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Growth and comfort do not coexist.

Ginni Rometty



India, France finalise deal for 26 Rafale-M aircraft

Dinakar Peri

NEW DELHI

India and France on Monday formally concluded an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA), valued at nearly ₹64,000 crore, to procure 26 Rafale-M fighter jets for the Indian Navy. Deliveries are set to begin from mid-2028 and likely to be completed by 2030.

The IGA was signed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Minister of Armed Forces of France Sébastien Lecornu remotely.

“The deal includes training, simulator, associated equipment, weapons, and performance-based logistics. It also includes additional equipment for the existing Rafale fleet of the Indian Air Force,” a Defence Ministry statement said, adding that the crew will undergo training in France and India. The IGA also includes transfer of technology for the integration of



Deliveries are set to begin from mid-2028 and likely to be completed by 2030. DINAKAR PERI

indigenous weapons, such as the Astra Beyond Visual Range air-to-air missile, on the Rafale jets.

“The delivery of these aircraft would be completed by 2030, with the crew undergoing training in France and India,” the Defence Ministry statement said.

Thousands of jobs

“It also includes the setting up of production facility for Rafale Fuselage as well as Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facilities for aircraft engine, sen-

sors and weapons in India,” the statement said, adding that the deal is expected to generate thousands of jobs and revenue for a large number of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

The French Defence Minister was scheduled to visit India to sign the deal, but the visit was deferred due to personal reasons. Hence, the signing of the IGA was done by the two Ministers remotely.

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Fact

- **Designed and built by Dassault Aviation, a French aerospace company.**

Features:

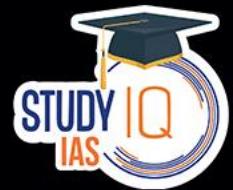
- Multi-role, single-seat fighter aircraft with advanced avionics and AESA radar.
- Capable of deep strikes, air defense, reconnaissance, and maritime operations.
- Heavier airframe due to additional reinforcements for naval operations.
- Optimized radar and electronic warfare systems for maritime applications.
- The Dassault Rafale is a versatile 4.5 generation multirole combat aircraft serving as the backbone of the French Air Force and Navy.
- India signed an agreement with France in 2016 for the swift procurement of 36 Rafales to augment the Indian Air Force's depleting fighter squadrons.

Fact

- It has a maximum speed of Mach 1.8 and a combat radius of 1000+ km. Rafale's advanced avionics provide superior situational awareness and survivability.
- **Rafale C:** The single-seat Air Force variant has 75% fleet availability and is designed for high mission reliability.
- **Rafale B:** The twin-seat variant for training and enhanced situational awareness. It retains the combat capabilities of the C model.
- **Rafale M:** The naval variant is optimized for carrier operations with a reinforced nose and tail and specially designed landing gear. It equips the French Navy's aircraft carrier, Charles de Gaulle.

Fact

- The deal includes 22 single-seater Rafale-M jets for carrier operations and 4 twin-seater trainer variants, which are non-carrier compatible.
- The jets are meant to operate from INS Vikramaditya and INS Vikrant, India's two operational aircraft carriers.
- The agreement is expected to be signed during the upcoming visit of the French Defence Minister.
- Capable of Sps up to Mach 1.8 and a combat radius exceeding 1000 km.
- Designed for air superiority, ground support, reconnaissance, and anti-ship missions.



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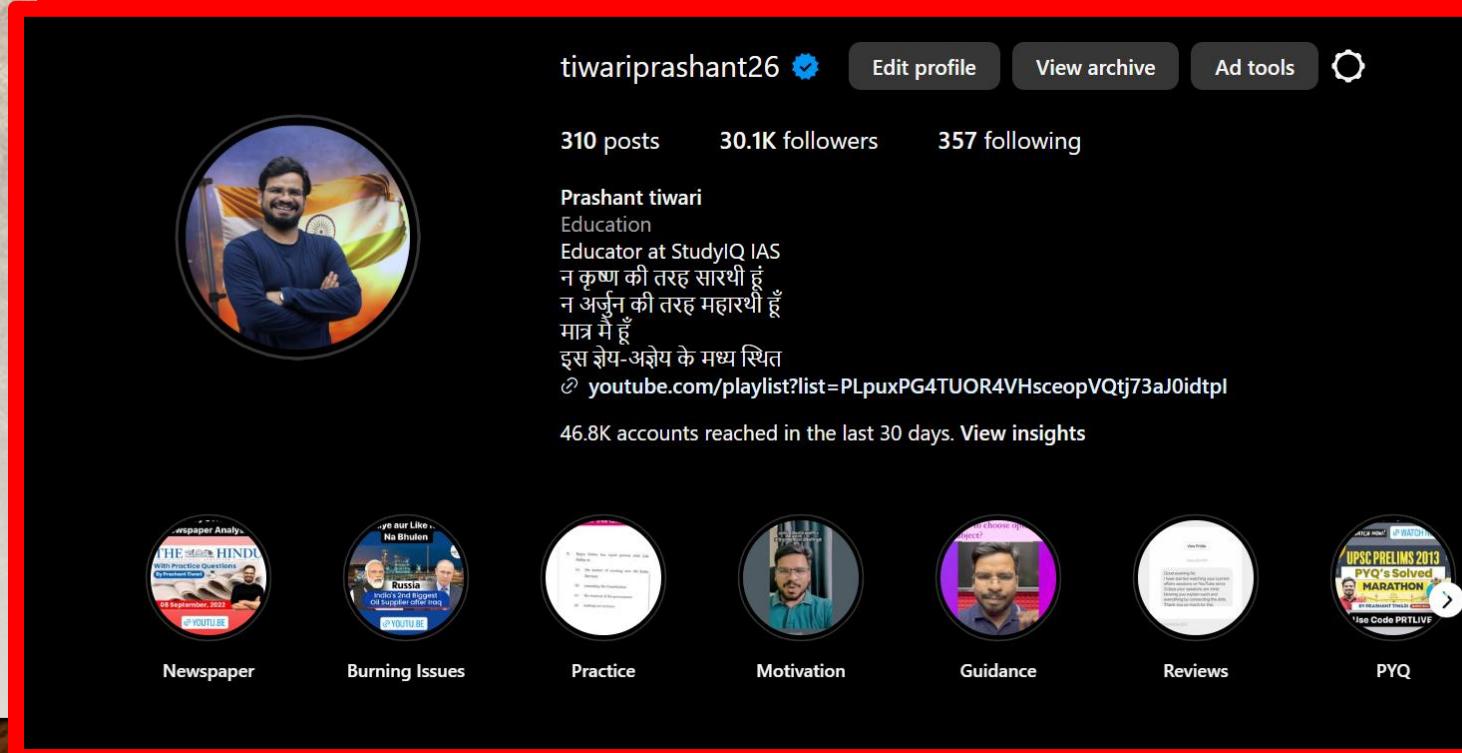


