

APRIL

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MK Yadav Sir

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Wayward elephant

Price stability must remain non-negotiable

The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has opted to keep the benchmark policy repo rate unchanged at 6.5% for a seventh consecutive meeting citing food price pressures that are impeding its efforts to slow inflation to the 4% target on a durable basis. Explaining the rate decision and the MPC's resolve to keep the policy stance focused on the withdrawal of accommodation, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das remarked that the 'elephant in the room - inflation', which had hit a peak of 7.8% in April 2022, 'appeared to be returning to the forest after having gone out for a walk'. "We would like the elephant to return to the forest and remain there on a durable basis," he said, emphasising that in the best interest of the economy, it was essential to ensure that retail inflation continued to moderate and aligned to the target on a durable basis. The monetary authority's repeated emphasis on 'a durable basis' underlines its concern that headline inflation and food price inflation in particular have remained stubbornly unpredictable, with the headline Consumer Price Index-based reading stuck above the RBI's 4% target for 53 months through February 2024. Nor are the MPC's projections for price stability in the new fiscal year significantly reassuring in terms of the target: CPI inflation is expected to slow slightly to an average of 4.9% in the current quarter, then decelerate markedly and dip below target to 3.9% in Q2, before quickening again to 4.6% and 4.5% in Q3 and Q4, respectively.

The MPC is, however, more confident about the outlook for economic growth in the 12 months through March 2025, with the GDP expected to expand by 7% on average this year. For this it cites a multiplicity of factors: from expectations of a normal south-west monsoon, that it posits will boost agricultural activity and rural demand, to sustained momentum in the manufacturing and services sectors. It also points to the RBI's March round of the consumer confidence survey, which indicates that urban households are less pessimistic about the current situation and anticipate improvements in one year's time on all five key parameters surveyed. Monetary policymakers assert that improving incomes and a rise in readiness to spend on non-essentials augur well for a strengthening in private consumption, which has been struggling for momentum in recent quarters. It is the expectation of strong growth that gives the RBI the policy space to focus on targeting inflation, Mr. Das said. Only too aware that sticky inflation has not only dampened discretionary spending so far but also led to a sharp surge in personal loans for meeting essential expenditure, the RBI chief's determination to send the elephant back to the forest or risk seeing growth lose momentum again is well justified. Price stability can and must be non-negotiable.

Context: Recently, the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) maintained the benchmark policy repo rate at 6.5% for the seventh consecutive meeting, citing persistent food price pressures hindering efforts to achieve the 4% inflation target consistently.

Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)

- **About:** It is body created in 2016, responsible for fixing the benchmark interest rate in India.
 - Its meeting are held at least **four times a year** (specifically, at least once a quarter) and it publishes its decisions after each such meeting.
 - The committee is answerable to the government of India if the inflation exceeds the range prescribed for three consecutive quarters.
 - Current mandate: To maintain 4% annual inflation until 31 March 2026 with an upper tolerance of 6% and a lower tolerance of 2%.
- **First proposed by:** The Urjit Patel Committee.
- **Set up:** Under Section 45ZB of the RBI Act of 1934 by the Union government.
- **Composition:** It is a 6 member committee. There are in total three internal members and three external experts. The **RBI Governor and Deputy Governor are also members** of the MPC Committee.
- **Objectives:** To improve the repo rate, reverse repo rate, liquidity, etc.
- **Instruments of Committee:** Repo rate, Reverse Repo rate, Marginal Standing Facility (MSF), Bank Rate, Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR), Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR), Open Market Operations (OMOs).

Repo Rate

- **About:** The Repo Rate is the interest rate at which the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) loans money to commercial banks.
- **Role in Inflation Control:** It serves as a tool for monetary authorities to manage inflation by influencing borrowing costs for commercial banks.
- **Effect on Borrowing Behavior:** During inflationary periods, increasing the repo rate discourages banks from borrowing, thus reducing the money supply and curbing inflation.

TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE IN NORTH AMERICA: WHY IS THIS SO RARE?

SETHU PRADEEP
KOCHI, APRIL 7

ON MONDAY, a total solar eclipse will cross North America, passing over Mexico, the United States, and Canada. It will not be visible in India, but this type of solar eclipse is a rare event for any particular spot.

What is a total solar eclipse?

A solar eclipse takes place when the Moon moves in between the Earth and the Sun. The Moon blocks the Sun's light, either fully or partially, casting a huge shadow on some parts of the world.

There are four different types of solar eclipses – total solar eclipse, annular solar eclipse, partial solar eclipse, and hybrid solar eclipse.

