of the COVID-19 disruptions, with an outlay of 53,422 crore. The scheme envisaged having off-grid solar irrigation pumps and grid-connected solar plants on fallow farmlands. While PM-KUSUM has received a tepid response, with less than half a gigawatt of installed capacity, the realisation that energy transition is both a desirable outcome and a requirement occurred during the COVID-19 years, when there were major supply chain disruptions to coal, oil and gas. This led to India pledging to produce half its energy requirements from renewables in about five years from now, at COP26 in 2021.

It was the 2023 Budget that heralded the clean energy shift, with 18,100 crore for a PLSI scheme for advanced chemistry cell manufacturing to augment India's grid-scale battery storage capacity. A 44,500 crore PLSI scheme for solar photovoltaic modules went up to 19,500 crore in 2022. But the government also decided to levy a 40% basic customs duty (BCD) on solar modules and 5% on solar cells to reduce the overwhelming import dependence on China. However, this slowed solar power installations nationwide with prices rising. And even while renewables have taken 46% of India's total installed capacity (October 2024), 70% of its power output is from coal. Experts have pointed to the need for grid-scale battery storage technology to augment India's renewables output. As an interdependence on China leads to the continued reliance on fossil-fuel based power. With the realisation that cheap BCDs could be inflationary and counterproductive to localising production, particularly in the capital-intensive battery storage sector, the government has announced that it will exempt 12 critical minerals and 35 capital goods from BCDs. But reducing dependence on China for energy transition resources and technology would also require concerted leadership in formulating a critical minerals framework, that is socially and environmentally just during extraction, and equitable in its distribution. With the U.S. withdrawing its leadership position in these areas, India must aim to play a bigger role.

Tariff turmoil Donald Trump is triggering a trade war over unrelated bilateral issues

President Donald Trump set the cat among the pigeons delightfully when he introduced a slew of punishing tariffs on trade with Canada, Mexico, and China, with even more tax cuts promised for other trading partners in the months ahead. Markets in Japan, South Korea and across Asia were rattled as fears peaked of the fallout on supply chains for North America, particularly in sectors such as automobiles, which have enjoyed the strong presence of foreign investment for decades. Over the weekend, Mr. Trump signed three executive orders that would raise Canadian and Mexican auto import duty to 25%. Only Canadian energy products were spared a 10% tax will be applied. The White House further announced, in line with the promises Mr. Trump made on the campaign trail, a 10% tax on goods from China. Beijing responded angrily, saying that it would file a lawsuit with the WTO against the U.S. for "unilateral practices" even as it said that it would take "necessary countermeasures...." While Ottawa and Mexico City warned that retaliatory tariffs would be imposed soon, Mr. Trump's subsequent calls to Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum led to a one-month pause before the tariffs kicked in, and the White House appeared to strike a conciliatory note with Mr. Trump speaking to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as well. Meanwhile Mr. Trump has suggested that the EU was next in the firing line, even though the U.K. appeared to win a modicum of a reprieve for issues with Washington.

While tariffs are traditionally applied sparingly, and mostly in cases of trade imbalances in the context of artificial price barriers imposed by one country that impact its trading partners, the official reasoning supplied by the Trump White House for its tariff plan was that it would serve to address the "national emergency" resulting from "the extraordinary threat posed by illegal aliens and drugs, including deadly fentanyl". On one hand, this opens the floodgates to other nations retaliating to U.S. tariffs and dampening world trade at a time when global economic growth prospects are precarious. The move also signals that it is acceptable for nations to weaponise tariffs as a countermeasure against unrelated inter-country disputes. Few would deny Mr. Trump's administration the right to enforce law and order, but a crackdown on the U.S.'s "ridiculous Open Borders" — but most would have imagined that this process would entail increased law enforcement activity rather than intersectoral tariffs. The tariffs will almost certainly have a deleterious effect on the prices that American consumers pay for imported products, besides a broader inflationary impact through higher input prices across industries. Perhaps it will take a full four years of economic pain in the U.S. before the realisation dawns that tariffs are hardly a panacea to curb immigration and drug inflows.

Some wind behind the sails of India's shipping industry

The government deserves credit for its commitment to develop the maritime sector, largely neglected by predecessor governments. This is reflected in the expenditure on the government's flagship programme, Sagarmala, which, as on September 2024, had outlined 839 projects requiring an investment of 55.8 lakh crore by 2035. Of these, 241 projects, worth 11.22 lakh crore, have been completed, while 234 projects, valued at 11.8 lakh crore, are under implementation. Additionally, 364 projects, with an estimated investment of 22.78 lakh crore, are in various stages of development. Within Sagarmala, 22.91 lakh crore (over 50%) is allocated for port modernisation, 12,000 lakh crore (more than 35%) for port connectivity; 255.8 thousand crore (40%) for port-led industrialisation, the remaining 5% distributed between coastal community development, infrastructure for coastal shipping (not ship acquisition) and inland water transport. India's economy has seen GDP rising from 1153 trillion in 2016-17 to 2727 trillion in 2022-23 — an increase of 43%, growing at a CAGR of 7%, despite two years of COVID-19 related setbacks. The economy is projected to reach \$3.7 trillion this year, \$5 trillion by 2027, and \$7 trillion by 2030. During this period, India's EXM trade has also grown from \$66 billion in 2016-17 to \$16 billion in 2022, a cumulative increase of over 77% and an annual growth rate of 12.83%. India aims to boost exports to \$2 trillion by 2030, to strengthen its global trade position.

The industry continues to face stagnation Despite high economic growth and increased investments in the maritime sector, the Indian shipping industry has remained stagnant. According to statistics by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, the cargo handled at all major ports while renewables have increased from 1,071.76 million tons in 2016-17 to 1,249.99 million tons in 2020-21 — a cumulative growth of 16.26% or an annual increase of just 2.85%. In contrast, the number of vessels handled at these ports has steadily declined by 5,929, from 21,658 vessels in 2016-17 to 20,371 in 2020-21.

In terms of Indian-registered ships, the number has increased from 1,313 in 2016-17 to 1,526 in September 2024 — a cumulative rise of 17% and an average annual growth of 2.4%. Over the same period, gross tonnage has grown from 11,547,576 GT in 2016-17 to 13,744,897 GT — a cumulative increase of 17.44% and an annual average growth of 2.5%. A major concern has been the aging Indian fleet, with the average vessel age rising to 36 years in 2022-23. However, this has now improved to 21 years, with the addition of 24 relatively younger vessels (average age of 14 years).



Amitabh Kumar, a retired IRS officer, is former Director, General, Shipping, Government of India

Multiple challenges such as in shipbuilding Indian shipping faces multiple challenges hindering its competitiveness. Lack of capital and high borrowing costs; short loan tenures, rigid collateral requirements requiring shipowners to provide collateral instead of using ships as collateral; limited understanding of the industry's cyclical nature, leading to inflexible loan restructuring policies; unfavourable taxation laws often favouring foreign-flag vessels over Indian vessels even within Indian waters; delays in repatriating funds for shipowners to invest in green technology; and additional financial burdens on mandatory training of Indian seafarers and higher port charges, further eroding competitiveness. In contrast, ships registered in tax havens or flags of convenience — benefit from easier access to capital, lower interest rates, lenient regulatory standards, concealed ownership structures, and minimal regulatory oversight. This makes Indian-registered ships significantly less competitive in global shipping markets. Beyond capital constraints, India's major ports have only marginally increased from 1,071.76 million tons in 2016-17 to 1,249.99 million tons in 2020-21 — a cumulative growth of 16.26% or an annual increase of just 2.85%. In contrast, the number of vessels handled at these ports has steadily declined by 5,929, from 21,658 vessels in 2016-17 to 20,371 in 2020-21.

The Union Budget appears to have met most of the shipping industry's demands, but it has missed an opportunity to address tax disparities

The Union Budget has been presented, and this is the right time to outline the three kinds of jobs this writer believes India must create. Beyond reviving private construction in urban areas, we must continue to strengthen long-term job creation and real wage growth across India. The 2024 Budget had introduced Employment Linked Incentives (ELI) under the Prime Minister's five-scheme initiative, designed to create over four crore jobs over five years with a central outlay of 42 lakh crore. The Prime Minister's internship scheme saw significant traction in 2024, with 6.21 lakh applications for 1.27 lakh opportunities. The outcomes over the next year — beyond a draft Cabinet note on ELI and meetings by DPHIT with the Ministry of Labour and IIT, remain to be seen. But there must be more deliberation on the kind of jobs we wish to create for a Viksit Bharat.

The kind of jobs needed for the 'Viksit Bharat' goal

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Saubharya Rajadka is an independent researcher based in Delhi and has a Masters in Public Policy from the Blavatnik School of Management, University of Oxford

Impact of climate change First, climate resilience. India was the seventh most-affected country by climate change in 2019, having suffered an income loss of \$159 billion in 2021, and according to the Reserve Bank of India, will face adaptation costs of nearly \$1 trillion by 2050. The impact on agricultural and labour productivity and also livelihoods requires exponentially higher levels of funding for building rural and urban adaptation capabilities and the rejuvenation of local ecosystems to boost job creation.

To meet the net-zero targets by 2070, the Government must create and incentivise jobs which are "climate-resilient" by maximising all "co-benefits" (IPCC). This could mean providing three to four state-subsidised e-rickshaws in about 6,00,000 villages to create about two million jobs (focused on women drivers), also improving last-mile mobility. Or, there could be new ways to enable private investment in

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A closer look at the Budget The Budget's announcement of increasing the personal income-tax exemption limit has been projected as a relief for the middle class. However, while it may have benefited a fraction of the population, the story lies in the larger economic reality. The so-called "relief" benefits only a minuscule segment of taxpayers, while the vast majority of Indians, including lower-income groups, remain untouched by the government's decision. The poor and lower-middle-class populations, who barely earn enough to sustain themselves, are paying more in indirect taxes on essential goods and services. The government truly intends to provide relief to the common man, the focus must shift towards rationalising GST rates on essential goods, particularly food items, medicines, and daily necessities. Presenting superficial tweaks in income-tax slabs that benefit only a select few. A progressive tax system, coupled with GST reforms that shield the economically weaker sections, is the only way to ensure equitable taxation. It is high time that tax policies prioritise inclusive economic growth rather than optics that favour a limited population segment.

Additionally, industry stakeholders have been pushing for the removal of the 5% IGST on shipbuilding costs and the exemption of Indian seafarers from TDS requirements. Except for tax-related relief, most of the industry's long-standing demands appear to have been addressed in the Union Budget.

In reality, Indian shipping has continued to lose market to foreign-flag vessels in carrying cargo, and the government's support for domestic cargo. The reason is simple: the needs of shipowners and shipbuilders are vastly different from those of port and terminal operators.

The aging Indian shipping fleet requires urgent replacement, and greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets will necessitate investments in green technology. The sector requires long-term financing with lower interest rates and repayment tenures of 7-10 years. Additionally, India needs new shipyards to build large vessels and the expansion and modernisation of existing ones. Although Sagarmala has infused funds in ports, additional funds may still be necessary for modernisation, despite transitioning to a landlord model. If the MDF is strategically utilised to attract external commercial borrowings (ECBs) at lower interest rates, it could help bridge the funding gap for the shipping industry.