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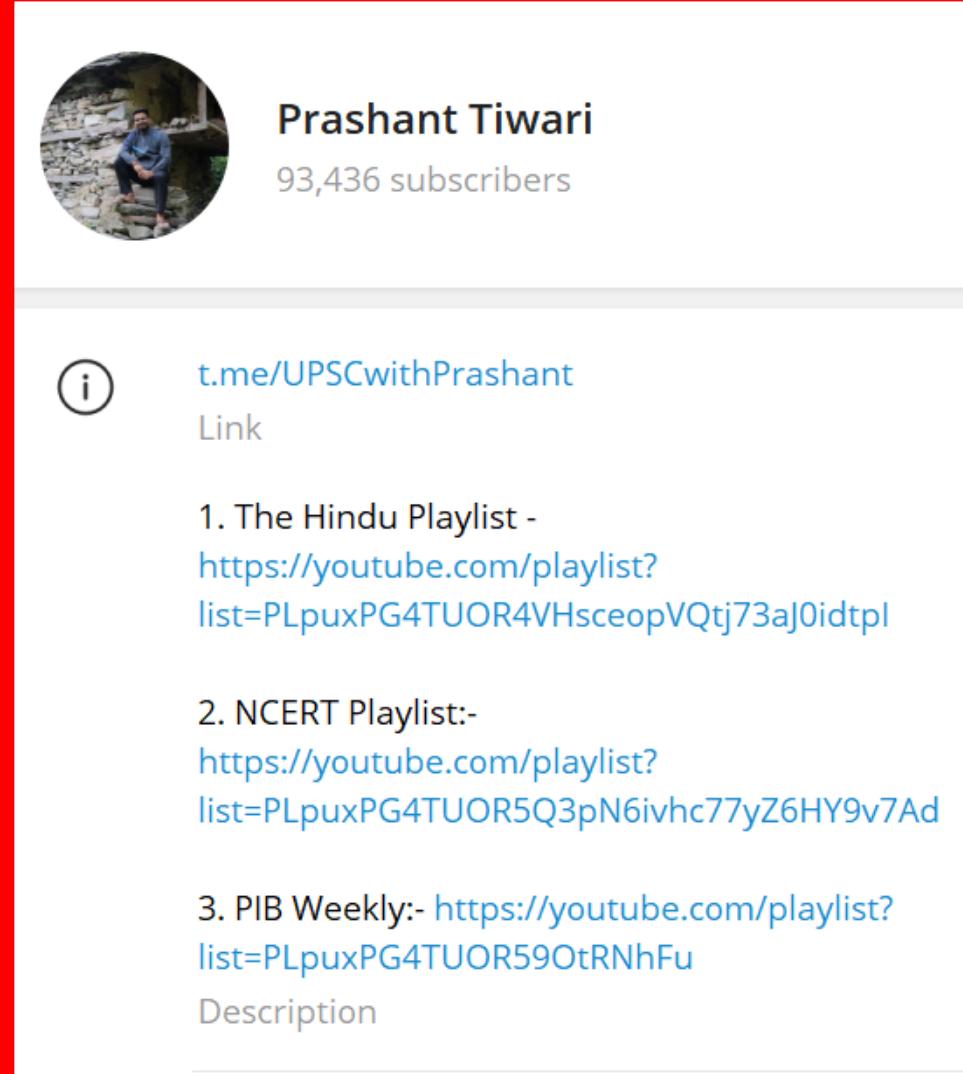
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Description

At 3% growth in March, IIP falls behind estimates

Ashokamithran T.

MUMBAI

The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) grew 3% as electricity and manufacturing sector production surged in March 2025, according to data from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The number was lower than the *Reuters* estimate of 3.3%.

On a year-on-year basis, IIP growth came in at 4%, making it the slowest in four years. Growth in capital goods output increased at a slower 2.4% in March, compared with 8.1% in the month before. Industrial growth has domestic tailwinds but will face global headwinds, say experts.

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FULL REPORT ON

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- **The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is a key statistical tool used to measure the short-term changes in the volume of production in Indian industries.**
- **It provides insight into the growth or contraction of industrial activity over a given period, making it a crucial economic performance indicator.**
- **The IIP is published by the Central Statistics Office(CSO), which is part of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).**
- **The current base year for the index is 2011–12. This base year was adopted to reflect modern industrial structure and production patterns, following periodic revisions from earlier base years such as 1937, 1946, 1951, 1956, and so on.**
- **Sectoral Composition of IIP (Weight-wise):**
- **Manufacturing: 77.63% of total weight (809 items)**
- **Mining: 14.37% (29 items)**
- **Electricity: 7.99% (1 item)**

Fact

- **Sectoral Growth (Year-on-Year in February)**
- **Mining:** Slowed sharply to 1.6%, down from 8.1% in Feb 2024.
- **Manufacturing:** Grew at 2.9%, lower than 4.9% a year ago.
- **Electricity:** Output growth dropped to 3.6% from 7.6% in Feb 2024.
- Listed in decreasing order of weightage:
 - **Refinery Products**
 - **Electricity**
 - **Steel**
 - **Coal**
 - **Crude Oil**
 - **Natural Gas**
 - **Cement**
 - **Fertilisers**

The post of Deputy Speaker is not symbolic or optional

The Office of the Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha is not merely a ceremonial seat but also a constitutional imperative. Mandated under Article 93 of the Constitution of India, this role is not just supplementary to the Speaker's. It is vital for the uninterrupted functioning of the lower House of Parliament. However, in recent years, the Deputy Speaker's position has fallen into unusual and troubling neglect.