When the Moon blocks the Sun entirely, the areas in the centre of the Moon's shadow at the time witness a total solar eclipse.

When the Moon passes in front of the Sun but is at or near the farthest point from Earth, an annular solar eclipse occurs.

A partial solar eclipse happens when the Moon blocks just a part of the Sun, giving it a crescent shape.

A hybrid solar eclipse is witnessed when an eclipse shifts between annular and total solar eclipses as the shadow of the Moon moves across the globe.

How often is a solar eclipse seen?

A solar eclipse happens only during a new Moon – when the Moon and the Sun are aligned on the same side of Earth. Although a new Moon occurs in about 29.5 days, a solar eclipse takes place only between two and five times annually. This is because the Moon does not orbit the Earth in the same plane as the Earth orbits the Sun. The Moon's orbit is tilted by about five degrees with respect to the



Total solar eclipse in Wyoming, US, on August 21, 2017. Wikimedia Commons

Earth's orbit around the Sun. As a result, usually when the Moon is in between the Sun and Earth, its shadow is either too high or too low to fall on the planet.

"If you think of the Earth's orbit around the Sun as a disk and the Moon's orbit around the Earth as another disk, there is a 5-degree angle between the two disks. However, any time you have two circles that intersect each other as the two disks do, there will be two points at which the intersection occurs. These two points on the Moon's orbit (where the Moon lies in the same plane as the Earth's orbit) are called nodes," according to a report by Pennsylvania State University. Whenever the new Moon crosses one of these nodes, there is an opportunity for a solar eclipse.

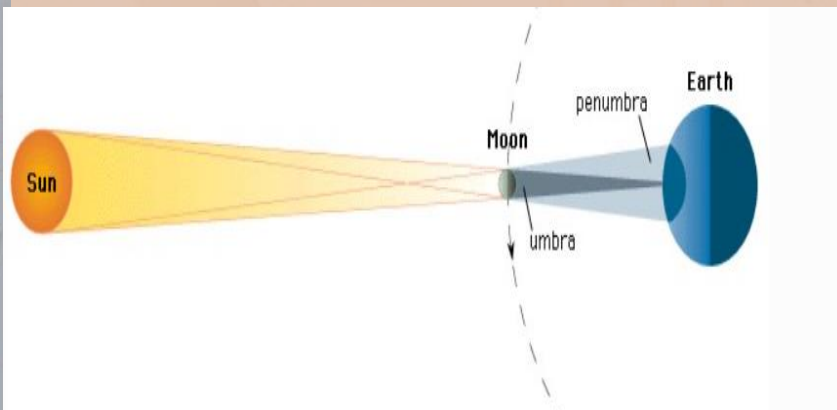
Why is a total solar eclipse so rare?

A total solar eclipse at a given spot on Earth occurs only once in about 400 years. That is because a total solar eclipse is only visible if one is standing in the umbra – the middle and the darkest part of the lunar shadow. The umbral shadow is very small, and covers less than 1% of the globe during a solar eclipse.

Context: A total solar eclipse recently crossed North America, traversing Mexico, the United States, and Canada, marking a rare occurrence for any specific location.

Solar Eclipse

- **About:** A solar eclipse occurs when the Moon comes between the Earth and the Sun, blocking the Sun's light either fully or partially.
- **Types of Solar Eclipses:**
 - **Total Solar Eclipse:** When the Moon completely blocks the Sun, casting a shadow on Earth, resulting in darkness in the area of totality.
 - **Rare Total Solar Eclipse:** While solar eclipses can happen between two and five times per year, total eclipses are rare, occurring only approximately once every 18 months.
 - **Umbra Visibility:** Total eclipses are visible only from within the umbra, the darkest part of the shadow. The penumbra, a lighter part of the shadow, does not provide the same viewing experience.
 - **Annular Solar Eclipse:** When the Moon covers the Sun's center but leaves its outer edges visible, creating a "ring of fire" effect.
 - **Partial Solar Eclipse:** When only a part of the Sun is obscured by the Moon from the perspective of an observer on Earth.
 - **Hybrid Solar Eclipse:** A rare type of eclipse that appears as a total eclipse in some places and annular in others, depending on the viewer's location.



Frequency of Solar Eclipses

- **Occurrence during New Moon:** Solar eclipses happen when the Moon and Sun align during the new moon phase, occurring approximately every 29.5 days due to the lunar orbit around Earth.
- **Nodes and Line of Nodes:** The points where the Moon's orbit intersects Earth's orbital plane, known as nodes, determine the possibility of solar eclipses.
- The line connecting these nodes, called the line of nodes, creates the opportunities for eclipses when the new moon passes through them.