Glaring tax disparities The Budget appears to have missed a crucial opportunity to address the tax disparities that put Indian ships at a comparative disadvantage to foreign ships, even when operating along the Indian coast. Indian-registered vessels are subject to a 5% IGST on purchase price, a levy not imposed on foreign-flagged ships. Additionally, Indian shipping companies must deduct tax at source (TDS) on seafarers' salaries, whereas foreign vessels employing Indian seafarers face no such obligation.

The Budget 2025 is a promising step but must become another half-measure in the name of shipping reforms. The industry needs decisive action, not just incremental progress.

The views expressed are personal

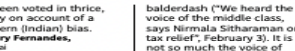
compressed biogas plants to bridge the gap of 82 plants set as a target of 100 by the end of FY23-24 in 2018. Or, even accelerating achieving the 500GW non-fossil energy capacity target to create one million jobs, with stronger support for decentralised and rooftop solar which can create seven times more labour-intensive (GEEW).

On AI resilience Second, Artificial Intelligence (AI)-resilience. With the rise of generative AI, numerous jobs now have disappeared in the near future, as noted by McKinsey Global Institute show that 50% of jobs are at high risk of automation by the next 10 years. India's IT and business services, which comprised 70-plus% of services exports in the Economic Survey 2023, will struggle to create millions skilled talent. The launch of AI, which is hoped to have potential can be limited in the gen AI-era as labour gets costlier relative to capital. With the launch of AI, which is hoped to have potential can be limited in the gen AI-era as labour gets costlier relative to capital.

Being aspiration-centric Third, being aspiration-centric. Despite their growing engagement with the startup culture, rural youth continue to have low confidence due to deeper insecurities from poor foundational education (this includes English) and resource-deprived upbringing. This can reinforce dependency on government jobs and "coaching" to "crack" entrance exams. As their aspirations are shaped by their socio-economic background, digital media, and interaction of the 'Sarsaar, Sarkaar, and Sarkar', the slow growth of non-farm jobs warrants off-farm job-creation which responds to these dynamic aspirations.

Greater use of tech, social media, and sports infrastructure can also help make off-farm jobs aspirational for India's youth. One clear avenue is accelerating the 'National Mission on Edible Oils - Oilseeds' to reduce India's 87% import-dependence of edible-oil back to the pre-WTO levels with the revitalised rural processing of native oilseeds like soybean, sunflower (about 40% of edible-oil imports), and boosting retail of in-vogue cold-pressed oils. Enabling creation of many such large-scale businesses with private-public partnerships and investments, can address economic aspirations of our disheartened youth protesting examination fees and low recruitment vacancies.

While tax relief may temporarily boost consumer demand, amidst growing household indebtedness and suboptimal private investment trends, the Centre can demonstrate greater commitment for long-term structural reforms. The National Rural Infrastructure Development and aspiration-centric jobs. Many opportunities exist as we embark towards our shared vision of a Viksit Bharat.



Gregory Fernandes, Mumbai The NDA government has not stopped putting itself on the back for the rise in the exemption limit for income tax with the Finance Minister also saying she had a tough time convincing the bureaucrats in her ministry. This is pure balderdash ("We heard the voice of the middle class, says Nirmita Satharaman, a politician, rather than tax relief", February 3). It is not so much the voice of the middle class which influenced the decision of the Finance Minister but the middle class has been a cry in the wilderness in all the Budgets presented by the NDA so far.

C.R. Aravind in Bengaluru

The kind of jobs needed for the 'Viksit Bharat' goal

The Union Budget has been presented, and this is the right time to outline the three kinds of jobs this writer believes India must create. Beyond reviving private consumption in urban areas, we must continue to strengthen long-term job creation and real wage growth across India.

The 2024 Budget had introduced Employment Linked Incentives (ELI) under the Prime Minister's five-scheme initiative, designed to create over four crore jobs over five years with a central outlay of ₹2 lakh crore. The Prime Minister's internship scheme saw significant traction in 2024, with 6.21 lakh applications for 1.27 lakh opportunities. The outcomes on the rest four – beyond a draft Cabinet note on ELI and meetings by DPIIT with the Ministry of Labour and CII, remain to be seen. But there must be more deliberation on the kind of jobs we wish to create for a Viksit Bharat.

Impact of climate change

First, climate-resilience. India was the seventh most-affected country by climate change in 2019, having suffered an income loss of \$159 billion in 2021, and according to the Reserve Bank of India, will face adaptation costs of nearly \$1 trillion by 2030. The impact on agricultural and labour productivity and also livelihoods requires exponentially higher levels of funding for building rural and urban adaptation capabilities and the rejuvenation of local ecosystems to boost job creation.

To meet the net-zero targets by 2070, the Government must create and incentivise jobs which are "climate-resilient" by maximising all "co-benefits" (IPCC). This could mean providing three to four state-subsidised e-rickshaws in about 6,00,000 villages to create about two million jobs (focused on women drivers), also improving last-mile mobility. Or, there can be new ways to enable private investment in



Saubhagya Raizada

is an independent policy researcher based in Delhi and has a Masters in Public Policy from the Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford

Long-term structural reforms must result in climate-resilient, AI-resilient and aspiration-centric jobs

compressed biogas plants to bridge the gap of 82 plants set-up versus the target of 5,000 set (for FY23-24) in 2018. Or, even accelerating achieving the 500GW non-fossil energy capacity target to create over one million jobs, with stronger support for decentralised and rooftop solar which can be seven times more labour-intensive (CEEW).

On AI resilience

Second, Artificial Intelligence (AI)-resilience. With the rise of generative AI, numerous jobs now have 50-plus% automation potential. Scenarios by McKinsey Global Institute show that 50% automation adoption in India can happen in the next 10 years. India's IT and business services, which comprised 70-plus% of services exports (Economic Survey 2021), hope to create millions skilled talent exports. But their employment potential can be limited in the gen AI-era as labour gets costlier relative to capital. With the launch of metaGPT simulating software companies, AI writing 25% of Google's code, and layoffs due to chatbots even in India, new jobs will also need to prioritise physical engagement and utilise our human 'creativity', which this writer terms as AI-resilience. This can take the form of larger education and health budgets to plug the deficit of millions of health-care professionals and teachers across states or dedicated financing for the National Rural Livelihood Mission to facilitate global and urban market linkages of local products, crafts, and knowledge of farmers and artisans in rural India.

Being aspiration-centric

Third, being aspiration centric. Despite their growing engagement with the startup culture, rural youth continue to have low confidence due to deeper insecurities from poor foundational

education (this includes English) and resource-deprived upbringing. This can reinforce dependency on government jobs and 'coaching' to 'crack' entrance exams. As their aspirations are shaped by their socio-economic backgrounds, digital media, and interaction of the 'Samaaj, Sarkaar, and Bazaar', the slow growth of non-farm jobs warrants off-farm job-creation which responds to these dynamic aspirations.

This can take the form of rapid infrastructure development such as building around 70,000 integrated pack-houses, plugging the 95-plus% infrastructure gap, to create over two million jobs. Or, boosting productivity and value-addition for high import/export-share items and tech-enabled local manufacturing of agri-inputs.

Greater use of tech, social media, and rebranding the 'rural' can also help make off-farm jobs aspirational for India's youth. One clear avenue is accelerating the 'National Mission on Edible Oils - Oilseeds' to reduce India's 57% import-dependence of edible-oil back to the pre-WTO levels with the

revitalised rural processing of native oilseeds like soybean, sunflower (about 40% of edible-oil imports), and boosting retail of in-vogue cold-pressed oils. Enabling creation of many such large-scale businesses with private-public partnerships and investments, can address economic aspirations of our disheartened youth protesting examination leaks and low recruitment vacancies.

While tax relief may temporarily boost urban consumer demand, amidst growing household indebtedness and suboptimal private investment trends, the Centre can demonstrate greater commitment for long-term structural reforms which create these climate-resilient, AI-resilient and aspiration-centric jobs. Many opportunities exist as we embark towards our shared vision of a Viksit Bharat.



The Union Budget 2024 has been presented, making it the right time to outline the types of jobs India must create for long-term growth.

केंद्रीय बजट 2024 पेश किया गया है, जिससे यह सही समय बन जाता है कि भारत को दीर्घकालिक विकास के लिए किस प्रकार की नौकरियां बनानी चाहिए।

Beyond boosting urban consumption, the focus should be on strengthening job creation and ensuring real wage growth.

शहरी खपत को बढ़ाने से परे, ध्यान रोजगार सृजन को मजबूत करने और वास्तविक वेतन वृद्धि सुनिश्चित करने पर होना चाहिए।

Government Initiatives & Job Creation | सरकारी पहल और रोजगार सृजन

The 2024 Budget introduced Employment Linked Incentives (ELI) under the Prime Minister's five-scheme initiative, aiming to create over four crore jobs in five years.

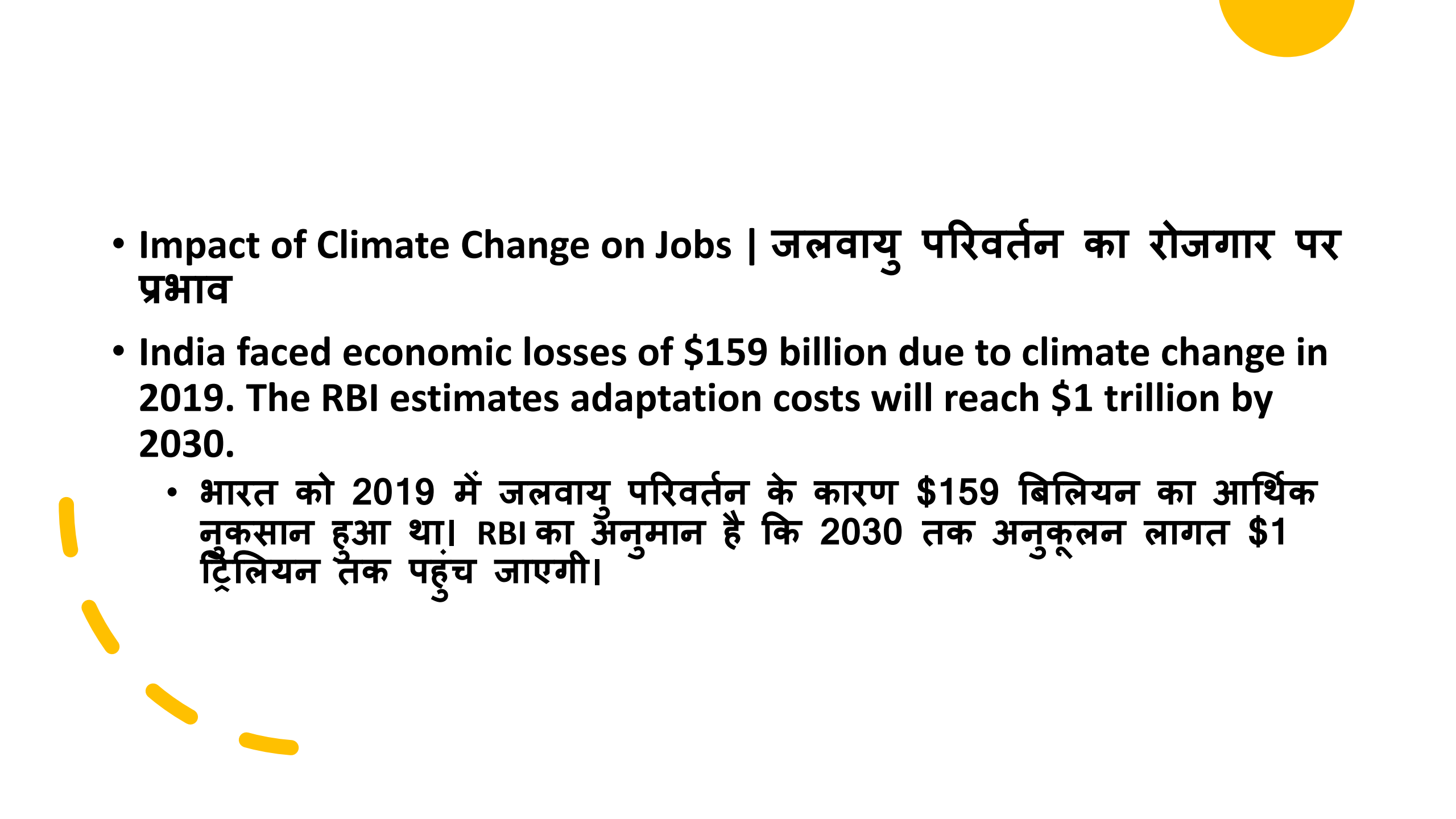
- 2024 के बजट में प्रधानमंत्री की पांच-योजना पहल के तहत रोजगार से जुड़े प्रोत्साहनों (ELI) को शामिल किया गया, जिसका लक्ष्य पांच वर्षों में चार करोड़ से अधिक नौकरियां पैदा करना है।

