



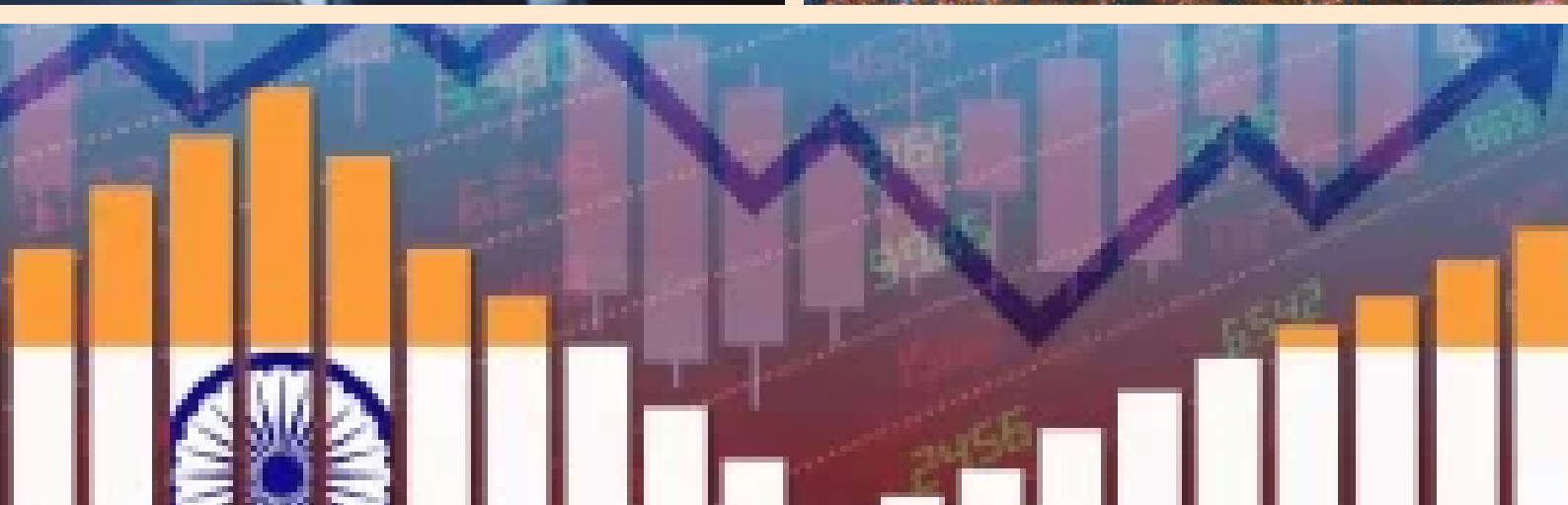
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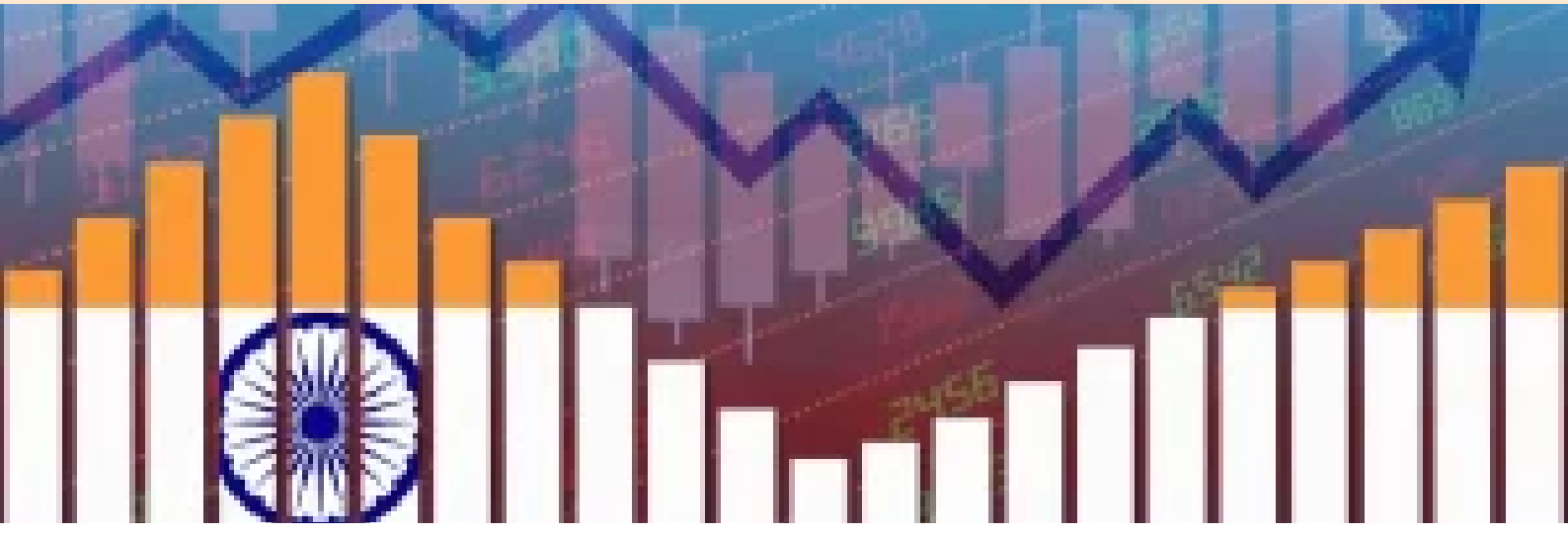