Article 93 clearly states: "The House of the People shall, as soon as may be, choose two members of the House to be respectively Speaker and Deputy Speaker...."

The phrasing "as soon as may be" implies urgency, and not discretion. The Deputy Speaker's role is not optional; the Constitution places this office on an equal footing with the Speaker in terms of its necessity to the parliamentary structure. Article 94 states that the Deputy Speaker remains in office until they resign, are removed, or cease to be a Member of Parliament.

The intent is clear: the Lok Sabha must never function without a second-in-command, a constitutional safeguard to ensure continuity, stability, and institutional balance.

The roots of this office can be traced back to the colonial period. The position originated in the Central Legislative Assembly under British rule, where it was known as the Deputy President. The first to hold the office was Sachidanand Sinha in 1921. By the time India achieved independence in 1947, the Deputy Speaker had already become an institutional fixture in legislative governance.

Post-Independence, during the Constituent Assembly (Legislative) sessions, a deliberate decision was made to maintain the role even before the Constitution was fully adopted in 1950. The first elected Deputy Speaker of India's Lok Sabha was M.A. Ayyangar, a respected parliamentarian who also served as the acting Speaker following the sudden death of Speaker G.V. Mavalankar in 1956. His appointment during a crisis established a precedent for the Deputy Speaker's importance as a ready and capable replacement.

Relevance in parliamentary practice

While the Speaker is the presiding authority of the House, no Speaker can physically preside over every session in its entirety. As noted by



Vinod Bhanu

is Executive Director of the Centre for Legislative Research and Advocacy (CLRA), New Delhi



Ravindra Garimella

is the former Joint Secretary (Legislation), Lok Sabha, and currently Secretary to the Leader of Opposition, Rajya Sabha

That the post remains vacant is a constitutional anomaly and an active sidelining of consensus politics

constitutional expert S.C. Kashyap in *Dada Saheb Mavalankar: Father of Lok Sabha*, the Speaker cannot chair proceedings for hours on end. The Deputy Speaker steps in during such absences, ensuring that proceedings continue without procedural disruption.

But the Deputy Speaker's role extends beyond simply "filling in". They can chair important sessions, preside over specific committees, and even handle sensitive debates that require a neutral and trusted authority. Notably, the Deputy Speaker, like the Speaker, is expected to act impartially once elected, regardless of party affiliation.

Historically, this office has also held symbolic importance in fostering bipartisan respect. A long-standing convention – though not legally binding – has been to offer the post of Deputy Speaker to the Opposition. This not only balanced power within the House but also helped to build trust and cooperation across the aisle. It has been a vital practice in reinforcing the non-partisan ethos that the Speaker's office aims to uphold.

A growing constitutional vacuum

Despite its clear constitutional basis and historic continuity, the Deputy Speaker's office has remained vacant for the entire term of the 17th Lok Sabha (2019-2024). As of this writing, the 18th Lok Sabha, formed after the 2024 general election, has also yet to elect a Deputy Speaker. This is not a procedural lapse; it is a constitutional anomaly.

Never before in India's parliamentary history has the office remained vacant for such extended periods of time. The Constitution does not prescribe a rigid timeline for the election, but the phrase "as soon as may be" cannot be interpreted as "whenever convenient". The delay – now running into multiple years – raises fundamental questions about adherence to constitutional mandates and respect for parliamentary norms.

Leaving the Deputy Speaker's position vacant undermines the institutional safeguards established by the Constitution. It centralises procedural power solely within the Speaker and the ruling party, eliminating a vital counterbalance. In an emergency, such as the Speaker's resignation, death, or removal, the lack of a designated second-in-command could lead to confusion or even a temporary leadership

vacuum in the House.

The delay also signals a broader disregard for parliamentary conventions – especially the unwritten rule of offering the post to the Opposition. While not mandatory, this practice has historically promoted inclusivity and moderation in parliamentary functioning. Failing to fill the post is not just a passive oversight; it is an active sidelining of consensus politics.

The argument that there is "no urgency" to appoint a Deputy Speaker runs counter to the entire ethos of constitutional democracy. The framers of the Constitution foresaw the importance of redundancy in leadership. Positions such as the Deputy Speaker are not afterthoughts – they are foundational to the system's resilience.

Moreover, restoring the practice of appointing a Deputy Speaker from the Opposition can help rebuild institutional credibility. In an era of increasing polarisation, such a gesture would not only honour democratic convention but also inject a degree of balance into legislative proceedings.

Need for legislative reform?

The ongoing vacuum raises a larger question: should the constitutional language be tightened to set a mandatory time frame for electing the Deputy Speaker? A specific deadline – for instance, within 60 days of the first sitting of the new Lok Sabha – could close this loophole of delay and warrant compliance.

Alternatively, a statutory mechanism could be introduced to allow the President to initiate the process within a time frame, upon advice from the Prime Minister or the Speaker. Either way, the current ambiguity is untenable in a functioning democracy.

The Office of the Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha is neither symbolic nor optional. It is a constitutionally sanctioned position designed to uphold the integrity and the continuity of legislative functioning. Disregarding it violates the Constitution's letter and undermines the spirit of democratic balance.

