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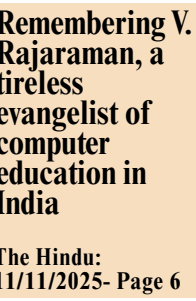
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High-intensity explosion in capital



A high-intensity explosion in a slow moving car outside the Red Fort in central Delhi left at least twelve people dead and more than 20 injured on Monday, sparking a nationwide alert and a probe involving multiple agencies. A person in whose name the car was registered was detained in Gurugram, Haryana. The impact of the blast was so severe that bodies were charred beyond recognition, with the explosion being heard around three km away. According to senior officials, the blast triggered a fire in several vehicles parked nearby, leading to casualties and chaos.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said “all possibilities” were being explored and a “thorough investigation will be conducted taking all options into account”. The Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Police have busted an “inter-State and transnational terror module”, arrested seven people, and seized 2,900 kg of improvised explosive device (IED)-making material in the past 15 days, officials said on Monday. A Srinagar-based police spokesperson said the terror module was linked to the Jaish-e-Mohammed and the Ansar Ghazwat-ul Hind. The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) has put all the Delhi-NCR installations under its security cover on “high alert” following the explosion in a moving car near Red Fort, the central armed police force said in a statement on Monday. The Railway Protection Force, in close coordination with the Government Railway Police, is on “high alert” with strict security arrangements at all stations in the Delhi-NCR region. The Punjab Police, in a statement, said a red alert had been sounded across all districts in Punjab. Delhi Police on Tuesday (November 11, 2025) registered an FIR under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the Explosives Act in connection with the blast near Red Fort

Capital owners gain, workers lose: the widening wealth gap



According to the Global Inequality Report, 83% of countries experience high income inequality, representing 90% of the world's population. Between 1990 and 2024, the capital share of national income increased in 56% of countries.



The 2025 local body elections in Kerala will be held in two phases on December 9 and December 11, State Election Commissioner A. Shajahan said in Thiruvananthapuram on Monday, announcing the schedule of the elections. Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Kottayam, Idukki, Alappuzha and Ernakulam will go to polls on December 9. Thrissur, Malappuram, Wayanad, Palakkad, Kannur, Kasaragod, and Kozhikode on December 11.



NATIONAL

Ministry simplifies rules to boost cornea transplant services

Policy Change Overview

- The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has amended the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues (Amendment) Rules, 2025, with the main goal of increasing cornea donation and transplantation across India.
- A key notification was issued on November 6, 2025, under the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 1994, to this effect.

Removal of Mandatory Equipment

- The amendment eliminates the mandatory use of clinical specular microscopes in corneal transplantation centers.
- Specular microscopes were previously required to measure the health and density of corneal endothelial cells, which are important for transplant suitability.

Rationale for the Change

- The move was made after review and consideration of expert recommendations and stakeholder inputs.
- The ministry states that this change will improve infrastructure and overcome operational challenges, especially in smaller eye centers in rural and semi-urban areas.

Impact on Cornea Transplantation

- Easing the requirement is expected to boost cornea donation and transplantation services, and increase accessibility in underserved regions.
- The amendment will streamline the National Organ Transplant Programme (NOTP) and enhance the functioning of cornea transplantation centers.

Medical and Social Context

- Corneal transplantation is a surgical procedure to restore vision by replacing a damaged or diseased cornea with healthy donor tissue.
- Corneal blindness is highlighted as the second-leading cause of blindness in India for people over age 50.

Data and Statistics

- An estimated 1.2 million cases of corneal blindness exist in India.
- There is a significant gap in organ and tissue transplantation services, which this amendment is expected to help bridge.

Expert Opinions

- The removal of the specular equipment requirement is expected to overcome both infrastructure and manpower limitations, particularly benefiting less-resourced healthcare settings.
- The Ministry emphasizes that the amendment aligns India's regulations with international practices and is based on current needs and evidence.

Healthcare Implications

- By making cornea transplants easier to perform, especially in non-urban areas, the amendment is projected to reduce avoidable blindness and improve quality of life for thousands.
- This move is part of a broader effort to make transplant and donation services more accessible and efficient nationwide.

SC says women are the 'largest minority', notes their receding presence in Parliament

Supreme Court's Key Observation

- The Supreme Court has described women as the "largest minority" in India, highlighting their steadily declining presence in Parliament.
- Justice B.V. Nagarathna, the only woman judge on the two-judge Bench, questioned why women cannot be given representation even without reservation, underlining the seriousness of falling female representation.

Context of the Hearing

- The Bench, including Justice R. Mahadevan, heard a petition by Jaya Thakur challenging the implementation timeline of the "Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam" (106th Constitution Amendment Act), which guarantees 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.