The Prime Minister's internship scheme saw high demand, with 6.2 lakh applications for 1.27 lakh opportunities.

- प्रधानमंत्री की इंटर्नशिप योजना को भारी मांग मिली, जिसमें 1.27 लाख अवसरों के लिए 6.2 लाख आवेदन प्राप्त हुए।

However, more deliberation is needed on the kind of jobs to be created for a 'Viksit Bharat'.

- हालांकि, 'विकसित भारत' के लिए किस प्रकार की नौकरियां बनाई जानी चाहिए, इस पर अधिक विचार-विमर्श आवश्यक है।

- 
- **Impact of Climate Change on Jobs | जलवायु परिवर्तन का रोजगार पर प्रभाव**
 - **India faced economic losses of \$159 billion due to climate change in 2019. The RBI estimates adaptation costs will reach \$1 trillion by 2030.**
 - **भारत को 2019 में जलवायु परिवर्तन के कारण \$159 बिलियन का आर्थिक नुकसान हुआ था। RBI का अनुमान है कि 2030 तक अनुकूलन लागत \$1 ट्रिलियन तक पहुंच जाएगी।**

The government must create 'climate-resilient' jobs, such as subsidizing 3-4 state-sponsored e-rickshaws in 60 lakh villages.

- सरकार को 'जलवायु-लचीले' रोजगार बनाने चाहिए, जैसे कि 60 लाख गांवों में 3-4 राज्य प्रायोजित ई-रिक्शा को सब्सिडी देना।

Supporting decentralized solar power and non-fossil energy can generate over a million jobs.

- विकेंद्रीकृत सौर ऊर्जा और गैर-जीवाश्म ऊर्जा को समर्थन देने से दस लाख से अधिक नौकरियां पैदा हो सकती हैं।

- **4. Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Job Market | आर्टिफिशियल इंटेलिजेंस और रोजगार बाजार**
- **With the rise of AI, automation has the potential to replace over 50% of jobs in India's IT and business services.**
 - AI के बढ़ते प्रभाव के साथ, भारत की आईटी और व्यावसायिक सेवाओं में 50% से अधिक नौकरियों के स्वचालित होने की संभावना है।
- **McKinsey reports suggest that AI-driven automation could affect millions of jobs over the next decade.**
 - McKinsey की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, AI-चालित स्वचालन अगले दशक में लाखों नौकरियों को प्रभावित कर सकता है।

- **New job opportunities should focus on human creativity and engagement rather than automation. नई नौकरियों को स्वचालन के बजाय मानवीय रचनात्मकता और सहभागिता पर ध्यान केंद्रित करना चाहिए।**
- **Investing in education and skill-building for rural areas can help counter AI-related job losses. ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में शिक्षा और कौशल निर्माण में निवेश करने से AI-संबंधित नौकरी नुकसान की भरपाई की जा सकती है।**

5. Aspiration-Centric Jobs | महत्वाकांक्षी रोजगार

India's rural population has growing aspirations but often lacks foundational digital and economic skills.




- भारत की ग्रामीण आबादी की महत्वाकांक्षाएं बढ़ रही हैं, लेकिन अक्सर उन्हें डिजिटल और आर्थिक कौशल की कमी होती है।



Greater integration of technology and local economy can help generate non-farm job opportunities.

- प्रौद्योगिकी और स्थानीय अर्थव्यवस्था के अधिक एकीकरण से गैर-कृषि नौकरियों के अवसर उत्पन्न हो सकते हैं।

The 'National Mission on Edible Oils' could reduce India's 57% edible oil dependency and create thousands of processing jobs.

- 'राष्ट्रीय खाद्य तेल मिशन' भारत की 57% खाद्य तेल निर्भरता को कम कर सकता है और हजारों प्रसंस्करण नौकरियां पैदा कर सकता है।

- **Policy Recommendations | नीतिगत सिफारिशें**
-  **Promote climate-resilient jobs through green energy and sustainable infrastructure.**
- **हरित ऊर्जा और सतत अवसंरचना के माध्यम से जलवायु-लचीले रोजगार को बढ़ावा दें।**
 -  **Develop AI-resilient jobs by investing in human creativity and skill-building programs.**
- **मानवीय रचनात्मकता और कौशल निर्माण कार्यक्रमों में निवेश करके AI-लचीले रोजगार विकसित करें।**
 -  **Encourage rural job growth through non-farm industries and agritech innovations.**

- गैर-कृषि उद्योगों और एग्रीटेक नवाचारों के माध्यम से ग्रामीण रोजगार वृद्धि को प्रोत्साहित करें।
 Rebrand rural jobs using technology and social media to make them aspirational.
- तकनीक और सोशल मीडिया का उपयोग करके ग्रामीण नौकरियों को आकर्षक बनाएं।
 Strengthen private-public partnerships in food processing and agribusiness.
- खाद्य प्रसंस्करण और कृषि व्यवसाय में सार्वजनिक-निजी भागीदारी को मजबूत करें।

Eliminating elitism in mental health

The Ministry of Labour and Employment, in its year-end review report for 2024, stated that all States and Union Territories are expected to complete the process of harmonisation and pre-publication of draft rules for the new Labour Codes by March 31, 2025. This provides an excellent window for the government to consider the incorporation of provisions that create a liability-based framework to ensure the mental health of workers, especially those in the blue-collar category.

In 2024, for the first time, mental health was acknowledged as an 'impactful driver' for individual and national development in the Economic Survey. The Survey also noted that 10.6% of adults in India suffered from mental disorders, with the treatment gap ranging between 70% and 92% depending on the specific condition (National Mental Health Survey 2015-16). The World Health Organization, in its fact sheet on mental health and work, outlined several risks including excessive workloads or rapid work pace, long working and inflexible hours, unsafe or poor physical working conditions, job insecurity, inadequate pay and conflicting home/work demands. These risks primarily impact blue-collar workers due to their demanding jobs, unsafe work environments, and a lack of adequate legislative and policy protections. The time has come for the government to address the challenge of increasing elitism in the field of mental health and the well-being of workers, highlighting the significant disparity between blue-collar and white-collar employees concerning legislative and policy frameworks.

Challenges first, in the Occupational Safety and Health Working Conditions Code (OSHWC), 2020, the concept of occupational safety is limited to physical safety in the course of employment. This implicitly



Shivanya Tripathi
Director Research at Banarus Hindu University



Karishma Kabudyal
Doctoral Researcher at the Faculty of Law, Banarus Hindu University

It is time to give the mental health of blue-collar workers due precedence.

excludes mental well-being and safety norms of a preventive nature. For instance, Section 60(6) uses the phrase "as far as reasonably practicable" while creating a mandate for the employer to provide a working environment that is safe and without any health risks. Defining the ambit of this phrase is left to the central government, which will notify it from time to time. Moreover, the conjoint reading with sections 21 and 24 of the OSHWC provides a narrow connotation of health, confining it to physical well-being and excluding mental health.

Second, as per the definition of 'employment injury' under Section 2(28) of the Code on Social Security (CSC), 2020, read with the third schedule, the employee can claim compensation under Section 74 of the CSC only if personal injury is caused by an accident or an occupational disease arising out of and in the course of employment. The third schedule nowhere enlists diseases arising out of and in the course of employment. Moreover, it tends to create a legislative mandate upon the victim to establish a direct link between the injury and the occupation before the adjudicating authority. In contrast, the Bombay High Court in *Laxmibai Armaram v. Chairman and Trustees, Bombay Port Trust* (1953) expanded the scope of 'occupational injury,' observing that even if the employment is not a direct cause or an accelerating mechanism, the disease-employment combination shall be deemed to be established.

Third, some major companies are making substantial efforts to enhance the well-being, work-life balance and mental health of their white-collar employees. The HALE (Health Assistance and Lifestyle Enrichment Program by Infosys), Wipro's 'Mitra' initiative, and the Employee Assistance Program by Tata Consultancy Services are some examples. In contrast, the Central government's

praiseworthy Tele Manas initiative bridges the gap between its callers and mental health professionals, but its functionality requires beneficiaries to voluntarily make the distress call to the helpline number. The lack of awareness about such initiatives among blue-collar workers, coupled with their inherent hesitation to take any such step, dilutes the objective of these initiatives.

The way forward To realise the goal of 'Satyameva Jayate to Shramam Jayate', as the Prime Minister envisioned in 2014, mental health of blue-collar workers ought to be given due precedence. First, a rights and duty-based legislative framework that balances the employer's right to get the job done with the concomitant duty to provide a safe and healthy work environment ensuring both the physical and mental well-being of workers would be a progressive step. Second, the list of 'occupational diseases' under the third schedule of the CSC calls for a legislative amendment to provide holistic coverage of diseases arising from mental strain attributed to employment and working conditions, thereby leaving less room for judicial interpretation on a case-by-case basis. Third, the upcoming Labour Codes have the opportunity to create a tripartite relationship between employers, blue-collar workers and mental health specialists. Fourth, amidst multiple statements made recently by the government regarding 70 to 90-hour workweeks, emphasising quality over quantity and well-being, the government must take steps towards forging a sustainable work environment for blue-collar workers. Fifth, creating a national mental health and governmental initiatives such as Tele Manas must be statutorily imposed on employers. Lastly, blue-collar workers also need to be acknowledged as stakeholders in the mental health discourse before this becomes a case of lost opportunity.