US pushes to expand AUKUS security pact to deter China: FT

China has called the AUKUS pact dangerous, warning it could spur regional arms race

Reuters
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LONDON

The US, Britain and Australia are set to begin talks on bringing new members into their AUKUS security pact as Washington pushes for Japan to be involved as a deterrent against China, the *Financial Times* reported.

The countries' defence ministers will announce discussions on Monday on "Pillar Two" of the pact, which commits the members to jointly developing quantum computing, undersea, hypersonic, artificial intelligence and cyber technology, the newspaper reported on Saturday, citing people familiar with the situation.

They are not considering expanding the first pillar, which is designed to deliver nuclear-powered attack submarines to Australia, the *FT* said.

AUKUS, formed by the three countries in 2021,

is part of their efforts to push back against China's growing power in the Indo-Pacific region. China has called the AUKUS pact dangerous and warned it could spur a regional arms race.

US President Joe Biden has sought to step up partnerships with US allies in Asia, including Japan and the Philippines, amid China's historic military build-up and its growing territorial assertiveness.

Rahm Emanuel, the US ambassador in Tokyo, wrote in an opinion piece in the *Wall Street Journal* on Wednesday that Japan was "about to become the first additional Pillar II partner".

A senior US administration official told *Reuters* on Wednesday that some sort of announcement could be expected in the coming week about

Japan's involvement but gave no details.

Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida will likely discuss expanding AUKUS to include Japan when the president hosts the prime minister in Washington on Wednesday, a person with knowledge of the talks said.

Biden has sought to step up partnerships with US allies in Asia, like Japan and Philippines, amid China's growing territorial assertiveness

Australia, however, is wary of beginning new projects until more progress has been made on supplying Canberra with nuclear-powered submarines, said the

person, who asked not to be identified because they are not authorized to speak to the media.

A spokesperson for the White House National Security Council and China's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the *FT* report.

Context: Recently, the U.S., Britain, and Australia have initiated discussions about expanding their AUKUS security agreement by considering new members, with Washington advocating for Japan's inclusion to serve as a deterrent against China.

AUKUS

- **About:** It is a trilateral security partnership for the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Members:** Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
- **Established in:** 2021.
- **Objective:** The partnership involves the US and the UK assisting Australia in acquiring nuclear-powered submarines.
- **Cooperation:** Cooperation on advanced cyber mechanisms, artificial intelligence and autonomy, quantum technologies, undersea capabilities, hypersonic and counter-hypersonic, electronic warfare, innovation and information sharing.

Significance of AUKUS

- **Promotion of Regional Freedom:** AUKUS is geared towards upholding freedom and openness in the Indo-Pacific, particularly in areas like the South China Sea.
- **Countering China's Ambitions:** The partnership serves to bolster Australia's naval strength, presenting a challenge to China's hegemonic aspirations in the region.
- **Enhanced Military Coordination:** Operationalizing AUKUS will foster closer military coordination among participating nations, enhancing regional security.
- **Mitigating China's Encirclement of India:** AUKUS could alleviate some of China's encirclement tactics against India by strengthening strategic alliances in the Indo-Pacific.

Right against adverse effects of climate change part of rights to life, equality: SC

States owe a duty of care to citizens... right to a healthy, clean environment part of this duty: Court

ANANTHAKRISHNAN G
NEW DELHI, APRIL 7

IN A significant ruling, the Supreme Court has expanded the scope of Articles 14 and 21 to include the "right against the adverse effects of climate change".

"Article 48A of the Constitution provides that the State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country. Clause (g) of Article 51A stipulates that it shall be the duty of every citizen

of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife, and to have compassion for living creatures. Although these are not justiciable provisions of the Constitution, they are indications that the Constitution recognises the importance of the natural world," a three-judge bench presided by Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud has said.

"The importance of the environment, as indicated by these provisions, becomes a right in other parts of the Constitution.



CJ D Y Chandrachud wrote the ruling for the bench

Article 21 recognises the right to life and personal liberty while Article 14 indicates that all persons shall have equality before law and the equal protection of laws. These Articles are important sources of the right to a clean environment and the right against the adverse effects of climate change," it said.

While the bench, also comprising Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, gave the ruling on March 21, the detailed order was only uploaded on Saturday evening.