Legal and Legislative Background

- The 106th Amendment was signed into law by President Droupadi Murmu in September 2023 but has not yet been enforced.
- The law stipulates that reservation for women will be implemented only after the next decennial census and the subsequent delimitation (redrawing) of parliamentary and assembly constituencies.
- Advocate Shobha Gupta, representing the petitioner, stressed that despite constitutional amendments, women's actual representation remains negligible.

The Supreme Court's Rationale and Concerns

- Justice Nagarathna cited the 106th Amendment as an instance of legal provision for women's political justice but noted that women, being 48.44% of the population, continue to be underrepresented.
- This reiterates that, despite recommendations and long-standing demands, there has been no adequate, real representation for women in Parliament or state legislatures.

Implementation Challenges and Delays

- The Court and petitioners noted that the actual implementation depends on the next census and completion of delimitation, with ambiguity around when either will occur.
- The proposed reservation will last for 15 years after implementation, but Parliament can later extend it.
- Justice Nagarathna pointed out the uncertainty: with no specific dates for the census or delimitation, the reservation could face indefinite postponement.

Historical and Social Context

- This frames women's underrepresentation as a "long-pending demand," reflecting 75 years of inadequate progress since independence.
- Affirmative action for women is painted as an unfinished agenda, hindered by procedural requirements like the census and delimitation.

Broader Implications

- There is a call for scientifically justified, quantifiable allocation of seats for women, based on actual population data from the next census.
- Court observations and senior counsel arguments collectively underline the systemic nature of gender imbalance, and the need for constitutional and practical solutions.
- This raises the urgency to address the receding political presence of women through both legislative action and timely administrative steps like the census and delimitation.
- It positions the issue as one linked to broader social justice, legal precedent, and the historical context of gender rights in India.

NATIONAL

India withdraws from Ayni airbase

- Ayni was India's only full-fledged overseas base, and its location offered India a military foothold in central Asia and leverage over Pakistan.
- Its presence projected influence in the region dominated by major powers like Russia and China.
- Ayni airbase in Tajikistan, where India first deployed military personnel when it was supporting the earlier Northern Alliance in Afghanistan, which was fighting the Taliban.
- The airbase was also used by India to evacuate its nationals after the Taliban took control of Kabul in August 2021.
- It is located around 20 km from Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor, which shares a boundary with the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and with China's Xinjiang province.

Reasons for the withdrawal

- India has officially said that it had a bilateral arrangement with Tajikistan for the rehabilitation and development of any aerodrome, and while this arrangement was in place for several years, the facility was handed over to the Tajikistan side in 2022 after the conclusion of the agreement with the country.
- It is understood that the Tajikistan government was reluctant to renew the lease for the airbase owing to pressure from Russia and China.
- The withdrawal of Indian presence was carried out subsequently, but quietly. The matter only came to light last month.
- Any overseas military base is of high importance to any country as it offers access not just to the country it is located in, but also to the neighbouring region.
- And if its located in a strategically key region, such a base would often be critical in filling up security and intelligence voids for the country.
- Withdrawal of Indian presence from Ayni airbase may be a setback for India, particularly because of its proximity to the Wakhan corridor, which is of geopolitical interest to both China and Pakistan for security reasons and for trade, potentially.
- India does not have a functional overseas military base in any other country.
- In 2024, India and Mauritius jointly inaugurated an airstrip and a jetty that India has built on Agaléga, a set of two islands in the western Indian Ocean.
- Both of these are key strategic projects that can help to expand India's reach in the Indian Ocean and enhance its coverage of the waters off the east coast of Africa, where China is also expanding its influence.

Remembering V. Rajaraman, a tireless evangelist of computer education in India

Background and Early Contributions

- Vaidyeswaran Rajaraman (awarded Padma Bhushan) was an early pioneer in computer programming education in India, starting his career when computers were not widely available and mostly custom-built and programmed for specific purposes.
- As a young electrical engineering student at IISc Bangalore, he worked on designing an analogue computer under the guidance of Vincent Rideout, visiting professor from the University of Wisconsin.

Academic and Institutional Legacy

- After Rideout's departure, Rajaraman continued computer work, advancing the field at IISc, and later moved to the newly established IIT Kanpur to set up research and teaching programs in computer science.
- Rajaraman's teaching included intensive programming courses using Fortran, a language crucial for the first generation of Indian programmers and researchers.

Contribution to Computer Science Education

- With the arrival of IBM mainframes in 1964, computing took off in India. Rajaraman's courses and leadership were instrumental in this growth.
- He developed and taught Masters-level computer courses, which later expanded into more advanced research and education programs at institutions like IIT Kanpur and IISc.

Textbook and Resource Development

- Rajaraman noticed a lack of textbooks for programming education and created booklets on Fortran, selling them at affordable rates to students.
- His popular booklet was later printed by Prentice Hall and became a bestseller, supporting the spread of programming knowledge.