The precarious road to development

In J&K, development projects are leading to ecological ruin and displacing people

STATE OF PLAY
Bilal Ahmad Wazir
Umam Lalwal



The government's ambitious proposals to construct highways and develop satellite townships in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) have led to fear among the locals, who feel that these projects could disrupt the region's delicate ecological balance, displace communities, and alter the demographic and cultural fabric.

In 2021, the government approved a semi-ring road project and acquired 900 acres of cultivated agricultural land for it. The district that is most affected by this project is Budgam, followed by Pulwama, Srinagar, Ganderbal, Baniptora, and Baramulla. This mega project, aimed at reducing traffic in the Kashmir Valley, will be implemented in two phases. Farmers worry about their livelihoods as thousands of apple, plum, and pear trees have already been axed to clear the land for the construction of the new highway, which the locals fear will be used for the security and tourism purposes alone. The project will feature numerous infrastructure elements, including 290 culverts, two bridges, two flyovers, 10 major junctions, 26 minor junctions, and a toll plaza at the Narbal junction.

J&K is predominantly an agrarian economy. More than 80% of the population is directly or indirectly associated with agriculture. This mass acquisition of land has exerted immense pressure on the land resources of J&K, which has some of the smallest land holdings in the country. The landowners were not compensated adequately for the loss

or given a full to already commissioned projects, which have been languishing due to paucity of funds. The untrained march of infrastructure development in the region is leading to ecological ruin and social displacement. While the government has promised enhanced connectivity and economic progress, these projects strike at the heart of the region's fragile ecosystems and hurt its agrarian backbone. The destruction of agricultural lands and orchards will strip the region of its biodiversity, displace wildlife, and erode its green cover. Construction activities will accelerate soil erosion, rendering land infertile and crippling agricultural output.

J&K has 14.3 lakh farming households and an average landholding of just 0.25 hectares. It contributes 80% of India's temperate fruit production. Yet, massive land acquisitions for infrastructure projects, often carried out without robust social impact assessments, are dismantling these livelihoods. Calamities such as the 2014 floods have laid bare the ecological fragility of the region. The blind pursuit of urbanisation and the relentless push for building highways, railroads, and satellite townships heightens the risk of more such disasters. This is not progress — it is a slow, methodical unraveling of J&K's ecological integrity and the livelihoods that depend on it. Without urgent course correction, the price of this so-called progress will be borne by generations to come.

Ever since J&K became a Union Territory in 2019, there has been a thrust on development. The government has either proposed new projects

Bilal Wazir teaches Public Health at Government Degree College Baramulla, Jammu and Kashmir, and Umam Lalwal is a student activist and member president of the J&K Students Association

The cause and effects of the U.S.'s withdrawal from WHO

Survey results indicate a growing negative sentiment among Americans towards the global public health body

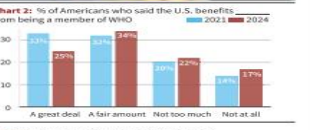
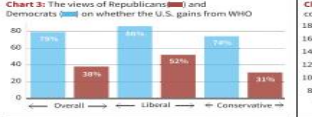
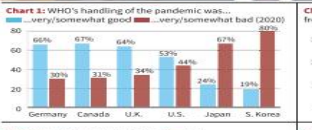
DATA POINT
Sambavi Parthasarathy

Signing his first batch of executive orders following his return to the White House on January 20, 2025, Donald Trump announced the United States' withdrawal from the World Health Organization (WHO). Mr. Trump accused WHO of being biased towards China and mishandling the COVID-19 pandemic. This is not the first time Mr. Trump has chosen to withdraw from the WHO. He took steps to leave the organisation in 2020 for the same reasons. However, Joe Biden administration decided to continue the partnership. Close to 45% of Americans agreed with Mr. Trump's assessment back in 2020, according to the Global Attitudes Survey conducted by the Pew Research Center. The share of people with a similar opinion in the U.K. was 10 points lower at 34% and even lower at 31% and 30% in Canada and Germany, respectively (Chart 1). In a 2024 survey by Pew, close to 40% of U.S. citizens said the country was benefiting "not at all" or "not too much" from being a member of the WHO compared to the 34% who said so in 2021. Chart 2 shows the respondents' views on whether the U.S. gains from WHO membership. These trends indicate a growing negative sentiment among Americans towards WHO. Republicans were only half as likely as Democrats to say that the U.S. benefits from WHO membership. The share of Democrats or Democratic-leaning people said in 2024 that the U.S. benefits from the WHO, only 38% of Republicans and Republicans-inclined respondents said so (Chart 3). The figure declined even further if only conservative Republicans were considered. Such opinions could have potentially influenced Mr. Trump's decision. As per the latest executive or-

der, the U.S. will pause the future transfer of any funds, support, or resources to WHO. This is a massive blow to WHO as the U.S. is its largest contributor. The U.S. has consistently contributed close to 15% of WHO's total funding since at least 2016-17. Its share dipped to 8.9% during 2020-21, when COVID-19 was at its peak, but went back again to the usual levels in the post-pandemic years. It contributed a record \$1.2 billion in the biennium period for 2022-23 (Chart 4). WHO's other major contributors in the latest year (2024-25) include the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2.3%), the GAVI Alliance (9.9%), the European Commission (8.04%) and the World Bank (5.34%). The share of contributions from China accounted for 3%. Will some other country step up to fill the financial vacuum left by the U.S.? Those are big shoes to fill as no country's contribution has exceeded 8% of the total funding received by WHO. Among countries, Germany and the U.K. are in a distant second and third place, respectively, as per latest data. Chart 5 shows how the funds from the U.S. are being utilised by WHO. In 2024-25, close to 26% of the funds were used to improve access to quality health services globally, 21% to respond rapidly to acute health emergencies, 20% for polio eradication, and close to 10% for prevention of epidemics and pandemics. Mr. Trump's decision to halt funding will have a cascading effect on these initiatives. The President's order also calls for the recall and reassignment of U.S. personnel working in any capacity with the global public health body. This could potentially impact the staff in WHO collaborating centres in the U.S. These centres implement WHO's objectives and engage in collaborative research with the institutions it is a part of. The U.S. has the most number of WHO collaborating centres (79), followed by India and China, as shown in Chart 6.

Withdrawal symptoms

The data for the charts were sourced from the Pew Research Center's surveys and the World Health Organization



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The U.S. and India

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 4, 1975

Ford seeks \$6.8 billions for foreign aid

Washington, Feb. 3: The United States President, Mr. Gerald Ford, today submitted to Congress a \$6.8 billion foreign aid budget — \$600 million for economic, food and financial aid and the rest in military assistance.

The budget message calls for "give away" expenditures of more than \$600 million in such commodities as wheat, feed grains, food products, vegetable oils, dried milk and other products.

Also listed was an extra \$620 million in the current fiscal year for the Food for Peace programme.

The \$2.25-billion request for military aid in fiscal year 1976 was \$700 million above the previous budget, not counting the \$522 million Mr. Ford has requested in extra help this year for South Vietnam and Cambodia.

Projected economic assistance included a request for \$762 million for post-war reconstruction in South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, and a "special requirement fund" of \$12 million for West Asia.

In addition, an "emergency security assistance" fund of \$659 million was requested for Israel.

The budget called for \$268 million to continue the United States Information Agency, which has been under attack by sectors of Congress as superfluous, new facilities for the Voice of America, in the Far East, and increased grants for Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, which broadcast to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 4, 1925

Penny postage

London, Feb. 3: A deputation representing of printings and paper making industries urged the Postmaster General to restore the penny postage contending that such restoration would stimulate trade, reduce unemployment, and help the home export trade. It was pointed out that sales of picture postcards in New Zealand has increased by 25 per cent since New Zealand reduced her postal rates, and South Africa was about to restore the penny postage. Therefore the moment was opportune for its reintroduction in Britain. It was mentioned that the income from advertisements exhibited in post-offices now amounted to 22,000 yearly.

Chart 1: WHO's handling of the pandemic was...

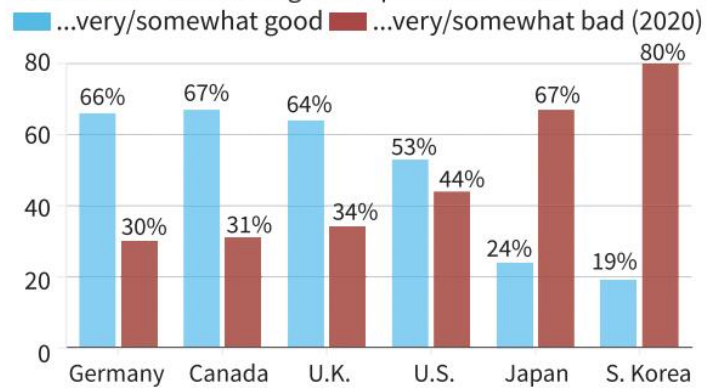


Chart 2: % of Americans who said the U.S. benefits _____ from being a member of WHO

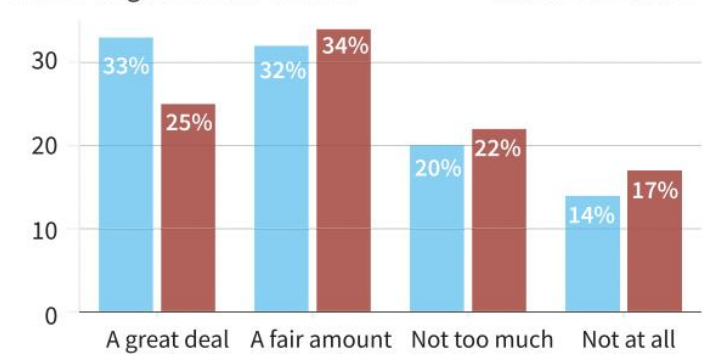


Chart 3: The views of Republicans (red) and Democrats (blue) on whether the U.S. gains from WHO

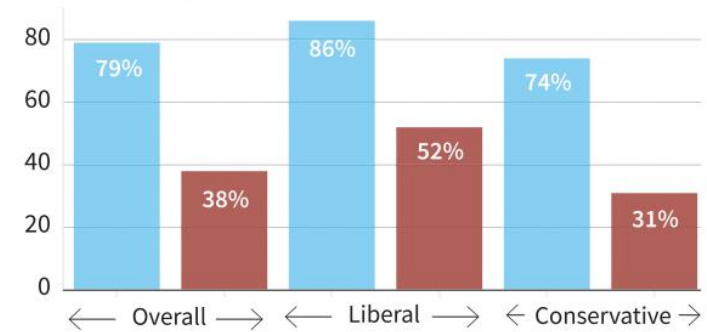


Chart 4: The chart shows the share of the U.S.'s contributions to WHO's total funding