"Despite governmental policy and rules and regulations recognising the adverse effects of climate change and seeking to combat it, there is no single or umbrella legislation in India which relates to climate change and the attendant concerns," the court noted. "However, this does

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

EXPLAINED
E Expanding scope

THE SUPREME Court has, from time to time, expanded the fundamental rights chapter to include various facets of a dignified existence. However, this is the first time that it has included the "right against the adverse effects of climate change".

- **Right to Life and Liberty:** Article 21 safeguards life and personal liberty, evolving through liberal interpretations by the Supreme Court.
 - Interpretations of Article 21 have broadened to include the right to a healthy environment, ensuring human dignity.
- **Recognition in Legal Precedent:** Legal cases like Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra vs. State and M.C. Mehta vs. Union of India have recognized the right to a pollution-free environment as part of Article 21.
- **Impact of Public Interest Litigation:** PIL empowered by Article 32 and 226 of the Indian constitution has sparked a significant wave of environmental litigation.
- **Article 51-A (g):** It deals with Fundamental Duties of the citizens states: "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures."

Context: Recently, in a significant ruling, the Supreme Court has extended the scope of Articles 14 and 21 to encompass the "right against the adverse effects of climate change."

Environment Protection under Constitutional Framework of India

- **Environment in Legislation:** The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 defines environment inclusively, considering the interrelationships among water, air, land, human beings, and other living organisms.
- **Fundamental Duties Regarding Environmental Protection:** The Indian Constitution's chapter on fundamental duties imposes the duty on citizens to protect the environment, emphasizing compassion for all living creatures.
- **Article 48:** It emphasizes the organization of agriculture and animal husbandry, with provisions for the preservation of breeds and prohibition of slaughter.
 - Article 48-A stresses the state's duty to protect and improve the environment, safeguarding forests and wildlife.
- **Article 14:** It implicitly imposes an obligation on the state to exercise fairness in its environmental protection measures.
- **Article 19 (1) (g):** Any business or trade which is offensive to flora and fauna or human beings cannot be permitted to be carried on in the name of fundamental right.

Launch of AgniKul 'Agnibaan SOrTeD' mission postponed for second time

Context: For the second time, the launch of AgniKul 'Agnibaan SOrTeD' has been postponed.

Agnibaan SOrTeD

- **About:** It represents a breakthrough in rocket technology, being a single-stage launch vehicle powered by AgniKul's patented Agnilet engine.
- **Full form:** Agnibaan SubOrbital Technological Demonstrator.
- **Pioneering 3D Printing:** It boasts the distinction of being the world's first single-piece 3D printed semi-cryogenic rocket engine, showcasing advancements in manufacturing techniques.
- **Launchpad Location:** Scheduled for liftoff from India's premier private launchpad, ALP-01, situated within ISRO's Sriharikota spaceport, marking a significant milestone in private space exploration.
- **Key Features of Agnibaan SOrTeD**
 - **Indigenous Propulsion System:** Equipped with India's first semi-cryogenic engine, the Agnilet, utilizing a subcooled liquid oxygen-based propulsion system, showcasing technological self-reliance.
 - **Versatile Payload Capacity:** Capable of carrying a 100-kg payload to heights of 700 km, with a lift-off mass of 14,000 kgs, enabling diverse mission objectives.
 - **Orbital Accessibility:** Can access both low- and high-inclination orbits, providing flexibility in mission planning, and is characterized by its mobility.
 - **Cutting-Edge Avionics:** Incorporates Ethernet-based avionics architecture and fully in-house developed autopilot software, marking a paradigm shift in control systems.

PSBs may be allowed to transfer unclaimed shares to IEPF

HARSH KUMAR
New Delhi, 7 April

The finance ministry is considering amending the Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act, 1970, which governs public-sector banks (PSBs), to make suitable provisions for allowing PSBs to transfer shares to the Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF) when dividends of such shares remain unclaimed by the investors for seven consecutive years.

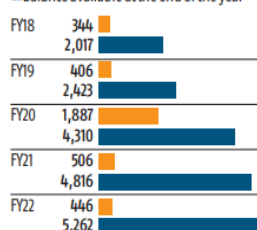
"While Section 10B of the Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act, 1970, allows the transfer of unclaimed dividends to the IEPF, it, however, does not mention a provision for transferring unclaimed shares and may now be amended by the next government to allow such transfers to happen," said a person familiar with the matter. An email query sent to the finance ministry remained unanswered until the time of going to press.

IEPF was established for the promo-

SHARE TRANSFERS TO IEPF

(Figures are rounded off, in ₹ crore)

■ Transferred by companies during the year
■ Balance available at the end of the year



Source: Annual Report 2021-22 IEPF

tion of investor awareness and protection of their interests. Unclaimed dividends and shares transferred to IEPF can be easily claimed by the investor by submitting the required documents and following the verification process.