THE DESERVING INDIA

C.A. SHORTS

GAGAN - THE DESERVING INDIA





WHAT IS NEXT FOR THE INDIAN ECONOMY?

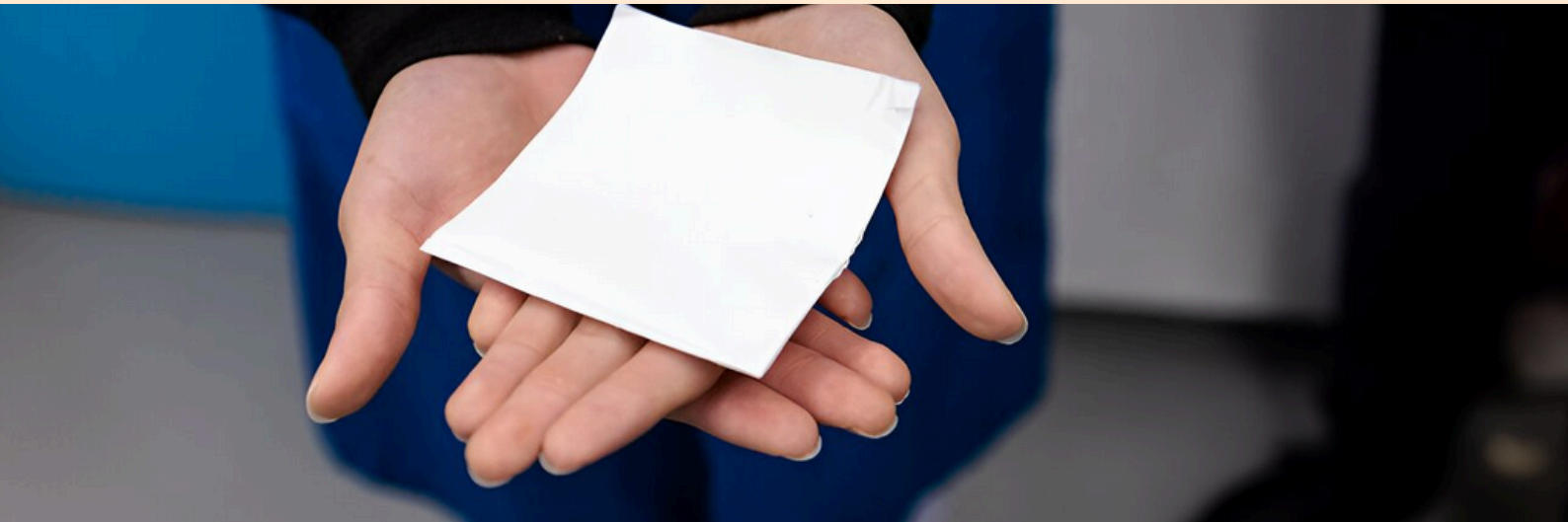
- India's GDP grew 8.2% in 2023-24, exceeding all projections and surpassing the NSO's advance estimates, with a 5.9% rise in Q4 and private consumption remaining weak but slightly improved.
- The Reserve Bank of India projects a 7.2% GDP growth for 2024-25, with initial indicators showing a slow start and challenges such as heat waves and a projected above-normal monsoon impacting the economy.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's coalition government is expected to maintain policy continuity, but pushing contentious reforms may be challenging, and the upcoming Union Budget is anticipated to address key economic issues and outline the administration's agenda for this term.