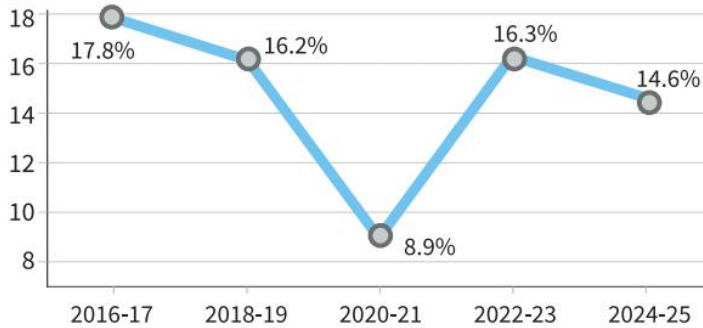


Chart 5: The chart shows how the funds from the U.S. are being utilised by WHO

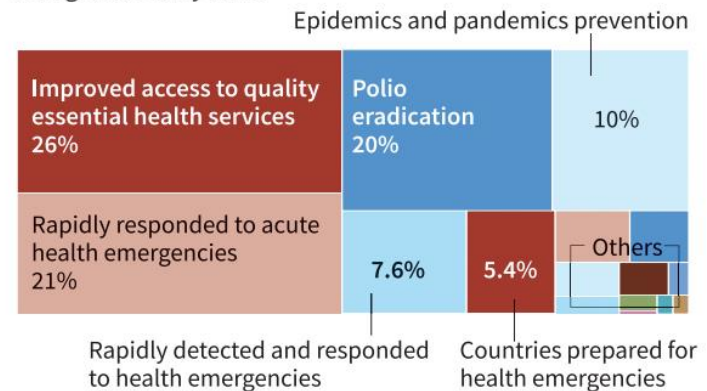
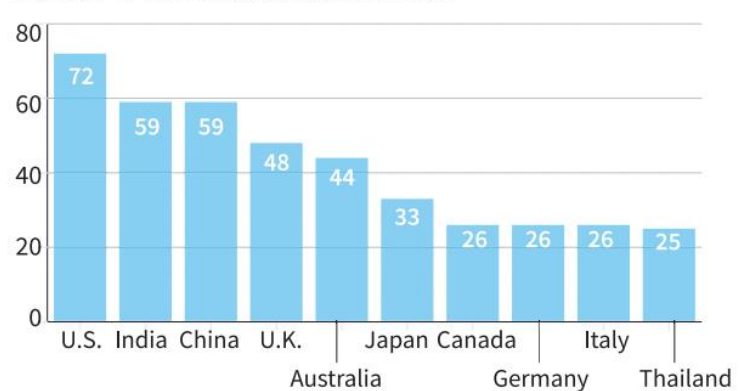


Chart 6: The chart shows the top 10 countries with the most number of WHO collaboration centres



Next

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Worth of ₹2000 notes still out in public despite withdrawal

6,577 in ₹ crore. The RBI said that 98.15% of the ₹2000 denomination banknotes have been returned, since there were withdrawals from circulation in May 2023. The facility for deposit and/or exchange was available at all bank branches till October 7, 2023. ■

New railway stations being constructed in Jharkhand

57 Railway Minister Ashwin Vaishnaw said Jharkhand has been allocated ₹7,200 crore in the Budget to accelerate the development of railways in the state. The construction of the stations amount to ₹2,314 crore. As much as 943 km of rail route has been electrified in Jharkhand since 2014. ■

Number of people killed in a car bomb explosion in Syria

19 All but one of the deceased were women. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the explosion. It was the seventh car bomb explosion in Manbij in just over a month. Manbij in northeastern Aleppo continues to witness violence even after the downfall of Bashar Assad. ■

Share of EVs from total vehicles sold in Norway in 2024

96 in per cent. An unparalleled number in the world, and close to the country's goal of selling only zero-emission vehicles as of this year. Of the 50 most-sold models, only two were non-electric. By comparison, the share of electric cars in Europe was just 13.6% in the full-year of 2024. ■

Number of protestors in a rally in Berlin against the far-right

1.6 lakh. Demonstrators had turned out to denounce the breach by the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) of Germany's unwritten agreement not to work with the far right at the national level, in place since World War II. ■

COMPILLED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Dehi's gender budget: its decline and impact

While freebies and cash transfers, just before the election, can bring in immediate relief to families, what the women voters of Delhi really need are concrete steps that can enable systematic growth in the economic and social empowerment of women

ECONOMIC NOTES

Shabana Mirza
Gledwyn Fernandez
Anishana Ramesh

There are 71 lakh women voters in Delhi, which is nearly half of the total electorate. Further, women have a high turnout rate as well. So, it is no surprise that all contesting parties provide incentives tailored towards women. These incentives then come to light through the budget. Over the last decade, the overall budget for Delhi has increased from ₹271 billion to ₹750 billion. But, how much of this budget is reserved for women?

Investing in women
Overall, the gender budget of Delhi has witnessed a seven-fold increase from ₹10 billion in 2017-18 to ₹71 billion in 2024-25 (Figure 1). While providing financial assistance to women and child development is essential to reduce the gender gap, it is equally important to invest in other components like education and health. Investments in education have multiplier effects and lead to long term benefits by generating a highly literate and skilled workforce for the country. Education of women, particularly, can bridge the gender gap in employment and achieve wage parity. What is needed is not freebies but concrete steps that can enable systematic growth in the economic and social empowerment of women.

The neglect towards the education of women by Delhi is concerning. The spending on women's education in the gender budget stood at ₹2 billion in 2017-18, which increased to ₹18 billion in 2024-25. This budget reached its peak in 2017-18 touching ₹24 billion. Since then, the budget allocated for women's education has steadily declined. For the last five years, the education budget has reported a negative growth, with exceptions for 2019-20 and 2023-24

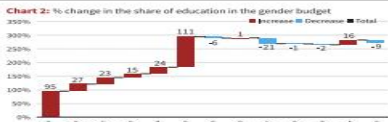
Need to focus on education

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(Figure 2). Another surprising fact is that the education budget made up 54% of the gender budget in 2017-18, but steadily declined to a mere 27% in 2024-25 (Figure 3). Concerningly, there was a massive decline of 9% in the education budget in just the past one year. The decrease is not only in the share, but also in the amount allocated to education (see Figure 1), indicating that cash transfers and freebies have become the focus of gender budgets.

Priority for women's education
Education and technical training are major pillars for sustainable long-term growth. A lack of investment in the education sector can have negative spillovers into the labour market. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS, 2023-24), compared to the national average of 45.2%, Delhi's female labour force participation stands at 28%, the lowest in India. While most people in



Delhi hold regular salaried jobs according to PLFS (2023-24), most women are working as house helps or cleaners, and men as shopkeepers or salespeople. Clearly, women are working in the lowest end of the skill spectrum. These jobs offer poor pay and low standard of living. Thus, low investments in female education lead to a relatively smaller female workforce, lower skill levels and low paying jobs. Secondly, the lack of a skilled women workforce can also lead to high gender inequalities in the labour force. As of 2023-24, the gender gap in labour force participation for Delhi stands at 51.6 percentage points. Moreover, the gender gap in top roles – legislators, senior managers, and CEOs – is stark, with 94% of these positions being held by men. Women are also under-represented in high skilled jobs, such as technicians and associate professionals. Only 3.8% of the female labour force are in these jobs

compared to 10.34% of the male labour force. This points to the fact that investments in education are needed to bridge the gap in the high skilled workforce. Third, the lack of technical and professional education of women has led to the concentration of women in certain fields. Most women professionals are in the teaching and health sectors. It is crucial, therefore, to promote technical education training and professional courses among women to close the gender gaps in various sectors. Cash transfers are necessary for relief but for empowerment of women, education and training are of utmost importance. Improving the budget for women's education would greatly reduce the gap in the long run. The writers are with ICRIER, an economic think tank based in Delhi. The views expressed are personal.

THE GIST

While providing financial assistance to women and child development is essential to reduce the gender gap, it is equally important to invest in other components like education and health.

The budget allocated for women's education in Delhi has steadily declined. For the last five years, the education budget has reported a negative growth, with the exceptions for 2019-20 and 2023-24.

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How will the govt. produce the required fuel ethanol?

Does India's ethanol distillery industry have the capacity to produce nearly 1,100 crore litres of fuel ethanol? Why have maize imports increased substantially in the past year?

M. Kalynaraman

The story so far:

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said that India will achieve its target of 20% ethanol blending of petrol in the next two months, at least a year ahead of what was originally planned. This would entail the production of nearly 1,100 crore litres of fuel ethanol in one year.

Where will this come from?

The 1,100 crore litres of fuel ethanol will come from sugar and high grade molasses. Food Corporation of India (FCI) rice, broken rice, and maize. India's ethanol distillery capacity has ramped up to 1,600 crore litres, driven by a range of government incentives and the promise of a stable, lucrative market.

Sugar is expected to provide some 400 crore litres this ethanol year, according to

Deepak Ballari, director general of Indian Sugar and Bio-energy Manufacturers Association. India had closing sugar stocks of around 80 lakh tonnes in October 2024. The projected sugar production for next year is around 315 lakh tonnes out of which 40 lakh tonnes will go to fuel ethanol. Mr. Ballari said that ethanol for non-fuel uses will come from low grade molasses called C Heavy that do not go into sugar production. The government recently decided to raise the price of FCI rice to distilleries from ₹28 to ₹22.5 per kg. The government handout states that some 100 crore litres of ethanol will be produced from FCI rice this ethanol year. This means almost 400 crore litres of fuel ethanol should come from maize. For context, India was producing little or no ethanol from maize until 2020. Besides pure-grain-based distilleries coming up, some sugar distilleries have modified to dual-feed so

in the off-season they can use other feedstock (maize) to produce ethanol.

How is maize playing a role?

India's maize production is just about enough for traditional needs such as for the poultry sector, livestock feed, starch production and some 10% for human consumption. As the government had imposed curbs on allowing sugar and high quality molasses for ethanol production, maize imports started ramping up in April 2024. From April to June, approx. ₹100 crore worth of maize was imported while, for 2023-24, maize imports were approx. ₹35 million. Ministry of Commerce figures show that a total of \$188 million worth of maize was imported from April to November 2024. The promise of a steady, lucrative ethanol market has meanwhile goaded many farmers to take to maize cultivation across India. The major maize producing

States are Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh. For the 2024-25 ethanol year, maize output would be some 42 million tonnes out of which nine million can go towards producing the 350 to 400 crore litres of ethanol. H. S. Jat, director ICAR Indian Institute of Maize Research, Ludhiana, said. Citing good prospects for Kharif this year, he said importing maize will not be necessary. Since 2020-21, when ethanol production was almost nil, sugar-based, maize production had increased by nearly six million tonnes in three years, for potential ethanol use.