Influence on Policy and National Curriculum

- Rajaraman lobbied for the institutionalization of computer science education in India, leading to the introduction of the M.Tech programme in computer science at IITs.
- Over time, his efforts resulted in most major Indian universities starting independent departments for computer science and engineering.

Industry and Research Leadership

- As the demand for software professionals grew in the 1980s, Rajaraman led national committees that influenced curriculum and training, including the development of India's three-year Master of Computer Applications (MCA) program.
- He later directed the Supercomputer Education and Research Centre at IISc (1982–1994).

Personal Traits and Legacy

- Rajaraman is noted for his humility, avoidance of self-promotion, and focus on educational and national development over personal gain.
- He remained a prolific teacher, author, and policy advisor throughout his career, with his last book published as recently as June 2024.

Impact Assessment

- This credits Rajaraman with laying the foundational infrastructure for India's rapid advancement in computer science research, education, and the software services industry.
- His legacy is felt in the proliferation of computer education in India and the sustained output of skilled IT professionals.

BUSINESS

Centre yet again seeks auto industry inputs on EV import policy

Policy Background and Initial Attempt

- The Indian government introduced a policy in June under the Scheme to Promote Manufacturing of Electric Passenger Cars (SPMEPC) to attract auto makers into importing EVs at a reduced duty rate of 15% (compared to the prevailing 70-100%) if they committed ₹4,150 crore in local manufacturing investment.
- Automakers could import up to 8,000 EVs under the scheme per year per applicant, provided they delivered on local manufacturing commitments.

Lack of Industry Response

- The policy failed to attract any bidders before the deadline expired on October 21, as not a single application was received.
- This prompted the Ministry of Heavy Industries to consult further with the auto sector at the end of October, to gather suggestions and better understand the reasons for the lack of interest.

Renewed Invitation for Feedback

- Industry players have now been given three more weeks to submit their recommendations regarding the EV import policy.
- The government signaled its willingness to reconsider or reopen the application window if practical and viable suggestions were brought forward by the industry.

Possible Reasons for Low Interest

- An official cited ongoing India-EU free trade agreement negotiations and the import concessions that might be included under it as one reason why automakers might be postponing their participation.
- The anticipation of better import concessions emerging from these negotiations could be causing auto companies to wait before committing to the current scheme.

Policy Flexibility and Limitations

- The government has also received suggestions to include Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) vehicles in the scheme, but remains firm that only minor changes to the policy will be considered, while fundamental elements will not be altered.
- The unwillingness to substantially change the core requirements signals the government's commitment to push for local manufacturing rather than extensive imports at reduced duties.

Sectoral and Economic Implications

- The situation reflects challenges in aligning government policy with industry expectations and the evolving international trade environment.
- The government's approach also illustrates its attempt to balance attracting foreign investment in local manufacturing with protecting national interests and leveraging ongoing international trade talks.

E-com sites may have to disclose country of origin of goods sold

Policy Proposal Overview

- The Union Department of Consumer Affairs has released a set of draft rules proposing that e-commerce platforms must provide "searchable and sortable filters" to display the country of origin for packaged commodities sold online.
- This proposal is part of the Draft Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) (Second) Amendment Rules, 2025.

Aims and Objectives

- The main goal is to enhance consumer empowerment and transparency in online shopping.
- By making the "country of origin" information prominent and easily searchable, the amendment aims to let consumers make better-informed purchasing decisions.

Practical Implementation

- The draft specifically wants all e-commerce platforms selling imported products to implement filters so users can easily sort or search products by country of origin.
- This is expected to make it easier and faster for shoppers to identify where products originate while shopping online.

Government Rationale and Justification

- The government states that this change directly supports initiatives like 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Vocal for Local' by making 'Made in India' products easier to find and prefer.
- Transparency and reduced time for informed decision-making are emphasised as consumer benefits.

Stakeholder Engagement and Feedback

- Stakeholders are invited to submit feedback or observations on the draft rules until November 22, 2025.
- The government appears open to public and industry input before finalising the amendment.

Expected Impact on E-Commerce

- Once implemented, the regulation should enhance marketplace transparency, potentially influence consumer choices toward local products, and hold platforms more accountable for product disclosures.
- It may also require technical and compliance adjustments from e-commerce platforms to enable new sorting and filtering functions for product listings.

Broader Economic Context

- The amendment is closely linked with India's push for self-reliance and support for domestic businesses, reflecting larger economic policy objectives to promote local manufacturing and informed consumption.



BUSINESS

PRELIMS CORNER :

1. Which one of the following texts helped to identify the initial year of the Gupta era by stating that the Gupta era began 241 years after the beginning of the Shaka era ?