It is time for Parliament to reaffirm its respect for constitutional norms and institutional integrity. Electing a Deputy Speaker is not just a formality – it is a test of the House's commitment to rule-based governance. India's Parliament must not fail this test any longer.

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Content.

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- Article 94 states that the Deputy Speaker remains in office until they resign, are removed, or cease to be a Member of Parliament.
- The intent is clear: the Lok Sabha must never function without a second-in-command, a constitutional safeguard to ensure continuity, stability, and institutional balance.

- The roots of this office can be traced back to the colonial period. The position originated in the Central Legislative Assembly under British rule, where it was known as the Deputy President.
- The first to hold the office was Sachidanand Sinha in 1921. By the time India achieved independence in 1947, the Deputy Speaker had already become an institutional fixture in legislative governance.
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- While the Speaker is the presiding authority of the House, no Speaker can physically preside over every session in its entirety.
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Not strong enough

The UNSC Statement on Pahalgam attack appears watered down

The UN Security Council's statement on Friday, condemning "in the strongest terms" the terrorist attack in Pahalgam, was necessary, but inadequate. According to the statement, which expressed condolences to India, and to Nepal which lost one citizen, the members of the Security Council, that include Pakistan as an elected, non-permanent member this year, "reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security". The statement also spoke of the need to bring the perpetrators and their sponsors to justice. However, the UNSC did not name The Resistance Front (TRF) that initially claimed responsibility for the attack, and did not refer to the group's linkages to a UNSC-designated terror outfit, the LeT. Nor did it expressly speak of cooperation with the Government of India, as it had in the past. Finally, the statement made no mention of the terrorists' intent to target non-Muslims – an abhorrent act aimed at instigating communal tensions. A comparison with previous such statements would make it clear that the language was "watered down" given that Pakistan is a member of the Council (2025-26), and had China's support. China has in the past sought to veto statements critical of Pakistan. It is also disappointing that the statement, which was negotiated by France's envoy, the current UNSC President, did not bring stronger inputs from others on the Council including the U.S., Russia and the U.K.

As the government and security forces discuss counter-terror operations within Jammu and Kashmir to apprehend the terrorists and possible military options across the border, India's next option may be to bring a more strongly worded statement to the UN General Assembly, as various countries have done in the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts. The government would no doubt be preparing to have those terrorists it has identified from the attack and the TRF itself, designated by the UNSC, much the same way as it was able to bring the designation of Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar as a terrorist after the Pulwama attack. In addition, India could build its case at the Financial Action Task Force, which put Pakistan on a "greylist" from 2012-15 and 2018-22, and revive its plans to pass a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism at the United Nations. On the bilateral front, expecting assistance from Pakistan has been a dead-end in the past, despite its promises after Mumbai (2008), Pathankot (2016), and Pulwama (2019). Given the state of bilateral relations and the lack of diplomatic engagement, this is even less likely. Only a multi-pronged effort on the global stage, and the patience it showed with the extradition of Tahawwur Rana from the U.S., will ensure that India is able to follow all the threads in bringing those responsible for this brutal attack to justice and establish a durable peace.

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India's urban future is at a crossroads

As summer intensifies, Indian cities are struggling with water shortages and rising electricity demand and temperatures. Reports from Bengaluru and Hyderabad show a spike in water tanker bookings while power cuts loom due to increased air-conditioner usage. These annual struggles raise a pressing question – are our cities, where more than 30% of Indians live, prepared for climate extremes and rapid urbanisation?

Urbanisation, while bringing about growth and opportunities, also paves the way for increased pollution, congestion, and environmental impacts, which often hit the underprivileged the hardest. Sustainable Futures Collective, in their report, 'Is India Ready for a Warming World?' (2025), find that there is much more to be done regarding long-term planning for climate change in cities. Concerns about how our cities are handling the urban heat island effect have also been raised often in Parliament. Such stark ground realities underscore the pressing challenges our cities face in pursuing Sustainable Development Goal-11 (SDG-11): to create inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable urban environments by 2030.

Do indices capture reality? While global SDG-11 indicators exist, India lacks city-level tools for effective tracking. NITI Aayog's SDG Urban Index ranks 56 cities on 77 indicators, but its SDG-11 component is limited to four: Swachh Survekshan, road deaths, PMAY-U housing, and waste treatment. The Ease of Living Index covers 111 cities but lacks a comprehensive SDG-11 assessment.

International indices such as Mercer's and the Economist's Resilient Cities Index offer insights but miss Indian ground realities. The absence of a focused SDG-11 index hinders policymakers from identifying genuinely safe,



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Mishra**

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**Pavan Kumar
Thimmavajala**

Research Associate, School of Economics, University of Hyderabad

sustainable, and inclusive cities, creating a policy-research gap.

To bridge this gap and supplement the indices used by NITI Aayog with a more comprehensive set of indices, our latest research constructs four distinct indices – one for each pillar of SDG-11 wherein we ranked 10 major cities (Hyderabad, Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, Mumbai, Pune, Kolkata, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, and Surat) based on performance across select indicators for each index. Nine indicators were used for safety, 19 for inclusivity, and 15 for resilience and sustainability indexes. The parameters used for defining the indicators were borrowed from the United Nations' definitions of the same in the urban context. Data was sourced from a wide range of datasets such as Census 2011, Road Transport Yearbook, Indian Forest Survey, National Crime Research Bureau, Periodic Labour Force Survey, National Family Health Survey-5, Reserve Bank of India, India Meteorological Department's Climatological Tables, and Ola Mobility Institute's Ease of Moving Index 2022. We employed a novel method known as the Shannon Entropy Weighting technique (borrowed from Multi-Criteria Decision-Making modelling) to generate weights for the indices as it provides a more objective approach to weighting.