Turn to Page 3 ▶

Context: The finance ministry is currently contemplating recent amendments to the Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act, 1970, to enable public sector banks (PSBs) to transfer shares to the Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF) if dividends from those shares remain unclaimed by investors for seven consecutive years.

Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA)

- **About:** The Authority is entrusted with the responsibility of administration of the Investor Education Protection Fund (IEPF), make refunds of shares, unclaimed dividends, matured deposits/debentures etc. to investors and to promote awareness among investors.
- **Established:** In 2016 under the Companies Act, 2013.
- It is a special organization set up by the government because of a law called the Companies Act 2013.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Corporate Affairs
- It takes care of a fund that's made to help and educate people who invest money. This fund is called the Investor Education and Protection Fund.
- **Objective:** To spread knowledge and awareness among investors, and to keep them safe from any problems that might come up.

Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Act, 1970

- **About:** The Act focuses on acquiring and transferring specific banking companies, considering factors like resources, coverage, and size, to regulate economic growth and align with national policy objectives.
- **Purpose of the Amendment:** It aims to control economic fluctuations and effectively cater to the evolving needs of economic development in alignment with national policies and objectives.
- **Scope:** The Act covers the acquisition and transfer of certain banking companies, emphasizing their significance in economic development and national objectives.
- **Implementation:** Except for section 21, the provisions of this Act were enforced on July 19, 1969, to initiate the regulatory measures outlined within it.

In Sittwe, govt secures 2nd overseas port

MEA approved a proposal to take over the ops of the entire port in Myanmar



Sittwe port in May last year

PHOTO: PIB

ECONOMY WATCHMAN

new Delhi, 1 April

After Chabahar, India has gained the rights to operate a second overseas port, Sittwe, in Myanmar. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has approved a proposal for India Ports Global (IPGL) to take over the operations of the entire port located on the Kaladan River.

IPGL is a company 300 per cent owned by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.

In the Indian Ocean, China and India are engaged in a struggle to expand their economic influence. Ports have become highly significant in this rivalry. China, in particular, has been aggressively seeking to acquire operating rights for overseas ports in different countries in the region, such as Hambantota in Sri Lanka and Djibouti in Africa. It has also approached Maldives and Bangladesh to invest in their ports, all of which raise serious concerns for India.

Sittwe began receiving cargo from India in May last year. The first consignment of cargo sailed from Sittwe to Mookerjee Port in Kolkata to the port in Myanmar's Rakhine state and was received by Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal and his Myanmar counterpart Admiral Tin Aung San. The port offers a significant connectivity advantage for cargo to reach from Vizag and Kolkata to the Northeastern states, bypassing Bangladesh.

The MEA approval means the port will now become an India-operated entity. On the financial front, it is expected that IPGL will encourage transactions in the Indian rupee among traders using the port. MEA did not respond to queries sent from Business Standard.

IPGL will operate the port with full rights, similar to any other Indian domestic port. The Sittwe deal is more significant than Chabahar, where IPGL has rights to operate only two terminals and not the port itself.

The Sittwe deal is a long-term one, to be renewed every three years.

Under the agreement, IPGL will raise finance to develop the port, which was initially built with a \$500 million grant-in-aid from India. Situated on the Kaladan River delta, the port has the potential to accom-

WHY SITTWE MATTERS

► Sittwe started receiving cargo from India in May last year.

► The port offers a huge connectivity advantage for cargo to reach from Vizag and Kolkata to the Northeast, bypassing Bangladesh.

► IPGL will operate the port, with full rights similar to any other Indian domestic port.

► It is expected that IPGL will encourage transactions in Indian rupees among traders using the port.

moderate deeper sea vessels. Cargo made possible between India and Myanmar are limited to construction materials such as cement, steel, and bricks from India, while imports from Myanmar include rice, timber, fish, and seafood. These could move shift to higher value-added products as the port expands.

The Indian state poised to benefit immediately are Mizoram and Tripura. Presently, Indian cargoes travelling to these destinations have to pass through Bangladesh, mainly the Chittagong port.

This scenario could change soon. "The development of Sittwe port required a dedicated user agency, which has not been possible so far. IPGL will fill that vacuum with long-term planning," said a senior official of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.

This port is part of the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project. Once operationalised, the Sittwe port will enable multimodal transit connectivity with Southeast Asia.

Sittwe Port has been developed under a framework agreement between India and Myanmar for the construction and operation of a Multimodal Transit Transport Facility on the Kaladan River, connecting the Sittwe Port in Myanmar with the state of Mizoram in India.