As things stand now, maize is cultivated in 10% more area at a higher yield, says Mr. Jat who also expects some diversion from traditional maize uses since supplying to ethanol is more lucrative for farmers. On whether that won't disrupt the market, Mr. Jat says DPOs (Distiller's Dried Grains with Solubles), a byproduct of ethanol, can be used for poultry. The ethanol market will depend on whether the switch to ethanol and stress on maize has a negative impact on production of other foodgrains. Mr. Jat estimates that 100 crore litres of fuel ethanol translates to ₹6,000 crore. The money going into the ethanol market has meanwhile goaded many farmers to take to maize cultivation across India. The major maize producing

THE GIST

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PORT SUDAN

At least 40 killed, 70 injured in artillery shelling in south Sudan



At least 40 people were killed on Monday and 70 wounded by artillery shelling in Sudan's south. The shelling was carried out by a faction of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N). The group has been clashing with both the Army and the rival paramilitary RSF since the start of their war in April 2023. AFP

PANAMA CITY

U.S. top diplomat Rubio lays down ultimatum to Panama over canal



U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Sunday threatened action against Panama without immediate changes to reduce Chinese influence on the canal, but the country's leader insisted he was not afraid of a U.S. invasion and offered talks. Mr. Rubio met President Jose Raul Mulino during a visit to the Central American country. AFP

TOKYO

OpenAI announces new 'deep research' tool for ChatGPT



U.S. tech giant OpenAI on Monday unveiled a ChatGPT tool called "deep research" that can produce detailed reports. The company made the announcement in Tokyo, where OpenAI chief Sam Altman also trumpeted a new joint venture with tech investor SoftBank Group to offer advanced AI services to businesses. AFP

DAMASCUS

At least 19 killed, mostly women, in a car bomb explosion in Syria



A car bomb exploded on the outskirts of a northern Syrian city on Monday, killing at least 19 persons, all but one of them women, and leaving more than a dozen wounded, hospital workers said. The car detonated next to a vehicle carrying mostly female agricultural workers on the outskirts of the city of Manbij. AP

Trump to cut South Africa funding over land law

Associated Press CAPE TOWN

U.S. President Donald Trump has said he will cut all funding to South Africa and has launched an investigation into the country's policies, claiming a "massive" human rights violation is happening over a new land expropriation law.

Mr. Trump made the pledge to stop all future funding on his Truth Social platform on Sunday, writing: "South Africa is confiscating land, and treating certain classes of people VERY BADLY" in South Africa. Mr. Trump wrote, a "massive Human Rights" violation is happening for all to see. The United States won't stand for it. We will act. Also, I will be cutting off all future funding to South Africa until a full investigation of this situation has been completed.

The South African government said on Monday that the Trump administration needed to have a better understanding of the new law, which is meant to help redress the impact of decades of white minority rule in South Africa under the apartheid regime, which ended in 1994. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said in a statement that "the South African government has not confiscated any land." During apartheid, South Africa's Black majority, who were forced to live in areas designated for Blacks only. Mr. Trump's close allies, who were born and raised in South Africa and has also targeted Mr. Ramaphosa's government, accusing it of being anti-white and claiming in 2023 it was allowing a "genocide" against white farmers.

Musk says Trump 'shutting down' U.S. aid agency as Rubio claims takeover

Employees instructed by email not to go to their offices on Monday amid confusion over the future of the U.S. Agency for International Development. Secretary of State Rubio accuses the agency of insubordination to the U.S. President's agenda

Agence France-Presse WASHINGTON

Elon Musk, the world's richest person and Donald Trump's controversial close advisor, said on Monday the giant USAID humanitarian agency will be "shutting down" as part of his radical - and critics say unconstitutional - drive to shrink the U.S. government.

Hours later, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said he had been put in charge of the U.S. aid agency, saying he would stop its efforts to shrink the U.S. government.

Hours later, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said he had been put in charge of the U.S. aid agency, saying he would stop its efforts to shrink the U.S. government.



Sudden move: People protest near the USAID building which was closed to employees in Washington on Monday. Reuters

reporters on a visit to El Salvador. Amid confusion over their computer systems, ABC News reported, employees were instructed by email not to go to their offices on Monday. Some 600 staffers found themselves locked out of their computer systems, ABC News reported. Around 50 demonstrators gathered outside the

headquarters in downtown Washington, with signs including "Save USAID, save lives."

USAID is the aid arm of U.S. foreign policy, funding health and emergency programs in around 120 countries. It is also seen as an important source of soft power.

Mr. Musk called USAID "a viper's nest of radical left marxists who hate America" and said, "you have got to basically get rid of the whole thing."

The SpaceX and Tesla CEO - who has massive contracts with the U.S. government and was the biggest financial backer of Mr. Trump's campaign - said he had personally cleared

the unprecedented move with the President.

Democrats cry foul Democrats, who hold the minority in Congress, are sounding alarm over what they say is an unconstitutional power grab by Mr. Trump and Mr. Musk. Congress has authority over the U.S. budget but Mr. Musk argues his so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) can decide how money is used.

Because Musk is neither a federal employee nor government official, it remains unclear how his agency are accountable - other than to Mr. Trump.

EU to adopt a more pragmatic approach in talks with India and others, says Kallas

Sriram Lakshman LONDON

The EU's top foreign policy and security official, Kaja Kallas, indicated a shift in the bloc's dialogue posture, with a greater emphasis on pragmatism, transactionalism and mutual benefit in its approach. Ms. Kallas said this during a meeting in Brussels's discussions with New Delhi later this month when European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and the College of Commissioners will visit India.

The majority of countries are reluctant to make a choice between autocracies opposing the West and the West itself. It was the same during the Cold War," Ms. Kallas said during her opening address at a conference of EU Ambassadors in Brussels on Monday. Countries were guided by their self-interest and "by whether they are allies of the EU, the U.S., China or Russia," she said. "This is true across the world, look at Turkey and the Gulf States in peace mediation roles with their own strategic agendas and transactional approaches," said Ms. Kallas. "The question is whether the EU should become transactional too. In many ways it is." Ms. Kallas said during her opening address at

Previously, India had bridled at EU criticisms over New Delhi's purchases of Russian oil

two weeks after U.S. President Donald Trump's return to the White House and hours after the threatened to slap tariffs on the bloc's exports to America. Ms. Kallas called for the EU to have more "mutually beneficial" projects with partners, citing the recent trade deals with Mexico and "Mercosur" (a group comprising Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) as pragmatic and logical. "We should have more mutually beneficial projects like these," she said, adding, "This is the spirit which we will take to India this year."

During her speech, Ms. Kallas said every country had a different culture and historical background and the EU would adopt a tailor-made approach to its partners.

Previously, India has bridled at EU criticisms over New Delhi's purchases of Russian oil after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar had criticised the EU for its double standards, citing its own Russian oil and gas purchase policies.

Last month, Ms. Von der Leyen's chief, Maro Sefcovic, had told media outlet Politico that the forthcoming India visit was "a very strong political signal" and suggested there would be new areas of sectoral cooperation.

Sriram Lakshman LONDON

Reacting to U.S. President Donald Trump's remarks on Sunday evening that tariffs against the EU were "definitely" on the cards, the EU's top foreign affairs and security official, Kaja Kallas, said China would stand to benefit from any such EU trade war.

"If the United States starts the trade war [sic], then the one laughing on the side is China. We are very interlinked. We need America, and America needs us as well," she said. "It might happen with increased costs and were de-

China will be laughing, says EU Foreign Minister on trade war

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'Invasive procedures': Israeli troops carry out a military operation in Jenin, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank on Monday. Reuters

Agence France-Presse RAMALLAH

The office of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas denounced an Israeli operation in the occupied West Bank as "ethnic cleansing" on Monday, with the Health Ministry saying Israeli forces killed 70 peo-

ple in the territory this year.

The Palestinian presidency "condemned the occupation authorities' expansion of their war on occupied Palestinian people in the West Bank to implement their plans aimed at displacing citizens and ethnic cleansing."

Beyonce's Cowboy Carter wins top album at the Grammys, as Lamar shines

Agence France-Presse LOS ANGELES

Beyonce on Sunday finally won the Grammy for the year's best album for her culture-shaking Cowboy Carter, as rapper Kendrick Lamar posted a clean sweep on a night and served as a love letter to fire-ravaged Los Angeles. Chappell Roan, Charli XCX, Doechii and Sabrina Carpenter emerged as big winners at the performance-heavy gala, while heavyweights Taylor Swift and Billie Eilish went home empty-handed. Beyonce's win for Cowboy Carter now makes her the most nominated and decorated artist at the awards show ever, as well as the first Black woman to claim the top prize in this

century. The triumph was all the more relevant as the 43-year-old's ambitious, historic, historically rooted album celebrated and showcased the work of Black artists in country music, whose rich contributions the industry has repeatedly sidelined. "I just feel very full and very honored," she said, nor her husband Jay-Z and daughter Blue Ivy cheering on a repeatedly awarded Crypto.com Arena. She dedicated the prize to Linda Martell, a pioneer in Black country music featuring her. "I hope we just keep pushing forward, opening doors," Beyonce said. The win brought Beyonce's total Grammy wins to three; she also won for her collabora-

tion with Miley Cyrus, and her best country album trophy. "I really was not expecting this," she said as she accepted that prize, her voice audibly shaking. "Some times genre is a code word to keep us in our place as artists." "I just want to encourage people to do what they're passionate about and to stay persistent," she added. Indian-American vocalist and entrepreneur Chandrika Tandon, and two other collaborators won the Grammy award for the album Travesia in the Best New Age, Ambient or Chill category. This was Tandon's second Grammy nomination after 2009's "Soul Call" and first win.



Taylor Swift presents the award for best country album to Beyonce for Cowboy Carter at the Grammys on Sunday in Los Angeles. AP

Tandon, also a global business leader and the smash disc track Not Like Us, one of a series of songs that won in the new category. Collaborators South African rapper Wouter Kellerman and Japanese cellist Eru Matsumoto.

He won in all five categories in which he was nominated, including Best Rap Album, capping a meteoric year for the Midwestern artist who went from struggling singer to Black girls and women like her. "But in a powerful acceptance speech, she recounted how it wasn't always easy - she was dropped from her label during the pandemic and struggled to find work. Roan demanded that labels provide artists with a "livable wage and health care," dedicated his best record win to his hometown, which is still reeling from the fires that razed whole neighborhoods and left thousands of people displaced. The coveted prize for

Best New Artist went to Chappell Roan, capping a meteoric year for the Midwestern artist who went from struggling singer to Black girls and women like her. "But in a powerful acceptance speech, she recounted how it wasn't always easy - she was dropped from her label during the pandemic and struggled to find work. Roan demanded that labels provide artists with a "livable wage and health care," dedicated his best record win to his hometown, which is still reeling from the fires that razed whole neighborhoods and left thousands of people displaced. The coveted prize for

for best rap album. "Anything is possible," Doechii said as she accepted the trophy through her speaking directly to Black girls and women like her. Sabrina Carpenter won for best pop vocal album, and her second award of the night that followed a slapstick, Old Hollywood-inspired performance. She nominated his Espresso and Please Please Please. Shakira scooped Best Latin Pop Album, before delivering a jaw-dropping performance of her classic and new work. And Charli XCX won three prizes including best dance/electronic album, her summer-defining Braz before a banging performance at the end of the night.