FRANCE'S RALLY TOWARDS THE RIGHT

The gist

- The National Rally's roots go back to the Ordre Nouveau, the neo-fascist party, formed in 1969, which called for banning political parties and preserving the 'white race'.
- The ON formed an electoral party, the Front National (FN), which fought the 1973 elections under the leadership of Jean Marie Le Pen, a far-right veteran of the Algerian war.
- Marine Le Pen, Jean Marie Le Pen's daughter, later took over the reins of the party and brought it to the mainstream by dissociating herself from her father and rebranding FN as the National Rally



NEW FABRIC FOUND TO MAKE URBAN 'HEAT ISLANDS' MORE BEARABLE

- As urban populations increase, cities become "urban heat islands," exacerbating heat issues due to thermal radiation from buildings and pavement, with 68% of people projected to live in cities by 2050.
- Researchers from the University of Chicago have developed a new wearable fabric that significantly reduces heat absorption compared to current materials, staying 2.3°C cooler than broadband emitter fabric and 8.9°C cooler than commercial silk in tests under the Arizona sun.
- The new textile, which has received a provisional patent, can be used beyond clothing, potentially aiding in cooling buildings, cars, and food storage, thus reducing the need for energy-intensive cooling systems.



INDIRECT EVIDENCE BUILDS, YET THE 'DARK' UNIVERSE REMAINS MURKY

THE GIST

- Dark energy apparently creates a negative pressure that stretches the fabric of spacetime and allows celestial objects to drift apart. In places with lots of matter, gravity has more of an effect than dark energy. But when space is empty of matter, dark energy dominates
- Scientists found that in many rotating galaxies the velocities of stars didn't decrease away from the centre. One explanation is that the galaxy has more matter than visible, exerting gravitational force that pushes stars at the rim to move faster. This additional matter is dark matter
- Dark matter and dark energy are assumptions. They have a very strong hypothetical basis but no physical evidence of them has been found. Scientists postulated the existence of these two entities so that they can explain their observations without having to break the general theory of relativity.



ON THE SIZE OF COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

THE GIST

- The present Council of Ministers consists of the Prime Minister, 30 Cabinet Ministers, 5 Ministers of State (MoS) with independent charge and 36 MoS
- The first COM at the time of independence had only 15 Ministers headed by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. When the council started expanding, through the 91st Constitutional amendment in 2003, the total number of Ministers including PM/CM in the COM was limited to 15% of the total strength of Lok Sabha/State Legislative Assembly.
- A thorny issue even after the limit on number of ministers is the appointment of Parliamentary Secretaries in various States. Courts have stepped in multiple times to restrain States from appointing PS to circumvent the constitutional limit set for the number of Ministers