The approval is also significant for IPGL. In other respects, the official said, it clarifies that this company will now spearhead India's overseas port development initiatives. Tanzania, for instance, has requested India's support to develop the potential of its ports.

Context: After Chabahar, India has gained the rights to operate a **second overseas port, Sittwe, in Myanmar.**

Sittwe Port

- **About:** Located in Myanmar's Rakhine state, Sittwe Port is a deep-sea port on the Bay of Bengal, jointly inaugurated by India and Myanmar.
- **Kaladan Multimodal Project:** Sittwe Port forms a crucial part of the ambitious Kaladan Multimodal Project.
 - The port is expected to enhance trade connectivity and foster people-to-people relations between India, Myanmar, and the wider South Asian region.
- **Stimulating Economic Growth:** The port is also anticipated to stimulate economic growth in India's North Eastern region, aligning with the government's Act East policy.
- **Gateway to South East Asia:** Moreover, Sittwe Port is poised to serve as India's gateway to South East Asia, which could catalyze regional growth and development.
- **Connectivity Components:** From Sittwe Port, the route extends to Paletwa in Myanmar through an inland waterway and from Paletwa to Zorinpui in Mizoram via a road component.
- **Development Under KMTTP:** Sittwe Port has been developed as a part of the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (KMTTP), funded under grant-in-aid assistance from the Government of India.
- **Operational Significance:** Once fully operationalized, the waterway and road components of KMTTP will link the East coast of India to the North-eastern states through the Sittwe port.
- **Alternative Connectivity Route:** This project was conceptualized to provide an alternative connectivity of Mizoram with Haldia / Kolkata / any Indian ports through Kaladan River in Myanmar.

Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project



WHY SITTWE MATTERS

► Sittwe started receiving cargo from India in May last year

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EC data show number of women candidates grew 16-fold from 1957 to 2019

Figures show number of women candidates has never crossed 1,000, flagging lack of political will. Centre for Social Research director says parties give fewer opportunities, harder seats to women

NUMBER THEORY

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

In 1957, there were just 45 women candidates contesting the Lok Sabha election; by 2019, this figure had risen to 726. Election Commission data show: The percentage of women in Parliament has increased from 4.5% in 1957 to 14.4% in 2019. The number of male candidates, on the other hand, has grown from 1,474 in 1957 to 7,322 in 2019.

This means that the number of men contesting has multiplied five times; for women, the growth has been 16-fold.

In 1957, a mere 2.9% of candidates were women; in 2019, they made up around 9% of the total pool of candidates. However, the number of women candidates has never yet crossed 1,000.

Gender-wise data are not available for the first Lok Sabha election in 1952.

A perusal of the EC data shows that in the second

Women legislators

The chart shows the share of women in Lok Sabha (left-axis) and the number of women contestants (right-axis) over time



Lok Sabha election in 1957, of the 45 women candidates in the fray, 22 won, indicating a 48.88% success rate. That has declined consistently ever since; in 2019, women's success rate was just 10.74%, as only 78 of the 726 women candidates won their seats.

In the case of male candidates, their winning percentage dropped from 31.7% in 1957 to just 6.4% in 2019. This is not, however, a marker for any trends in the winnability of men and women; it simply reflects

the fact that the number of candidates of both sexes has grown even as the number of seats in the Lok Sabha remained the same, experts note.

"This just shows the maturing of the Indian democracy and the fact that more and more women are entering the fray," says political analyst Tara Krishnaswamy, co-founder of the NGO Political Shakti.

On the huge gap between the numbers of women and men candidates, experts say that women have much fewer oppor-

tunities to contest. "The winnability of women is higher, but there is a lack of will among parties to give them opportunities to contest," says Ranjana Kumari, women's rights activist and the director of the Centre for Social Research. Even when they do, she says, "parties generally give more difficult seats to women. They may be put up against strong candidates or those who can be categorised as having more muscle and money power." There is thus no level playing field, she says.

Women Representation in Lok Sabha

- **Historical Success Rates:** In 1957, 48.88% of women candidates won, whereas in 2019, it dropped to 10.74%.
- **Declining Male Success:** Male candidates' winning percentage decreased from 31.7% in 1957 to 6.4% in 2019.
- **Changing Dynamics:** The increase in the number of candidates of both sexes contrasts with the stagnant number of Lok Sabha seats.
- **Challenges from Political Parties:** Women's rights activist notes political parties' reluctance to offer opportunities to women, often assigning them difficult seats.