Beyoncé's *Cowboy Carter* wins top album at the Grammys, as Lamar shines

Agence France-Presse
LOS ANGELES

Beyoncé on Sunday finally won the Grammy for the year's best album for her culture-shaking *Cowboy Carter*, as rapper Kendrick Lamar posted a clean sweep on a night that served as a love letter to fire-ravaged Los Angeles.

Chappell Roan, Charli XCX, Doechii and Sabrina Carpenter emerged as big winners at the performance-heavy gala, while heavyweights Taylor Swift and Billie Eilish went home empty-handed.

Beyoncé's win for *Cowboy Carter* now makes her the most nominated, most decorated artist at the awards show ever – as well as the first Black woman to claim the top prize in this

century.

The triumph was all the more relevant as the 43-year-old's ambitious, historically rooted album elevated and showcased the work of Black artists in country music, whose rich contributions the industry has repeatedly sidelined.

"I just feel very full and very honored," she said, her husband Jay-Z and daughter Blue Ivy cheering from the crowd of A-listers at Crypto.com Arena.

She dedicated the prize to Linda Martell, a pioneering Black country musician featured on the album.

"I hope we just keep pushing forward, opening doors," Beyoncé said.

The win brought Beyoncé's total Grammys on the night to three: she also won for her collabora-

tion with Miley Cyrus, and snagged the best country album trophy.

"I really was not expecting this," she said as she accepted that prize, her voice audibly shaking. "Sometimes genre is a code word to keep us in our place as artists."

"I just want to encourage people to do what they're passionate about and to stay persistent," she added.

Indian-American vocalist and entrepreneur Chandrika Tandon, and two other collaborators won the Grammy award for the album *Triveni* in the Best New Age, Ambient or Chant Album category. This was Tandon's second Grammy nomination after 2009's "Soul Call" and first win.



Taylor Swift presents the award for best country album to Beyoncé for *Cowboy Carter* at the Grammys on Sunday in Los Angeles. AP

Tandon, also a global business leader and the older sister of former CEO of PepsiCo Indra Nooyi, won the award along with her collaborators South African flautist Wouter Kellerman and Japanese cellist Eru Matsumoto.

Hip-hop laureate Lamar cleaned up thanks to his smash diss track *Not Like Us*, one of a series of songs from the Los Angeles-area native that skewer rap rival Drake.

He won in all five categories in which he was

nominated, including Record and Song of the Year. He lost only to himself – he was twice up for two of the rap genre prizes.

"Nothing more powerful than rap music," the 37-year-old Lamar said in accepting the top song trophy. "We are the culture."

Not Like Us shattered streaming records, catapulted to the top of the charts and quickly became a West Coast rap anthem, beloved for its pounding bass line, rhythmic strings and exaggerated enunciation.

Lamar dedicated his best record win to his hometown, which is still reeling from the fires that razed whole neighborhoods and left thousands of people displaced.

The coveted prize for

Best New Artist went to Chappell Roan, capping a meteoric year for the Midwestern artist who went from struggling singer to music's It girl seemingly overnight.

But in a powerful acceptance speech, she recounted how it wasn't always easy – she was dropped from her label during the pandemic and struggled to find work.

Roan demanded that labels provide artists with a "livable wage and health care."

"Record labels need to treat their artists as valuable employees," she said. "Labels, we got you, but do you got us?"

Doechii emerged as another big winner, becoming just the third woman to ever win the prize

for best rap album.

"Anything is possible," Doechii said as she accepted the trophy through tears, speaking directly to Black girls and women like herself.

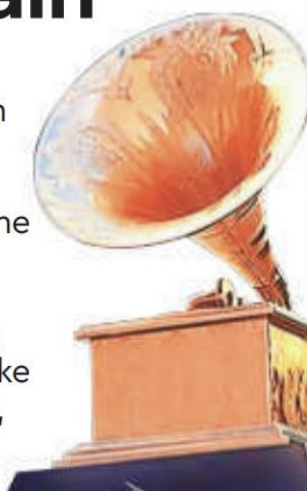
Sabrina Carpenter won for best pop vocal album, her second award of the night that followed a slapstick, Old Hollywood-inspired performance of her nominated hits *Espresso* and *Please Please Please*.

Shakira scooped Best Latin Pop Album, before delivering a jaw-dropping performance of her classics and new work.

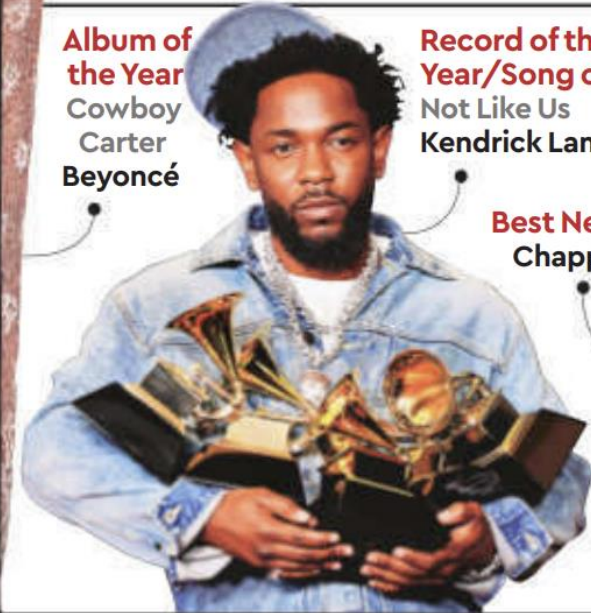
And Charli XCX won three prizes including best dance/electronic album for her summer-defining *Brat* before a banging performance at the end of the night.

Grammys 2025: Beyoncé makes history again

BEYONCÉ GOT HER long-awaited album of the year win at the 67th annual Grammy Awards on Sunday: "Cowboy Carter" took the night's final award, giving the superstar three wins (out of 11 nominations). Earlier, she became the first Black artist to win best country album. Kendrick Lamar swept five categories, winning the most awards, including both song and record of the year for his Drake diss "Not Like Us". Chappell Roan was named best new artist, capping a rocket-ship year.



Album of the Year
Cowboy Carter
Beyoncé



Record of the Year/Song of the Year
Not Like Us
Kendrick Lamar

Best New Artist
Chappell Roan



From left: Eru Matsumoto, Wouter Kellerman and Chandrika Tandon accept the Grammy for 'Best new age, ambient, or chant album' for *Triveni* AP

Indian-origin vocalist Tandon wins big, beats Ricky Kej & Anoushka Shankar

INDIAN-AMERICAN VOCALIST Chandrika Tandon won the Grammy Award for 'Best new age, ambient or chant album' for her album *Triveni*, beating out competitors like Ricky Kej and Anoushka Shankar. Chandrika shared the honour with her collaborators—South African flautist Wouter Kellerman and Japanese cellist Eru Matsumoto.

Tandon, known for blending Hindustani, Carnatic, and Western music, celebrated her win in an elegant silk salwar kurta, honouring her Indian heritage. Chandrika Tandon is more than a musician. She is a successful business leader and philanthropist. She became the first Indian-American woman to become a partner at McKinsey & Company and later founded Tandon Capital Associates, a financial advisory firm.

Category	Winner	Work
Album of the Year	Beyoncé	"Cowboy Carter"
Record of the Year	Kendrick Lamar	"Not Like Us"
Song of the Year	Kendrick Lamar	"Not Like Us"
Best New Artist	Chappell Roan	
Best Pop Vocal Album	Sabrina Carpenter	"Short n' Sweet"
Best Pop Solo Performance	Sabrina Carpenter	"Espresso"
Best Pop Duo/Group Performance	Lady Gaga & Bruno Mars	"Die with a Smile"
Best Dance/Electronic Recording	Justice & Tame Impala	"Neverender"
Best Rap Album	Doechii	"Alligator Bites Never Heal"
Best Rock Performance	The Beatles	"Now and Then"
Best Country Album	Beyoncé	"Cowboy Carter"



Chocolate War

- The Jharkhand Police has launched the “Chocolate War” initiative to **combat illegal opium cultivation** in Maoist-affected regions.

अफीम की खेती है कानूनन अपराध
संक्षिप्त पाए जाने पर होगी गिरफ्तारी
कड़े जाने पर 10 वर्ष से आजीवन कारावास की होगी सजा
NDPS Act के तहत होगी संपत्ति जप्त
आपत्ति होगी जो आपत्ति रक्षास्थल पर पते रहा नरा असर



- What is Chocolate War?

- Unique Awareness Campaign:

- Police distribute chocolates wrapped with **anti-opium messages** in rural weekly markets.
 - The wrapper highlights **legal consequences** of opium cultivation under the **NDPS Act**, warning of **up to life imprisonment and property confiscation**.
- 

- **Targeted Regions:**






- The initiative is actively implemented in **Khunti, Ranchi, Hazaribagh, Latehar, Palamu, and Chatra** districts known for opium cultivation.
- Maoist insurgents and local mafias are allegedly involved in promoting illegal cultivation.

-






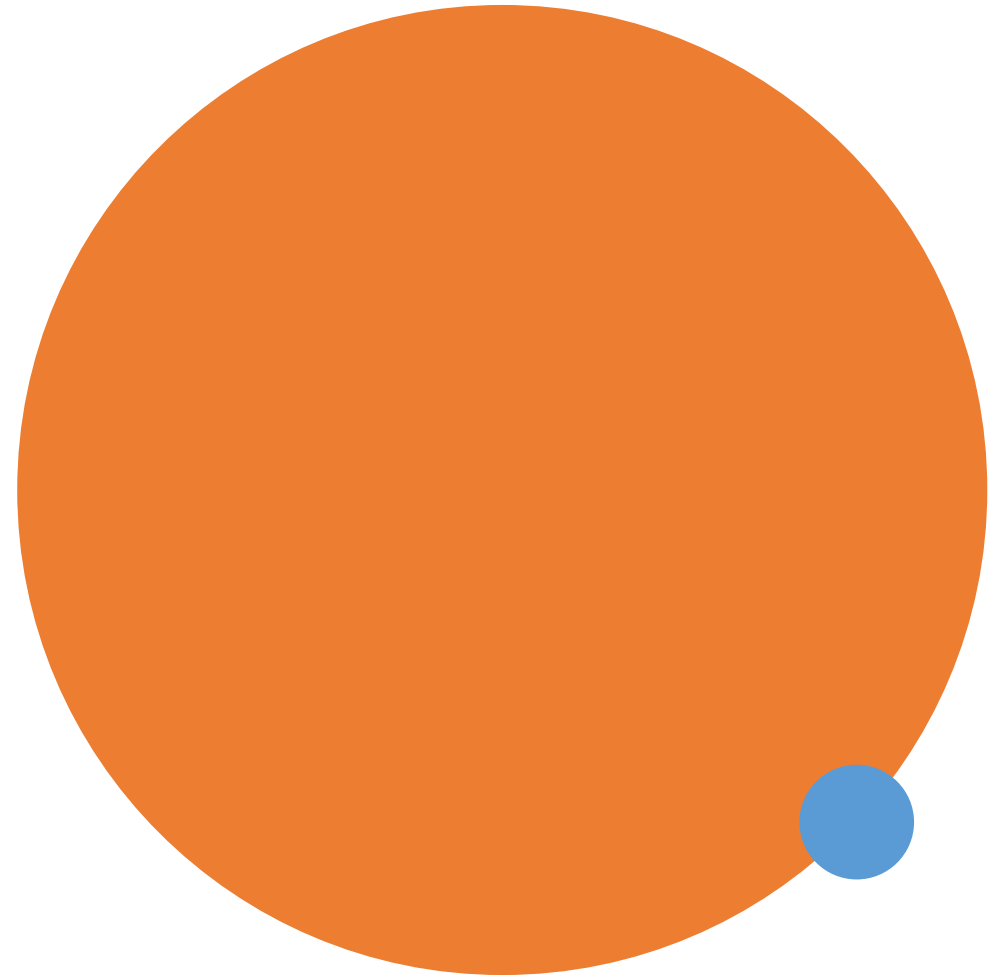
Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi
Yojana

- 
- Finance Minister announced the Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana in the Union Budget 2025-26, targeting 100 districts with low agricultural productivity.
 - **About PM's Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana:**
 - **Ministry:** Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare.
 - **Outlay:** No separate allocation, but Rs 1,000 crore allocated for pulses, Rs 500 crore for fruits and vegetables, and Rs 100 crore for hybrid seeds.
 - **Aim:** To boost agricultural productivity, crop diversification, post-harvest storage, irrigation facilities, and credit access in 100 low-productivity districts.
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Presumptive Taxation

- 
- Finance Minister introduced a presumptive taxation regime for non-residents in the Union Budget 2025-26, specifically targeting those providing services in India's electronics manufacturing sector.