WHY EQUITY DERIVATIVES ARE NOT FOR THE UNINITIATED

- Derivatives market is primarily a means of hedging; if you are participating in the derivatives market only, then you are indulging in short-term speculation and not being a long-term investor
- SEBI's May 2023 circular revealed that 9 out of 10 individual traders in equity derivatives incurred net losses, with average losses close to ₹50,000 and additional transaction costs making up 28% of those losses.
- Despite SEBI's risk disclosures, individual participation in equity derivatives has increased, with the number of individual investors rising from 10 lakh in 2018-19 to 96 lakh in 2023-24, and their share in turnover slightly decreasing from 26.8% to 25.5%.
- The equity derivatives market is dominated by professional proprietary traders, while inexperienced individual traders, often influenced by unapproved courses run by "finfluencers," face higher risks due to lack of awareness and the misleading promise of quick profits.



LAWS ON MERCENARIES IN WAR ZONES

- Indian nationals tricked by the promise of lucrative jobs in Russia have died fighting on the frontlines. As states are increasingly hiring private military companies to operate in conflict zones — can they qualify as mercenaries under international law? How can India secure the interests of its overseas migrant workers?

THE GIST

- Over the past year, nearly 100 Indians have been recruited by the Russian Army after being reportedly duped by agents with the lure of money and a Russian passport.
- The distinction between conventional combatants and mercenaries is a fundamental cornerstone of international humanitarian law (IHL). A combatant is typically a member of the armed forces of a party to the conflict, whereas a mercenary is recruited from a third-party state unrelated to the conflict. Mercenaries usually engage in hostilities motivated primarily by personal gain as opposed to virtues of patriotism associated with regular combatants.

One of the major challenges of the existing regulatory regime is the lack of a clear, unequivocal, and comprehensive legal definition of what constitutes a mercenary. This is compounded by the fact that the domestic laws of most states do not criminalise mercenary activity. The Indian government should develop a robust policy framework to address distress migration and implement strict measures against human trafficking.

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GOVT. SAID TO MULL PERSONAL TAX RATE CUTS

- The Indian government is considering lowering personal tax rates for certain categories of individuals, which could help boost consumption, two government sources told Reuters.
- A post-poll survey showed that voters were worried about inflation, unemployment and decreasing incomes. While India's economy grew 8.2% in 2023-24, consumption has grown at half that pace.
- The category of individuals that may see some tax relief are those earning more than ₹15 lakh annually, up to a certain amount which is yet to be determined, a source said.



NSAS OF INDIA, U.S. REVIEW PROGRESS ON ICET

- **National Security Advisers Ajit Doval and Jake Sullivan chaired the second meeting of the initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET), resolving to prevent the leakage of sensitive and dual-use technologies to countries of concern and set the vision for the next chapter of the strategic technology partnership.**
- **The joint fact sheet highlighted commitments to co-production, co-development, and R&D opportunities, as well as enhancing coordination with like-minded nations to deliver secure, reliable, and cost-competitive technology solutions.**
- **Key areas of cooperation discussed included the planned acquisition of MQ-9B unmanned aerial vehicles, licensed manufacture of GE-414 jet engines, co-production of land warfare systems, a new strategic semiconductor partnership, and initiatives to diversify critical mineral supply chains, including co-investments in lithium and rare earths projects.**



GENOMES REVEAL LEGACIES OF HUMAN SACRIFICE AND MEDIEVAL EPIDEMICS

- In the last decade, scientists have used the tools of archaeogenetics and evolutionary medicine to study ancient human burial sites, thus understanding the origins of a bubonic plague pandemic, the evolution of malarial parasites, the spread of the mpox virus, and the historical occurrence of Down's syndrome