Women's Reservation Act, 2023

- **Reservation of Seat :** Reservation of one-third of all seats for women in Lok Sabha, state legislative assemblies, and the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi.
- **Rotation of Seats:** The act proposes the rotation of seats reserved for women after each delimitation, as determined by a law made by Parliament.
- **Duration:** The reservation will be provided for a period of 15 years. However, it shall continue till such date as determined by a law made by Parliament.
- **Current Representation:**
 - Women constitute 15% of the 17th Lok Sabha and approximately 9% on average in state legislative assemblies.
 - The 2015 Report on the Status of Women in India highlighted the inadequate representation of women in political decision-making roles and within political parties.

Context: Recently, according to Election Commission data, the number of women candidates contesting the Lok Sabha election has significantly risen, from just 45 in 1957 to 726 in 2019, reflecting a notable increase in the percentage of women in Parliament from 4.5% in 1957 to 14.4% in 2019.

Delhi HC declares Haldiram as well-known trademark, says brand 'deeply rooted in India's rich culinary tradition'

Context: Delhi High Court declared Haldiram and its oval-shaped logo as well-known trademark for food items, restaurants, and eateries under the Trade Marks Act, 1999.

Well-Known Trademarks

- **About:** These are an essential tool for businesses to protect their brand identity and reputation.
- **Legal Protection:** The Trade Marks Act, 1999, ensures legal protection for well-known trademarks, obligating the Registrar to safeguard them against similar trademarks.
 - Once recognized as well-known, owners gain the right to prevent others from registering or using identical or similar marks for different goods and services.
- **Brand Value:** Well-known marks enhance brand value and reputation in the market, solidifying consumer trust and loyalty.
- **Licensing Opportunity:** Owners can license or franchise well-known marks to other entities, expanding their market reach and revenue streams.
- **Criteria for Recognition:** The Indian Trademarks Act outlines various criteria for determining well-known status, including recognition among the public, duration and extent of use and promotion, and distinctiveness.
- **Registrar's Role:** The Registrar of Trade Marks maintains a list of famous trademarks in India, encompassing both domestic and international brands, facilitating legal processes and protection.

Trademark

- **About:** It is a distinctive sign or indicator utilized by a business organization.
- **Purpose:** It distinguishes the products or services of one entity from others in the market.
- **Role as a Badge of Origin:** A trademark serves as a badge of origin, exclusively identifying a particular business.

Bose, Barkatullah, a history of Indian governments before freedom

ARJUN SENGUPTA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 7

ACTOR KANAKA Ranaut, the BJP candidate from Mandi, has claimed that Subhas Chandra Bose, not Jawaharlal Nehru, was the first Prime Minister of India, citing the provisional government of "Free India" declared by Bose in Singapore during World War II.

Azad Hind government

Bose travelled to Germany in 1941 hoping for a collaboration to overthrow the British in India, and then to Japan in 1943, from where he arrived in Singapore. There, on October 21, 1943, he proclaimed the Provisional Government of Azad Hind (Free India).

"In the name of God, in the name of bygone generations who have welded the Indian people into one nation, and in the name of the dead heroes who have bequeathed us a tradition of heroism and self-sacrifice — we call upon the Indian people to rally round our banner and strike for India's freedom," Bose said. (Quoted in Sugata Bose's *His Majesty's Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India's Struggle Against Empire*, 2011).

Bose was head of state of Azad Hind, and also held the foreign affairs and war portfolios. A C Chatterjee was in charge of finance, S A Ayer was minister of publicity and propaganda, and Lakshmi Swami-

nathan had the ministry of women's affairs.

The Azad Hind government claimed authority over all Indian civilian and military personnel in Britain's Southeast Asian colonies (primarily Burma, Singapore, and Malaya) which had fallen into Japanese hands during the War. It also claimed prospective authority over all Indian territory that would be taken by Japanese forces and the Azad Hind Fauj as they attacked British India from its Northeastern frontier.

Bose obtained legal control over the Andamans, which established the legitimacy of the provisional government — much like Charles de Gaulle's declaration of sovereignty of the Free France government over some islands in the Atlantic after the fall of France.

"It (the Azad Hind government) obtained *de jure* control over a piece of Indian territory when the Japanese handed over the Andaman and Nicobar islands in late December 1943, though *de facto* military control was not relinquished by the Japanese admiralty," Sugata Bose wrote.

The provisional government also gave citizenship to Indians living in Southeast Asia. Sugata Bose wrote that 300,000 Indians pledged allegiance to Azad Hind in Malaya alone.