The results provide key insights into SDG-11 implementation across cities. Among the 10 major cities analysed, Ahmedabad ranked first in inclusivity, while Jaipur ranked the lowest. Bengaluru appeared to be the safest city, whereas Kolkata ranked lowest in safety. Surat led in sustainability, while Kolkata lagged behind. In terms of climate resilience, Chennai ranked first, while Jaipur was the least resilient. A comparison with NITI Aayog's SDG-11 rankings showed that cities tagged as front-runners and performers fared poorly in our indices.

Variations in the inclusivity index reflect disparities in social

and economic participation, emphasising the need for equitable access to opportunities in urban planning and broadening the idea of inclusivity. Differences in safety rankings suggest that while some cities benefit from vigorous law enforcement, others require better crime prevention and urban safety strategies. Sustainability rankings reveal uneven progress in environmental planning, waste management, and pollution control, stressing the need for comprehensive sustainability policies. Disparities in resilience highlight gaps in disaster preparedness and recovery. Notably, the Annual Survey of Indian City Systems 2023 by Janaagraha reported that only 16 cities had a 'city sustainability plan', while 17 had 'city resilience strategies'. This indicates significant gaps in the groundwork needed for SDG-11 to make substantial progress in India.

The road ahead

India's urban future is at a crossroads. Cities must establish better mechanisms for tracking SDG-11 at the urban local body (ULB) level. While some States and Union Territories have adopted district-level monitoring frameworks, urban local bodies must follow suit. Integrated Command and Control Centres, developed under the Smart Cities Mission, should be leveraged to collect real-time data and enhance urban planning and development processes. Additionally, as almost a third of urban residents are poor, addressing their needs is critical. India still relies on Census 2011 data, leading to severe underestimation of urban poverty. A periodic Urban Poor Quality of Living Survey at the State level is necessary to bridge this gap.

Each city (small and large) faces unique challenges, requiring localised governance, better planning, and city-specific strategies. Addressing these differences through data-backed, city-specific policies is crucial for a more equitable urban future.

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- **International indices such as Mercer's and the Economist's Resilient Cities Index offer insights but miss Indian ground realities. The absence of a focused SDG-11 index hinders policymakers from identifying genuinely safe, sustainable, and inclusive cities, creating a policy-research gap.**

Fact

- India still relies on Census 2011 data, leading to severe underestimation of urban poverty. A periodic Urban Poor Quality of Living Survey at the State level is necessary to bridge this gap.
- Each city (small and large) faces unique challenges, requiring localised governance, better planning, and city-specific strategies. Addressing these differences through data-backed, city-specific policies is crucial for a more equitable urban future.

Indians fear fake news but are less concerned about press freedom

In India, the share of people who believe that media freedom exists is higher than the share of people who believe it is important

DATA POINT

Sambavi Parthasarathy
Vignesh Radhakrishnan

In India, while there is widespread anxiety about misinformation and fake news, people largely do not attribute it to government influence. Instead, a relatively large share do not mind greater state censorship, according to the latest survey by the Pew Research Center.

Survey data suggests that while distrust in fake news is high, confidence in systemic solutions such as a free press remains low. In fact, a relatively large share of respondents believed that the media is free from state censorship and supports greater state control over the press. In other words, the data indicates that many citizens view misinformation as stemming from sources such as social media, WhatsApp, or other non-governmental actors, rather than from state censorship or suppression.

In India, 65% of the respondents said that made-up news and information is a very big problem in the country. This is one of the highest rates among the 35 countries surveyed and places India among the top 10 nations where this concern is most strongly felt.

At the same time, only 68% of the respondents said that it is very or somewhat important for the media to report news without state or government censorship – the second-lowest rate among the 35 countries surveyed. In fact, 80% of the respondents believe that the media in India is currently somewhat free or completely free from state intervention. This is one of the highest rates among the countries surveyed and places India among the top 10 once again.

This dichotomy has serious implications for press freedom in India, which has been deteriorating rapidly. In 2024, India ranked 159 out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index published by

Reporters Without Borders. While India has consistently ranked below 100 since 2003, the situation has worsened significantly in recent years.

Chart 1 shows the share of respondents who said that made-up news and information is a very big problem in their country. In Bangladesh, South Korea, Chile, Colombia and Thailand, over 70% of the respondents felt this. In Peru, Philippines, Turkey, Greece and India, more than 65% or more of the respondents said so. The concern for fake news was lowest in Singapore, Poland, Sweden, Netherlands, and Israel.

Chart 2 shows the share of respondents who said that it is very or somewhat important for the media to report news without state or government censorship. The share was above 90% in Greece, Sweden, the U.K., and 11 other countries; between 80% and 90% in 13 countries; and between 70% and 80% in five countries. In India and Kenya, less than 70% of the respondents emphasised the need for a media free of state censorship.

Chart 3 shows the share of respondents who said that the media is currently completely/somewhat free in their country. India, Sweden, Netherlands, Philippines, Ghana, Australia, Kenya, and Thailand are the eight countries where 80% or more of the respondents said that the media is now completely or somewhat free. In Chile and Greece, less than 40% felt so.

Reading Charts 2 and 3 together offers a different perspective. India and Kenya are the only two countries where a larger share of respondents believe that the media is free (80% or more), while a smaller share (less than 70%) emphasise the importance of media freedom. In other words, in 33 of the 35 nations surveyed, there is ‘press freedom gap’, which means the share of people who feel media freedom is important is greater than the share who believe it exists. In contrast, in India and Kenya, this gap is reversed.