- (a) Raghuvamsa
- (b) Razmnama
- (c) Amarakosha
- (d) Tahqiq-i-Hind

2. Who among the following enhanced the power and prestige of the Maratha Empire by defeating the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Rajput Governor of Malwa and the Governor of Gujarat?

- (a) Balaji Viswanath
- (b) Baji Rao I
- (c) Balaji Baji Rao
- (d) Madhav Rao I

3. The earliest epigraphic reference to image worship in Jainism is found in :

- (a) Nashik inscription
- (b) Junagarh inscription
- (c) Hathigumpha inscription
- (d) Mathura inscription

4. Which of the below Articles of the Indian Constitution speaks specifically of religious and linguistic minorities ?

- (a) Article 30
- (b) Article 29
- (c) Article 350A
- (d) Article 16

DETAILED ANSWER KEY IN THE CIVIL SERVICE CHRONICLE PAGE

Rural unemployment down, urban joblessness up, finds government survey

Key Findings from PLFS (July-September 2025)

- The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) by the Labour Bureau reports that the rural unemployment rate among people aged 15+ dropped to 4.4% from 4.8% in the previous quarter.
- In contrast, urban unemployment crept up marginally, with rates for males rising from 6.1% to 6.2% and for females from 8.9% to 9.0% in the same period.
- The overall unemployment rate among people aged 15+ thus fell to 5.2% (down from 5.4%).

Sectoral and Workforce Shifts

- Rural self-employment saw an increase, with 62.8% of rural workers self-employed (up from 60.7%).
- Urban employment remained dominated by regular wage/salaried jobs. The proportion of urban workers in this category rose to 49.8% from 49.4%.
- Most rural workers were engaged in agriculture (57.7%, up from 53.5%), attributed to seasonal factors.

Total Employment Numbers

- On average, 56.2 crore persons (15+ years) were employed across India during July-September 2025, of whom 39.6 crore were male and 16.6 crore female.

Sectoral Concentration

- Agriculture continued to dominate rural employment, while the tertiary (services) sector was the largest employer for urban workers (62%, slightly lower than 61.7% in the previous quarter).

Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)

- Female LFPR among people aged 15+ rose to 33.7% (from 33.4%).
- In rural areas, the jump in female LFPR was more pronounced: from 37% in April-June to 37.5% in July-September 2025.
- This increase in rural employment, especially among females, is linked to agricultural activity.

Policy Implications and Observations

- The improvement in rural employment can be linked to seasonal agricultural operations.
- The rise in urban unemployment suggests ongoing structural challenges despite a regular wage/salaried employment improvement.
- The continued dominance of agriculture and services sector highlights ongoing dualism in India's labour market dynamics.

Broader Context

- Data points to important trends for policymakers: rural employment remains highly sensitive to agricultural cycles, while urban job creation needs further, sustained attention.
- The survey underscores the importance of disaggregated gender data in understanding labour market dynamics, especially female participation.

EDITORIAL

What South Asia wants from COP30?

The Context and Urgency

- Even a decade after the Paris Agreement, South Asia continues to suffer disproportionately from escalating climate crises, including monsoons, floods, landslides, and heatwaves.
- Trust in global collective action and climate governance has weakened, especially after the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and the rise in trade protectionism, putting pressure on smaller, vulnerable nations.

South Asia's Consultations and Approach

- Regional consultations (such as COP30 Special Envoy for South Asia) involved government and civil society representatives from Bhutan, Nepal, Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, converging on priorities and messages.
- The article stresses collaborative, pragmatic solutions that leverage regional cooperation, science, and knowledge transfer instead of isolated national efforts.

Key South Asian Demands and Priorities

1. **Implementation Gap:** There's a large gap between commitments and actual climate finance and technology delivery. Of the 203 billion promised for adaptation since 2015, very little has reached South Asia, which receives only a fraction for implementation.
2. **Climate Leadership and Adaptation:** South Asia needs international support for adaptation, urgent finance, and knowledge sharing, especially for agricultural resilience, disaster risk reduction, and long-term capacity-building.
3. **Inclusive Regional Agendas:** Broader representation in multilateral coordination, especially for marginalized communities and women, and cross-border technology solutions like CDRI and Nepal's Sabarmatha Sambahad.
4. **Adaptation and Loss & Damage:** Support for locally-led adaptation practices, avalanche monitoring (as in Nepal), and resilience to non-economic climate impacts. Countries like Maldives and Sri Lanka face new and persistent climate threats, such as rising seas and freshwater scarcity.
5. **Finance and Capacity Building:** Calls for dedicated regional allocations from global funds (Green Climate Fund, Loss and Damage Fund, Adaptation Fund), direct access to reliable finance, and simplified funding mechanisms to avoid project delays and high transaction costs.