The Azad Hind government was recognised by the Axis powers and their satellites: Germany, Japan, Italy, as well as Nazi and Japanese puppet states in Croatia, China, Thailand, Burma, Manchuria, and the Phil-



(From left) Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, and Barkatullah. Wikimedia Commons

ippines. Immediately after its formation, it joined the Axis powers and declared war on Britain and the United States.

But Bose wasn't the first

Twenty-eight years before the Azad Hind government came into existence, a Provisional Government of India had been formed in Kabul by a group known as

**EXPLAINED
HISTORY**

the Indian Independence Committee (IIC). During World War I, Indian nationalists based mainly in Germany and the US, as well as revolutionaries and pan-Islamists from India, attempted to further the cause of Indian independence with aid from the Central Powers — the alliance of Germany, Austria-

throwing British rule in India. Lala Har Dayal, one of the movement's leaders, put forth the following plan of action for Ghadarites:

"Use the freedom that is available in the US to fight the British... British rule must be overthrown, not by petitions but by armed revolt... Carry this message to the masses and to the soldiers in the Indian Army. Enlist their support."

While the movement was crushed in India by the end of the War, the Ghadarites left a powerful and lasting impression on both Indians and the British. "If success and failure are to be measured in terms of the deepening of nationalist consciousness, the evolution and testing of new strategies and methods of struggle, the creation of tradition of resistance, of secularism, of democracy, and of egalitarianism, then, the Ghadarites certainly contributed their share to the struggle for India's freedom," Bipan

Chandra and others wrote in *India's Struggle for Independence* (1988).

The Kabul Provisional Government was one of many moves by revolutionaries with links to the Ghadar movement and the San Francisco-based Ghadar Party.

Acts of defiance, patriotism

Setting up provisional governments and governments-in-exile has long been a way for resistance movements to claim political legitimacy. These are not actual govern-

ments, even though they are powerful symbols of hope for the people they represent.

Both the 1915 and 1943 provisional governments were, more than anything else, symbolic acts of defiance against British rule in India. In the present time, a major purpose of the Tibetan government-in-exile in Dharamshala is to keep the symbolic flame of resistance of the Tibetan people burning outside Tibet.

By proclaiming the Azad Hind government, Bose gave his army legitimacy in international law. The oaths of allegiance taken by officers of the Azad Hind Fauj were produced during the 1945-46 Red Fort trials as evidence of the legality of their actions.

That said, neither of the two provisional governments can in any seriousness be called the "Government of India". This is for two reasons.

First, neither of these governments gained wide international recognition. While some countries did recognise and support them, they did so for their own motives. After the wars, this support vanished.

Second, these governments never controlled Indian territory. Even as Bose held the Andamans, the islands were effectively under Japanese occupation. So was all the territory in the Northeast captured briefly by the combined Indian and Japanese armies. The Kabul government never set foot on Indian soil.

Context: In a recent interview, the ruling party candidate claimed that Subhas Chandra Bose, not Jawaharlal Nehru, was the first prime minister of independent India.

Azad Hind Government

- **About:** On October 21, 1943, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose announced the establishment of the 'Arzi Hukumat-e-Azad Hind' or the provincial government of free India in Singapore.
- **Leadership Roles:** Within the provisional Government, Bose held multiple positions, serving as the Head of State, Prime Minister, and Minister of War.
- **Women's Organization:** Captain Lakshmi led the women's organization, while SA Ayer headed the publicity wing within the newly formed government.
- **Supreme Adviser:** Revolutionary leader Ras Behari Bose was appointed as the supreme adviser by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.
- **Support from Axis Powers:** The government garnered support from the Axis powers, including Imperial Japan, Nazi Germany, the Italian Social Republic, and their allies.
- **Proclamation of Authority:** The Azad Hind government swiftly asserted authority over Indian civilian and military personnel in Southeast Asian British colonial territory after its formation.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose

- **About:** Subhas Chandra Bose, an Indian nationalist leader, played a pivotal role in the country's struggle for independence against British colonial rule.
- **Early Life:** Born on January 23, 1897, in Cuttack, Orissa, Bose showed early signs of leadership and commitment to the cause of India's freedom.
- **Forward Bloc:** In 1939, Bose established the Forward Bloc, an organization aimed at uniting all anti-British forces in India.
- **Formation of Indian National Army (INA):** With Japanese assistance, Bose reorganized and led the Indian National Army, comprised of Indian prisoners-of-war and plantation workers from Southeast Asia, against British forces.
- **Death:** Subhas Chandra Bose is believed to have died on August 18, 1945, in a plane crash over Taiwan.

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