Dangerous dichotomy

The data for the charts were taken from Pew Research Center's 'Free Expression Seen as Important Globally, but Not Everyone Thinks Their Country Has Press, Speech and Internet Freedoms' released in April 2025



Chart 1: % who say made-up news and information is a very big problem in their country

Bangladesh	78
South Korea	73
Chile	72
Colombia	71
Thailand	71
Peru	69
Philippines	67
Turkey	66
Greece	65
India	65
France	63
Nigeria	63
Sri Lanka	63
Germany	62
South Africa	61
Spain	61
Kenya	60
Japan	59
Ghana	57
Malaysia	56
Argentina	55
Mexico	55
Brazil	54
Italy	51
U.S.	51
U.K.	48
Indonesia	47
Canada	43
Hungary	40
Australia	36
Israel	36
Netherlands	34
Sweden	27
Poland	21
Singapore	19

Chart 2: % who say it is very/some-what important for the media to report without state censorship

Greece	97
Sweden	97
U.K.	94
Spain	93
Canada	93
Hungary	92
Poland	92
U.S.	92
Australia	92
Netherlands	92
Turkey	91
Argentina	91
Germany	91
Chile	90
France	89
Italy	89
Thailand	88
Japan	87
Philippines	86
Mexico	85
South Korea	85
Singapore	85
Sri Lanka	85
Indonesia	84
Ghana	83
Malaysia	81
Colombia	80
Brazil	78
Peru	77
Israel	76
Nigeria	75
South Africa	70
Bangladesh	69
India	68
Kenya	64

Chart 3: % who say the media is completely/somewhat free in their country currently

Sweden	89
Netherlands	87
Philippines	86
Ghana	84
Australia	83
Kenya	82
Thailand	80
India	80
U.K.	79
U.S.	79
Netherlands	78
Germany	75
Canada	74
Italy	73
Malaysia	73
Israel	73
Indonesia	72
Japan	71
Bangladesh	71
Spain	70
South Africa	70
Brazil	67
Poland	66
Hungary	62
France	61
Nigeria	60
Singapore	54
Argentina	51
South Korea	51
Turkey	49
Mexico	49
Colombia	49
Peru	44
Greece	37
Chile	29

Page No. 9, GS 2

Content.

- In India, while there is widespread anxiety about misinformation and fake news, people largely do not attribute it to government influence. Instead, a relatively large share do not mind greater state censorship, according to the latest survey by the Pew Research Center.
- Survey data suggests that while distrust in fake news is high, confidence in systemic solutions such as a free press remains low. In fact, a relatively large share of respondents believes that the media is free from state censorship and supports greater state control over the press.
- In other words, the data indicates that many citizens view misinformation as stemming from sources such as social media, WhatsApp, or other non-governmental actors, rather than from state censorship or suppression.
- In India, 65% of the respondents said that made-up news and information is a very big problem in the country. This is one of the highest rates among the 35 countries surveyed and places India among the top 10 nations where this concern is most strongly felt.

Fact

- In 2024, India ranked 159 out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders. While India has consistently ranked below 100 since 2003, the situation has worsened significantly in recent years.
- India and Kenya are the only two countries where a larger share of respondents believe that the media is free (80% or more), while a smaller share (less than 70%) emphasise the importance of media freedom.

SC notice to govt. on plea to regulate sexually explicit content on OTT platforms

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday said a petition to check “obscene, indecent and objectionable” content on OTT platforms raises an important and serious issue as mobile phones have reached the hands of even children below the age of 10.

“Unfortunately, parents give phones to even small children to keep them occupied,” Justice B.R. Gavai remarked.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta said children had become adept at technology, provided they reach the “correct sites” which helped them academically or provide clean fun.

“Some of these regular programmes on OTT platforms display language, content and innuendo...



The petition seeks appropriate steps to prohibit such content.

no, not even innuendo, but directly show things which are not just vulgar but perverse. Two respectable people cannot sit together and watch it,” Mr. Mehta submitted.

Some measures

He said the government had some regulations in place as counter-measures, and some more were in the works.

“This is either for the legislature or the executive to do. As it is, the judiciary is facing a lot of allegations of encroachment... You (government) do something, we will keep this petition pending,” Justice Gavai said.

Mr. Mehta said the objective behind the regulations ought to be to balance freedom of speech and decency.

The court issued notice to the Union government. The petition was filed by Uday Mahurkar, represented by advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain. It had sought a direction from the court to take appropriate steps, including the constitution of a ‘National Content Control Authority’, to prohibit sexually explicit content from being shown on OTT and social media platforms.

Page No. 12, GS 2

Content.

- The Supreme Court on Monday said a petition to check “obscene, indecent and objectionable” content on OTT platforms raises an important and serious issue as mobile phones have reached the hands of even children below the age of 10.
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- “Some of these regular programmes on OTT platforms display language, content and innuendo... no, not even innuendo, but directly show things which are not just vulgar but perverse. Two respectable people cannot sit together and watch it,” Mr. Mehta submitted.

Fact

- **IT Rules, 2021:** Prescribes obligations for online publishers, including content classification and self-regulation under a Code of Ethics.
- **Information Technology Act, 2000:** Governs the transmission of digital content and prescribes penalties for prohibited content.
- **Guidelines from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting:** Enforce standards for acceptable content on OTT platforms.

In 2024, India's military expenditure was 9 times that of Pakistan: SIPRI

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Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI

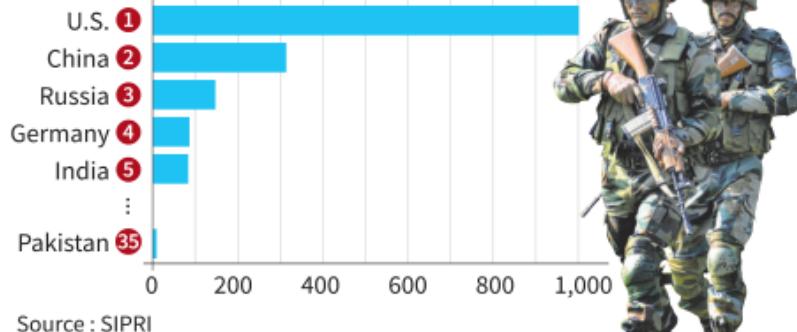
India's military spending in 2024 was nearly nine times that of Pakistan's expenditure, according to a study released on Monday by a leading Swedish think tank that comes amid growing tensions between the two countries over the Pahalgam terror attack.