THE GIST

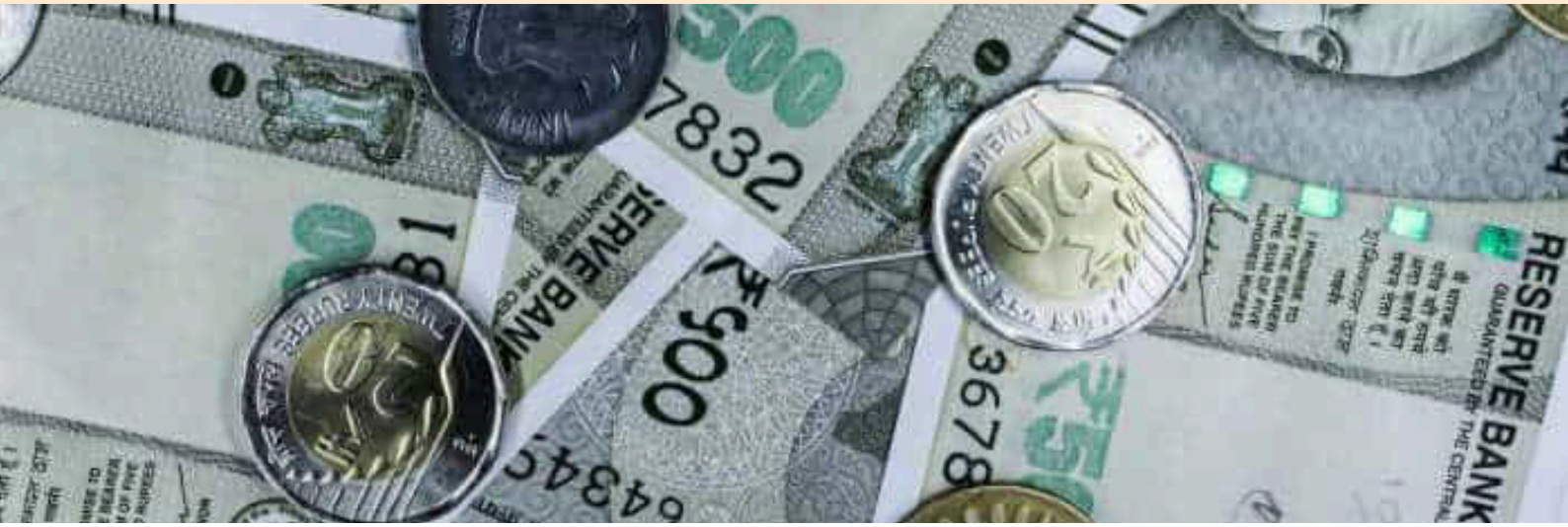
- The oldest modern human burial dates to more than 100,000 years ago, in Israel. This overlaps with the discovery of the buried remains of a three-year-old in Kenya some 80,000 years ago
- Skeletal remains at ancient burial sites open a window into the dietary habits, environmental adaptations, microevolutionary characteristics, biological kinship, sex, and genetic history of the population
- By comparing ancient and modern genomes from Mexico, researchers found evidence of positive selection in genes related to immunity. The study of genomes helps resolve mysteries, and gain new insights into the past



DOES H5N1 POSE A THREAT FOR HUMANS?

THE GIST

- The districts of Alappuzha, Kottayam and Pathanamthitta in Kerala, where water bodies, migratory birds, fowls and integrated farms form part of the ecosystem, have reported H5N1 outbreaks in 19 places since April.
- The virus seems to spread from birds/animals to humans who may be closely interacting with these, without adequate personal protection.
- In a recent editorial, The Lancet, spoke about the need for a robust and coordinated response to H5N1. It pointed out that the concept of 'One Health', although often acknowledged, is rarely prioritised and operationalised.