Proposed Action Items

- Mainstream adaptation and resilience into national and regional policy, emphasizing solutions that can be rolled out rapidly and benefit the most vulnerable.
- Build rapid access pipelines to climate funds and enable local-level implementation with reduced transaction time.
- Facilitate technology flows and address trade barriers in climate-related goods, noting South Asia's lag in technology transfer as a major bottleneck.

Equity and Technology

- COP30 should address the equity gap, ensuring that technology partnerships (e.g., AI, quantum computing, renewable energy technologies) are accessible and affordable for developing regions.
- Remove digital and financial barriers to tech transfer, encourage knowledge-sharing platforms, and ensure inclusivity in global tech standards.

Call for Results and Multilateralism

- The article concludes that COP30 must produce ambitious outcomes or face further erosion of multilateral climate credibility.
- Renewed investment in transparency, accountability, and tailored regional solutions is vital for restoring trust and progress on global climate action.

India-Bhutan story offers lessons for managing asymmetric relationships

- This reflects on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bhutan, highlighting the resilience and adaptability of the India-Bhutan relationship despite vast asymmetry in size and changing regional dynamics.
- It frames India-Bhutan ties as a model for mutually respectful and productive neighborhood diplomacy in Asia.

Historical Foundation

- The roots of India-Bhutan relations lie in the 1949 Treaty of Friendship, which offered Bhutan protection while allowing autonomy in internal matters.
- In the 1960s, concerns over Himalayan security and geopolitics led to a framework where India handled Bhutan's foreign affairs, mirroring British colonial precedents.

Evolution and Reforms

- Over time, Bhutan sought and secured greater sovereignty, especially after the 2006 constitutional transition ushered in democracy.
- India recognized Bhutan's domestic evolution, culminating in a 2007 treaty revision affirming "mutual respect for each other's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity."

Diplomatic and Strategic Management

- Bhutan has carefully pursued diversification and modernization without compromising sovereignty, balancing development with diplomatic caution.
- Bhutan expanded its diplomatic and economic engagements, building ties beyond India, while remaining mindful of its sensitivities vis-à-vis China and regional security.

Mutual Interests and Cooperation

- This cites how India supported Bhutan's modernization through aid, infrastructure, trade, and training, later adapting engagements to reflect Bhutan's policy changes and aspirations.
- The relationship has withstood major regional and global shifts (like China's rise and ends of the Cold War), and still centers on consultation, non-interference, and reciprocal respect.

Challenges and Ongoing Issues

- This also acknowledges that Bhutan, by virtue of its geography and small size, faces continuous challenges in managing great power dynamics, especially with the China-India rivalry and the unsettled Doklam issue.
- India and Bhutan have generally managed crises constructively, aided by durable communication and trust, though emerging pressures—digital shifts, cross-border connectivity, and multilateral negotiations—introduce new complexities.

Diplomatic Lessons from the Relationship

- The piece draws broader diplomatic lessons for managing asymmetry:
 - Build enduring cooperation anchored in mutual benefit and adaptation, not dependency.
 - Resolve disputes in ways that recognize each side's core interests—delaying what can't be resolved, prioritizing practical cooperation, and protecting sovereignty.
 - Recognize that small states can exert agency by gradual transformation and cautious diversification, as Bhutan has done.

Conclusion and Relevance

- The India-Bhutan partnership is offered as a positive example for India's wider neighborhood policy, underlining flexibility, mutual respect, and the careful management of unequal power relations.
- Sustained cooperation—even in asymmetry—demands ongoing negotiation, trust, and readiness to recalibrate, providing valuable guidance for regional diplomacy amid rising global competition.

INTERNATIONAL

Brahmaputra, Teesta rivers eroding land faster than ever in Bangladesh

- Villages, homes, farmlands, and essential infrastructure (like schools and mosques) are being lost at an unprecedented rate, forcing families into constant cycles of displacement and poverty.

Acceleration of the Erosion Crisis

- Erosion along the Brahmaputra and Teesta has intensified, causing devastation for thousands of families and endangering local communities and livelihoods.
- This highlights Kurigram as one of the most severely affected districts, making the erosion here a visible and dramatic sign of the wider crisis.

Climate Change as a Core Driver

- The increased rate of erosion is directly attributed to climate change, particularly the melting of Himalayan glaciers feeding the rivers.
- The flow and force of water in these rivers have increased, raising the frequency and intensity of erosion events.

National and International Stakes

- Bangladesh is seeking to highlight this disaster at COP30, linking its need for adaptation support and climate finance more directly with the consequences of global warming.
- The country's strategic aims at COP30 include drawing attention to climate-induced disasters—especially as Bangladesh is one of the world's most vulnerable nations to climate change impacts.