The country's military expenditure, the fifth largest globally, grew by 1.6% to \$86.1 billion while Pakistan spent \$10.2 billion, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

The top five military spenders – the United States, China, Russia, Germany and India – accounted for 60% of the global total, with combined

Arms full

The chart shows the top military spenders (in \$ billion) in the world in 2024. Pakistan was ranked 35 among the spenders



spending of \$1,635 billion, it said.

China's military expenditure increased by 7% to an estimated \$314 billion, marking three decades of consecutive growth, the study noted.

China accounted for 50% of all military spending in Asia and Oceania, investing in the continued

modernisation of its military and expansion of its cyberwarfare capabilities and nuclear arsenal, it said in the report titled 'Trends in World Military Expenditure 2024'.

SIPRI said military spending in Europe (including Russia) rose by 17% to \$693 billion and was the main contributor to the

global increase in 2024.

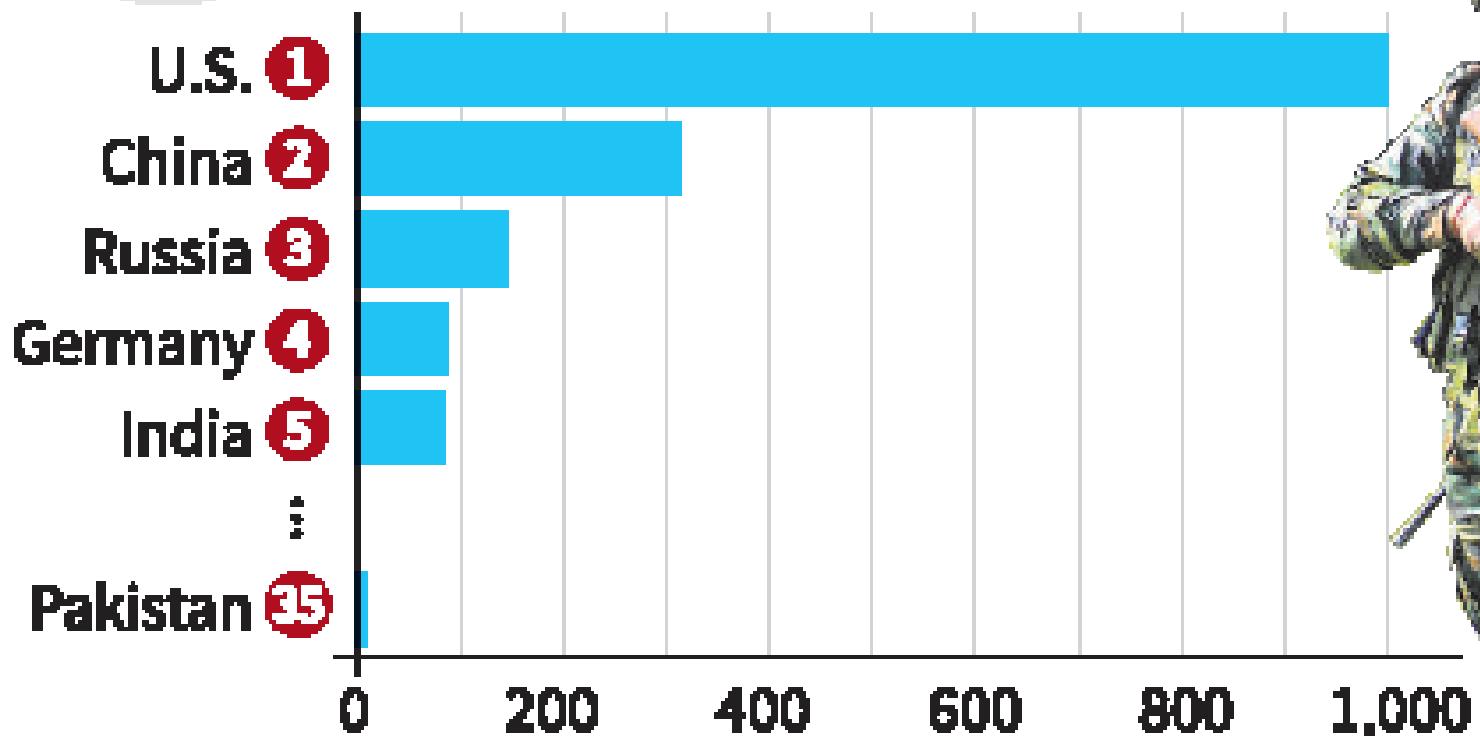
With the war in Ukraine in its third year, military expenditure kept rising across the continent, pushing European military spending beyond the level recorded at the end of the Cold War, it noted.

SIPRI said Russia's military expenditure reached an estimated \$149 billion in 2024, a 38% increase from 2023 and double the level in 2015. This represented 7.1% of Russia's GDP and 19% of all Russian government spending.

Ukraine's total military expenditure grew by 2.9% to reach \$64.7 billion – equivalent to 43% of Russia's spending. At 34% of GDP, Ukraine had the largest military burden of any country in 2024, the report added.

Arms full

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Source : SIPRI

Content.