NET DIRECT TAX RECEIPTS RISE 21%, CIT SHARE DIPS TO 39.1%

- Share of Personal Income Tax and Securities Transaction Tax in net direct tax receipts crosses 60%, while corporate taxes yield less than 40%; Gross tax collections rose 22.2% by June 17.
- Direct tax collections made a brisk start in the first quarter of 2024-25, with net taxes rising 21% to almost ₹4.63 lakh crore by June 17, from ₹3.82 lakh crore over the same period a year earlier, the Finance Ministry said on Tuesday.
- Personal Income Tax (PIT) and Securities Transaction Tax (STT) inflows continued to dominate the tax pie, contributing 60.7% of the direct taxes, while corporate taxes (CIT) yielded a smaller share of 39.1%.
- In FY24, net direct tax collections rose 17.7% to hit ₹19.58 lakh crore, with PIT's share rising to 53.3% from 50.1% in the previous year while CIT's contribution declined to 46.5% from 49.6%.



A PROLONGED SUMMER SHOULD BE CLASSIFIED AS A NATURAL DISASTER

- **Extreme Heatwave Conditions:** Northern India is currently experiencing its longest heatwave in 15 years, with day temperatures consistently exceeding 45°C in some states. Even cooler areas are seeing temperatures 3°-6°C above normal. Night temperatures are similarly elevated due to low moisture and minimal rainfall, aggravating the heat stress on residents.
- **Monsoon Delay and Rainfall Deficit:** The monsoon, which typically begins by late June, has stalled over central India since June 12. This delay has led to a downgrade in the rainfall forecast from 'normal' to 'below normal,' with an anticipated 8% shortfall in June's expected rainfall. The delay raises concerns about agricultural impacts and exacerbates the heatwave by delaying cooling rains.

- **Infrastructure Strain and Power Demand:** The prolonged heat has spiked electricity demand to record levels, reaching 89,000 MW in northern India alone. Despite an installed capacity of 113,000 MW, up to 30% of power is being imported from other regions to meet demand. This strain on the power grid was evident with a blackout at Delhi's international airport, highlighting infrastructure vulnerabilities exacerbated by the prolonged summer conditions.





HINDU KUSH HIMALAYAS SNOW

- **The Ganga river basin — India's largest — reached a record low snow persistence in 2024. The Brahmaputra and the Indus basins have suffered similarly, threatening water supply to millions of people.**
- **The authors of the 2024 HKH snow update analyzed data from 2003 to 2024 and found significant fluctuations in snow persistence between November and April every year, when snow accumulates above ground.**
- **In the long term, experts say, reforestation with native tree species can help the ground retain more snow. Better weather forecasting and early warning systems can also help local communities prepare for impending water stress.**



RUSSIA, N. KOREA SIGN DEFENCE PACT, VOW TO ASSIST EACH OTHER IF ATTACKED

- **Mutual Aid Pact Against Aggression:** Putin and Kim signed a new partnership agreement pledging mutual aid in the event of aggression against either country. This marks a significant strengthening of relations since the Cold War, covering security, trade, investment, and cultural ties.
- **Historic Summit and Treaty:** The agreement was sealed during Putin's first visit to North Korea in 24 years. Kim described it as the "strongest ever treaty" between the two nations, likening their relationship to an alliance. This summit occurred amidst international concerns over potential arms deals and the implications for regional stability.
- **International Reactions and Context:** The pact has raised concerns among the US and its allies, who see it as Russia bolstering ties with North Korea amidst ongoing tensions, including Russia's involvement in Ukraine. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken criticized the visit as Russia's attempt to secure support amid its aggression in Ukraine.



SICKLE CELL PATIENTS NEED URGENT ACCESS TO MODERN MEDICATION

- nextIndia grapples with a formidable challenge posed by SCD, with millions affected. The high prevalence of this genetic disorder underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions, and robust healthcare infrastructure to mitigate its impact.