Social Strain and Adaptation Struggles

- Erosion often leads to loss of schools, jobs, homes, and even family safety (with women and children especially vulnerable).
- Displaced families struggle to find new places to live, frequently moving due to landlessness and fear of further riverbank collapse.

Data and Warnings

- According to official figures, Bangladesh loses approximately 10,000 hectares of land a year to river erosion, affecting hundreds of thousands of people.
- Erosion is cited as being as damaging as, or sometimes worse than, flooding.

Local Testimonies and Loss

- Regional NGOs and local authorities are struggling to cope, with state support often proving inadequate to address the large-scale crisis.

Call for Global Action

- The erosion crisis in Bangladesh is presented as a stark example of the local, visible impacts of global climate change, making a compelling case for urgent adaptation funding and international support.
- Without decisive action and additional resources, vulnerable communities face continued cycles of loss, displacement, and insecurity.



With the West dragging its feet, BRICS may seize climate leadership at COP30

Context and Criticism of the West

- As COP30 opens in Belém, Brazil, there is rising discontent with the role and commitment of the U.S., Europe, and other developed countries regarding climate finance and action.
- Donald Trump's recent criticism of environmental policy and the Paris Agreement is cited as indicative of Western reluctance and climate inaction.

Brazil's Central Role and Momentum

- Brazil, under President Lula, positions itself at the forefront of global climate diplomacy, hosting COP30 and launching new initiatives such as the Tropical Forests Forever Fund (TFFF).
- Lula seeks to unify the Global South and leverage Brazil's Amazonian leadership to argue for transformative climate change measures and nature conservation.

BRICS Bloc's Emerging Leadership

- With the failure of the traditional (Western-led) climate governance, BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) are poised to set the climate agenda and present a coordinated front.
- BRICS nations argue that their low historical emissions and current high vulnerability give them the moral authority to demand overdue action from the developed world.

New Institutions and Funds

- Brazil's TFFF, launched during the Climate Summit, aims to provide sustainable funding for forest preservation and has already secured \$5.5 billion in pledges, mainly from European partners.
- The creation of new climate funding mechanisms under BRICS, independent of U.S. or European control, signals a strategic shift in climate finance leadership.

Key Themes at COP30

- Brazil initiated COP30 with the theme "Climate and Nature: Forests and Oceans," stressing the urgent need to halt environmental destruction and transition to a more sustainable development model.
- COP30 is viewed as a pivotal climate summit where the Global South could reshape climate governance and push for genuine commitments on finance and technology transfer.

Political and Diplomatic Implications

- The absence of U.S. leadership is less significant, as many emerging economies are actively stepping up. The article quotes negotiators and scientists who argue that decisive change can come from developing nations themselves.
- The new paradigm emphasizes a shift from dependency and broken promises by developed countries to a proactive, self-organized and South-led model of multilateralism.

Multilateralism and Solidarity

- President Lula and BRICS leaders stress solidarity, North-South collaboration, and the need for a new multilateral system that includes real accountability for funding and emissions reductions.
- The summit is expected to witness historic meetings between BRICS leaders and a renewed commitment to push back on Western inertia.

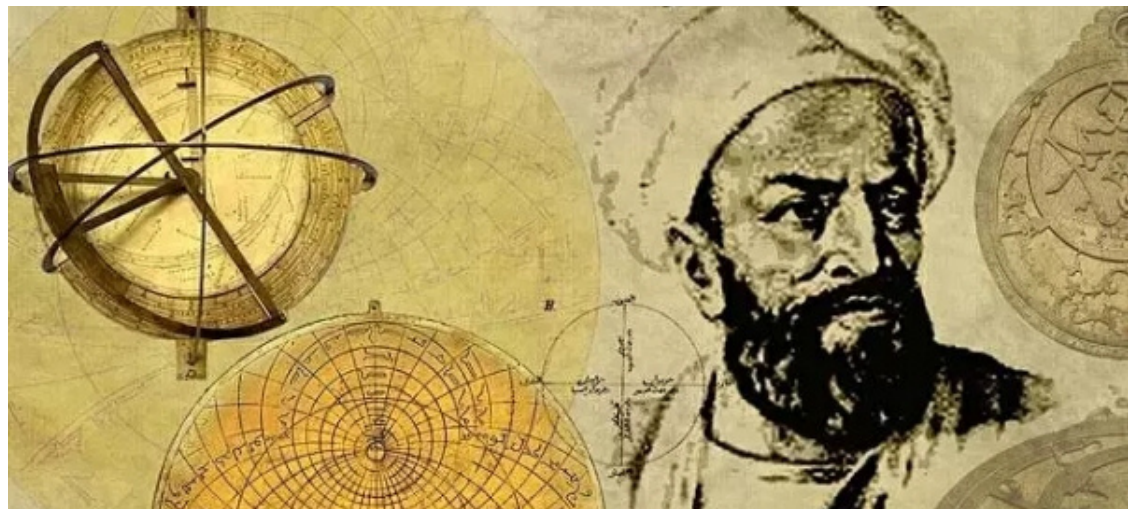
Conclusion: The Global South's Opportunity

- COP30 is portrayed as an opportunity for BRICS and the wider Global South to seize the mantle of climate leadership, redefine international climate priorities, and champion a more equitable, effective climate regime.
- The outcome will test whether the Global South can turn rhetoric into lasting action to save the global economy and environment, making COP30 a significant moment in climate diplomacy.