What is Presumptive Taxation?

- A simplified tax scheme where income is calculated based on a **presumed rate of profit rather than actual income.**
- Designed to reduce compliance burden and simplify tax filing for small businesses and professionals.

Eligibility:

- Non-residents providing services or technology to Indian companies setting up or operating electronics manufacturing facilities.
- Excludes businesses like **goods carriage, agency work, and professions** requiring detailed bookkeeping.

Why Imposed?

A flowchart with three stacked boxes. The top box is orange and contains the question 'Why Imposed?'. A light orange arrow points down from the bottom right of this box to the top right of the middle box. The middle box is a darker shade of orange and contains the text 'To attract foreign technicians and companies to India's electronics and semiconductor sectors.' A grey arrow points down from the bottom right of the middle box to the top right of the bottom box. The bottom box is grey and contains the text 'To provide tax certainty and reduce compliance burdens for non-residents.'

To attract foreign technicians and companies to India's electronics and semiconductor sectors.

To provide tax certainty and reduce compliance burdens for non-residents.

- **Impacts on Economy:**

- **Boost to Electronics Manufacturing:** Encourages foreign investment and technology transfer in critical sectors like semiconductors.
- **Job Creation:** Increased foreign presence will create skilled and semi-skilled jobs.
- **Reduced Compliance Burden:** Simplifies tax filing for non-residents, making India a more attractive destination for business.
- **Global Competitiveness:** Enhances India's position as a preferred manufacturing base for electronics and semiconductors.

- **Key Highlights of Presumptive Taxation in Budget 2025**

- 1. New Section 44BBD:**

1. Introduced in the Income Tax Act for non-residents in electronics manufacturing.
2. 25% of gross receipts deemed as income, taxed at 35%, resulting in an effective tax rate of less than 10%.

- 2. Exclusion from Significant Economic Presence (SEP):**

1. Non-residents purchasing goods in India for export will not be considered to have a significant economic presence in India.
2. Provides clarity and reduces tax liability for export-oriented activities.



1. Effective Date:

1. Applicable from **April 1, 2026**, for the assessment year 2026-27 and subsequent years.
- 

Man Portable Air Defence System (MANPAD)



- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully conducted three flight trials of the indigenously developed Very Short-Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS), a Man Portable Air Defence System (MANPAD).



About Man Portable Air Defence System (MANPAD):

What is MANPAD?

- A lightweight, shoulder-fired missile system designed to target low-altitude aerial threats like drones, helicopters, and aircraft.
- Provides mobility and flexibility to ground forces for air defence in combat zones.

Developed By:

- Designed and developed by **DRDO's Research Centre Imarat (RCI)**, Hyderabad.

Aim:



- To provide the Indian armed forces with an **indigenous, advanced air defence system** capable of neutralizing modern aerial threats.
- To replace ageing systems like the Russian Igla MANPADS.



Features:

- **Portability:** Weighs **20.5 kg** and can be shoulder-fired or mounted on a tripod.
- **Range:** Effective range of **250 meters to 6 kilometres**.
- **Speed:** Maximum speed of **Mach 1.5 (1,850 km/h)**.
- **Warhead:** Equipped with a **2 kg adaptive proximity fuze** for precise target destruction.
- **Target Engagement:** Capable of intercepting low-flying drones and aircraft with reduced thermal signatures.
- **Operational Flexibility:** Can be deployed in various combat scenarios, including mountainous and urban terrains.



World Wetlands Day 2025

- 
- The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) organised the World Wetlands Day 2025 celebrations at the Parvati Arga Ramsar Site, Gonda, Uttar Pradesh (UP) on 2nd February 2025.
 - What are the Key Facts Regarding World Wetlands Day 2025?
 - About:
 - It is observed annually to raise awareness about the importance of wetlands and marks the adoption of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran.
- 

- 
- **Theme for 2025:** Protecting Wetlands for our Common Future.
 - **New Ramsar Sites:** **Udhwa Lake** in Jharkhand, **Theerthangal and Sakkarakottai** in Tamil Nadu and **Khecheopalri** in Sikkim are included in the list of Ramsar sites.
 - These are the **first** Ramsar Sites of **Sikkim and Jharkhand**.
 - With this, **Ramsar sites (Wetlands of International Importance) in India increased to 89**.
 - **Tamil Nadu** continues to have the **maximum** number of Ramsar Sites (20 sites) followed by **Uttar Pradesh (10 sites)**.
- 

-
- **If a wetland of international importance is brought under the 'Montreux Record', what does it imply?(2014)**
 - (a) Changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring or are likely to occur in the wetland as a result of human interference
 - (b) The country in which the wetland is located should enact a law to prohibit any human activity within five kilometres from the edge of the wetland
 - (c) The survival of the wetland depends on the cultural practices and traditions of certain communities living in its vicinity and therefore the cultural diversity therein should not be destroyed
 - (d) It is given the status of 'World Heritage Site'

Word of the day

Vituperative:

marked by harshly abusive criticism

Synonym: scathing

Usage: *His emails to him were full of vile and vituperative language.*

Pronunciation: bit.ly/vituperativepro

International Phonetic

Alphabet: /vɪ'tju:pɹətɪv/, /vaɪ'tju:pɹətɪv/

Fun fact

The World's Largest Ambulance Network





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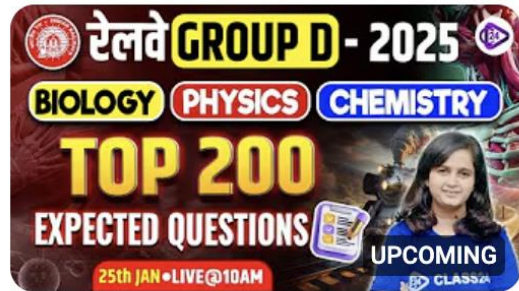


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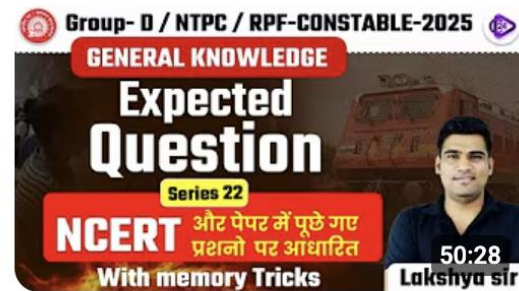


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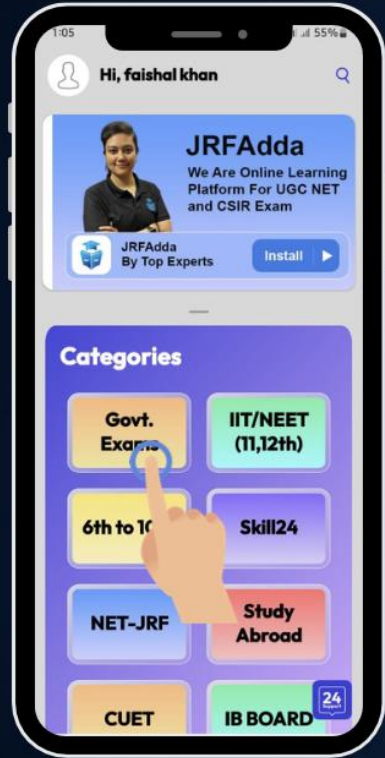
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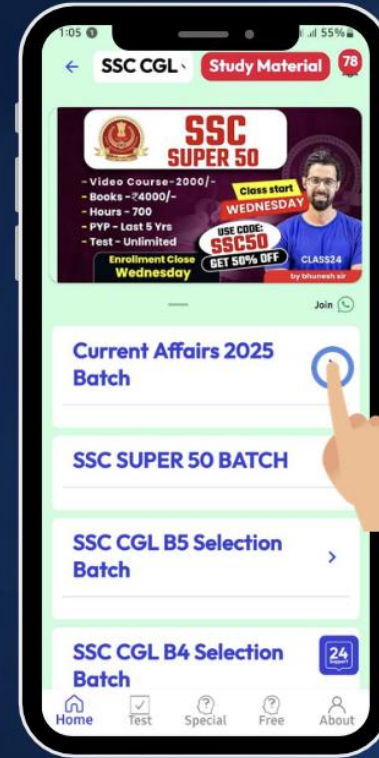
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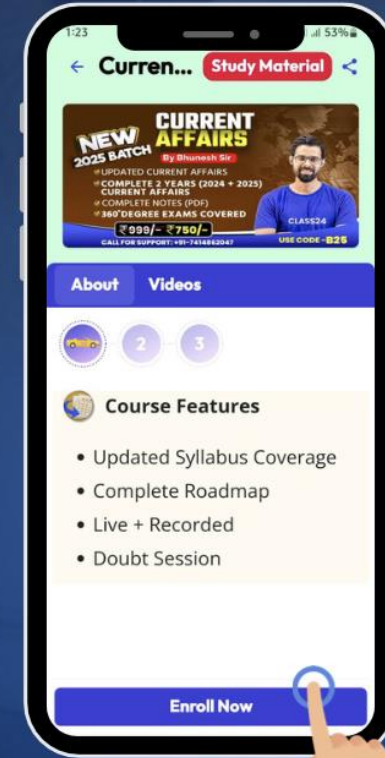
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Step 3



Step 4



A group of people are clapping in a dimly lit room. The focus is on the hands and forearms of several individuals, some in the foreground and some blurred in the background. The lighting is low, creating a warm and intimate atmosphere. There are some red dots scattered in the upper left area of the image.

Thank you
guys.