THE GIST

- Typically, red blood cells possess a disc-like shape, passing smoothly through blood vessels. In SCD, a mutation causes red blood cells to adopt a sickle shape. These disrupt blood flow and cause complications
- Patients with SCD suffer increased morbidity and mortality. Complications include: end-organ damage, increased infection susceptibility, stroke, and pulmonary complications

- **Empowering tribal communities is key to addressing the endemicity of SCD in India. Leveraging indigenous knowledge, nurturing partnerships, and grassroots healthcare infrastructure, are part of the process needed to find solutions tailored to the needs of tribal populations**





HOW DANGEROUS IS METHANOL POISONING?

THE GIST

- At least 38 people had died after consuming spurious liquor in the Kallakurichi district of Tamil Nadu.
- The deadliness of spurious liquor arises from methanol. James Manor, emeritus professor of Commonwealth Studies at the University of London, wrote in December 2022, “In every hooch tragedy in the history of India – and of the world since 1945 – the poison has been methanol.”
- More than 0.1 ml of pure methanol per kilogram of body-weight can be devastating. Methanol-poisoning can also cause cerebral edema, haemorrhage, and death.



JAISHANKAR REVIEWS ENERGY PROJECTS IN SRI LANKA VISIT

- **Energy Sector Initiatives and MRCC Commissioning:** During his visit to Colombo, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar discussed progress on key energy sector initiatives, including LNG supply plans, a petroleum pipeline, oil and gas exploration projects, and the Sampur Solar Power Plant. He also commissioned a Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) with President Ranil Wickremesinghe, underscoring deepening maritime security cooperation.
- **India-Backed Projects and Housing Projects:** Mr. Jaishankar reviewed the implementation of ongoing India-backed projects across Sri Lanka. He and President Wickremesinghe unveiled a digital plaque for 106 houses built under the Indian Housing Project and handed over homes constructed in model villages in Colombo and Trincomalee.



MEETINGS WITH SRI LANKAN LEADERS AND POLITICIANS:

Mr. Jaishankar held talks with various leaders, including President Wickremesinghe, Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena, Leader of Opposition Sajith Premadasa, and other senior politicians. Discussions covered the national question, land grabs in the north and east, and the election strategy of Tamil parties.





THE NIGHT OF SURVIVAL ON A MOUNTAIN

- On June 3, a 22-member trekking group from Bengaluru got caught in a blizzard while descending from the Sahastra Tal summit in Uttarakhand, resulting in the death of nine members due to hypothermia.
- Despite personal loss and extreme weather conditions, group leader S. Sudhakar kept the team motivated and active throughout the night, ensuring survival until morning light allowed them to seek help.
- The surviving members of the trek, though experienced and bonded by camaraderie, now face survivors' guilt and are contemplating their future involvement in mountaineering, with mixed feelings about returning to the mountains.



RBI'S RAO STRESSES ON CUSTOMER PROTECTION IN NBFC SECTOR

- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Executive Director R. Lakshmi Kanth Rao on Friday stressed the importance of compliance and customer protection in the non-banking financial company (NBFC) sector.
- “NBFCs are a critical part of the financial system, contributing to diversification and innovation. However, their growing size necessitates a shift from pure activity-based regulation to a framework that considers both activity and scale to effectively manage risk,” he said, addressing the Assocham 10th National Summit on NBFCs & Infrastructure Financing in Mumbai.
- “There could be lesser importance given to compliance due to lighter regulations in the past.
- However, with increased scale, NBFCs are required to meet stricter compliance requirements,” he added.



ARMENIA BECOMES THE LATEST NATION TO RECOGNISE PALESTINE

- **Armenia announced its recognition of the State of Palestine amid the ongoing war in Gaza, condemning violence towards civilian populations and expressing interest in long-term peace and stability in the Middle East.**
- **In response to Armenia's recognition, Israel's Foreign Ministry summoned Yerevan's Ambassador for a severe reprimand, highlighting Israel's strong opposition to such recognitions during the conflict with Hamas.**
- **Armenia criticized both Israel's military conduct in Gaza and Hamas' captivity of civilians, aligning with international demands for the release of captives and reiterating its commitment to international law, equality, and peaceful coexistence.**