Prelims Corner: Explanations

Q1. Ans d

The political history of c. 300-600 CE, which in general, is known as the Gupta era in Indian history, has been largely reconstructed on the basis of inscriptions and coins. There are no specific details about the origins or social backgrounds of the Guptas. Apart from the historical value of his descriptions of 11th-century India, Al-Biruni helped modern historians identify the initial year of the Gupta era in his Tahqiq-i-Hind states that the Gupta era began 241 years after the beginning of the Shaka era. Since the Shaka era began in 78 CE, this places the beginning of the Gupta era in 319-320 CE.



Q2. Ans b

Baji Rao I (1720–1740) was appointed as Peshwa in 1720 by Shahu after Balaji Viswanath (father of Baji Rao I). Baji Rao's achievements include establishing Maratha dominance in southern India and political power in northern India. As a result, he played a key role in establishing Maratha supremacy in Gujarat, Malwa, Rajputana, and Bundelkhand, as well as liberating Konkan (India's western coast) from Janjira Siddis and Portuguese dominance. After consolidating Maratha power in central India, Baji Rao resolved to reassert the Maratha right to collect taxes from the prosperous province of Gujarat. Sarbuland Khan, the Mughal governor of the Gujarat province, gave permission to the Marathas to collect Chauth. The Marathas defeated the Nizam of Hyderabad, and Peshwa Baji Rao I forced him to sign a peace treaty on March 6, 1728, in the village of Mungi-Paithan. The Nizam agreed to make some concessions to the Peshwa under the Munji Shivagaon Treaty. Thus, Baji Rao enhanced the power and prestige of the Maratha Empire by defeating the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Rajput Governor of Malwa and the Governor of Gujarat.

Q3. Ans c

The 1st century BCE Hathigumpha inscription of the Kalinga king Kharavela refers to his retrieving an image of a Jina. This inscription is the earliest epigraphic reference to image worship in Jainism. The Udayagiri and Khandagiri caves in Orissa are among the oldest long-standing centres of Jaina monasticism. A large number of Jaina images and inscriptions from the Mathura area indicate the popularity of Jainism. Kharavela, the Chedi king of Kalinga (in eastern India), claims in his Hathigumpha inscription to have defied a king named Satakarni in his second regnal year. He also claims two years later, he defeated the Rathikas of the Maratha country and the Bhojas of Vidarbha, who seem to have been subordinates of the Satavahanas. A possible indication of Nanda military victories in Kalinga is suggested by the later Hathigumpha inscription of Kharavela, which mentions a king named Nanda building a canal and either conquering a place or taking away a Jaina shrine or image from Kalinga.

Q4. Ans a

Article 30 of the Indian Constitution speaks about the right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions. This Article consists of provisions that safeguard various rights of the minority community in the country, keeping in mind the principle of Equality as well. Article 30 (1): Promises to all linguistic and religious minorities the 'right to establish' and the 'right to administer' educational institutions of their own choice. This clause provides the right for two types of minorities, namely, religious and linguistic minorities. Article 30 (2): Restricts the State from making discrimination in the matter of providing help to any educational institution on the ground that it is managed by a religious minority or linguistic minority. Thus, Article 30 of the constitution speaks specifically of religious and linguistic minorities.

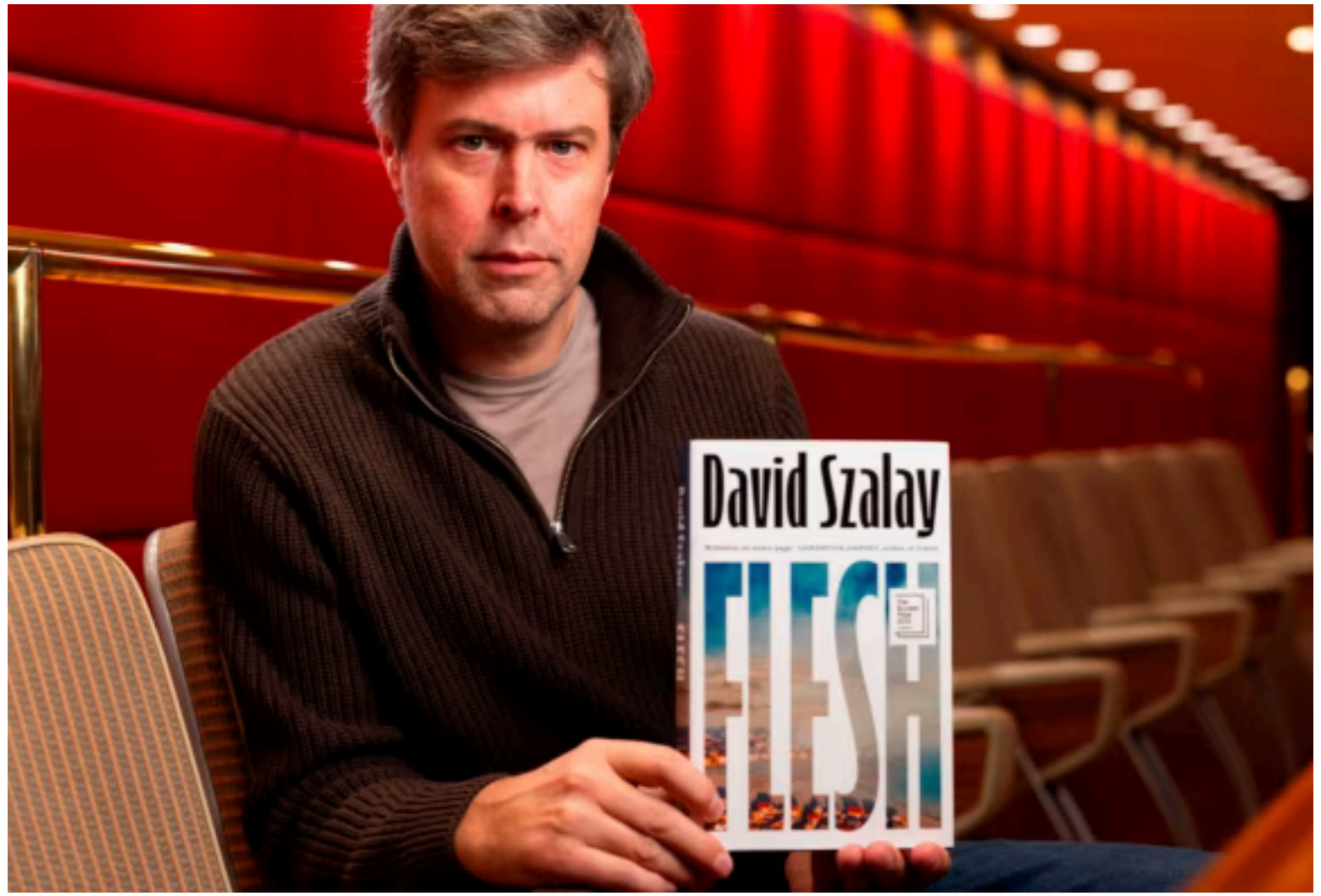
Case Study:



Meet the Couple Turning Waste Into Pieces That Can Return to Soil in 180 Days

Bhakti and Suyash's story begins in 2010, at an architecture school in Mumbai, where they first met. After graduating in 2015, they both pursued advanced studies at the Institute for Advanced Architecture of Catalonia (IAAC) in Barcelona. Their paths diverged briefly, with Bhakti working with the Spanish architect Ricardo Bofill, and Suyash practising in Lisbon, before converging again in 2022 when they returned home to Mumbai. That September, the couple launched Anomalia. What united them was a shared discomfort with the enormous waste generated by the construction and design industries. "We were always conscious of reducing waste and reusing materials," Bhakti recalls. "Mycelium's regenerative, circular nature aligned with our vision. It serves its purpose and then biodegrades instead of ending up in landfills." Their first experiments were humble. During the pandemic, confined to their home, they grew mushrooms in cupcake trays. "That's when we realised how lightweight yet strong the material could be," Suyash says. From there, they graduated to experimenting with bricks, partitions, textiles, and eventually, furniture. At Anomalia, the couple does not construct furniture but grows it. Their first collection, 'Grown Not Built', uses modular "microblocks" made from agricultural waste bound with mycelium. These blocks can be assembled into stools, tables, shelves, or partitions.

The Booker Prize 2025 Winner:



David Szalay is the Hungarian-British author who has won the prestigious 2025 Booker Prize for his profound and propulsive sixth novel, *Flesh*. His victory marks a significant milestone, as he is the first author of Hungarian heritage to win the award. Szalay's personal history is as international as the scope of his fiction. He was born in Canada, grew up primarily in London, and now lives in Vienna.



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