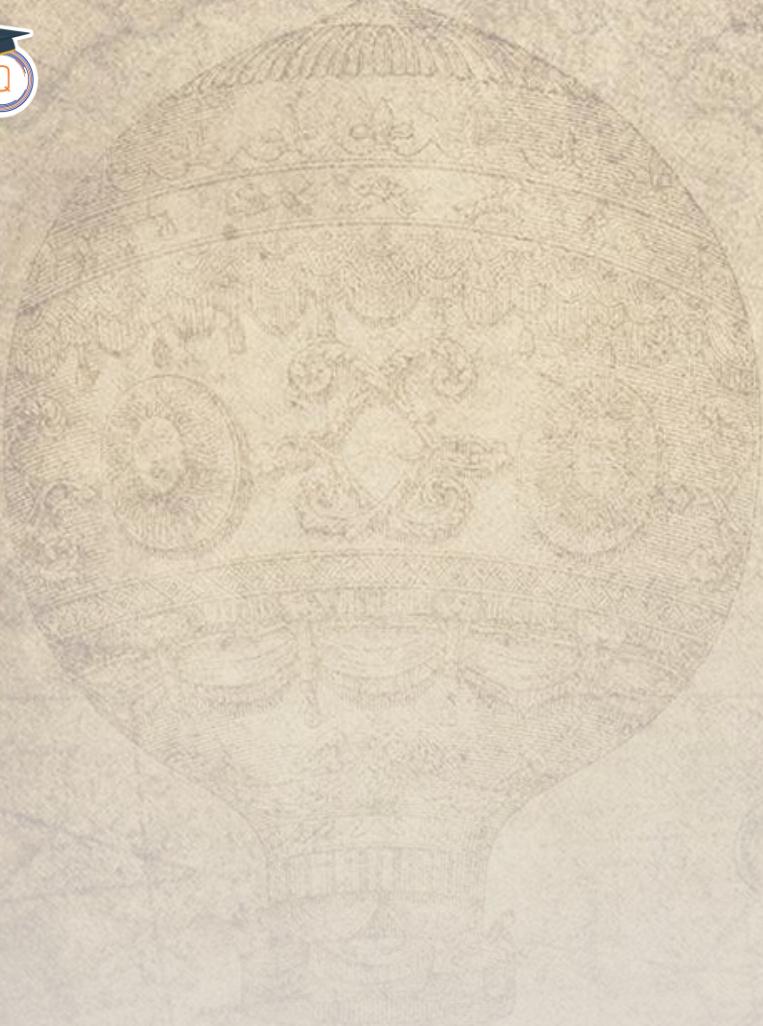
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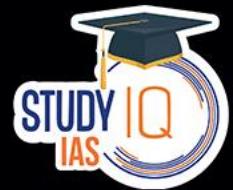
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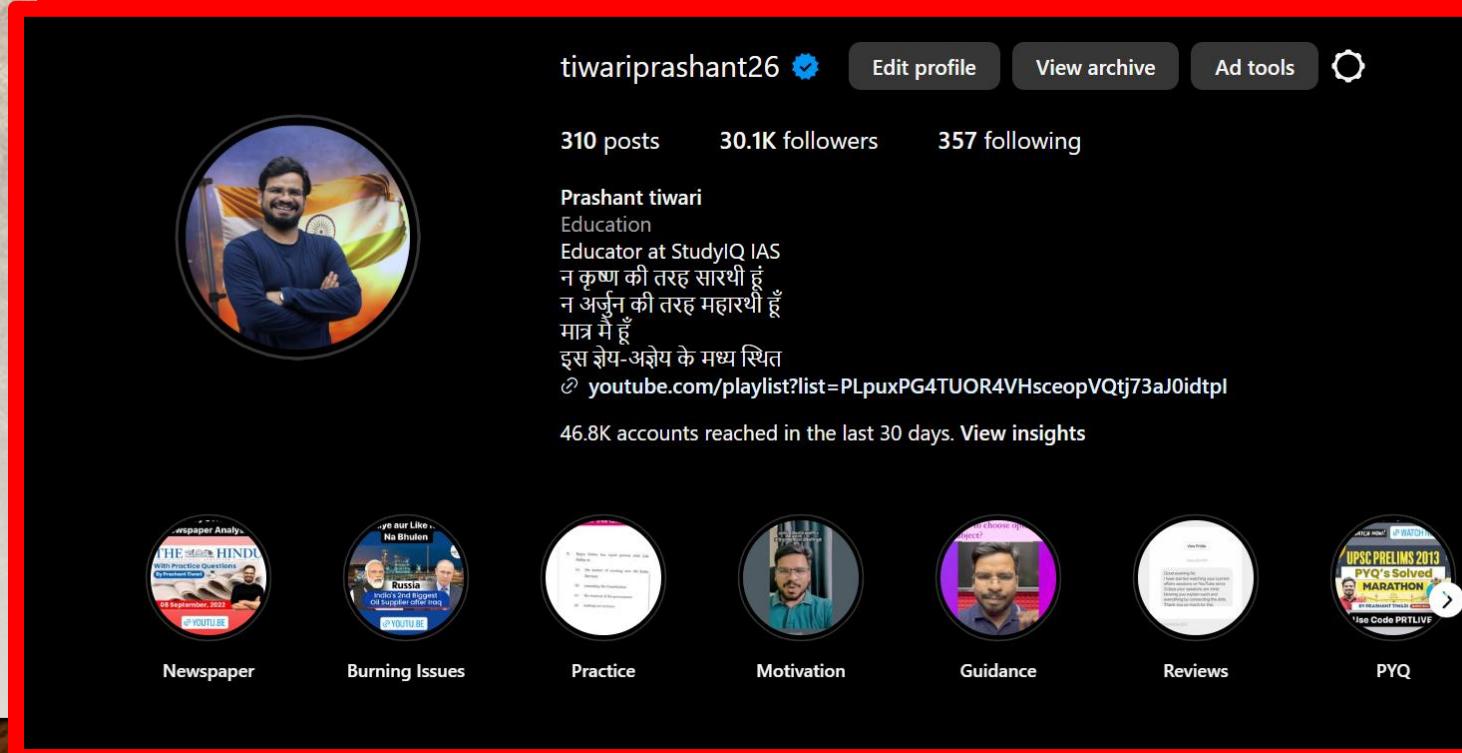


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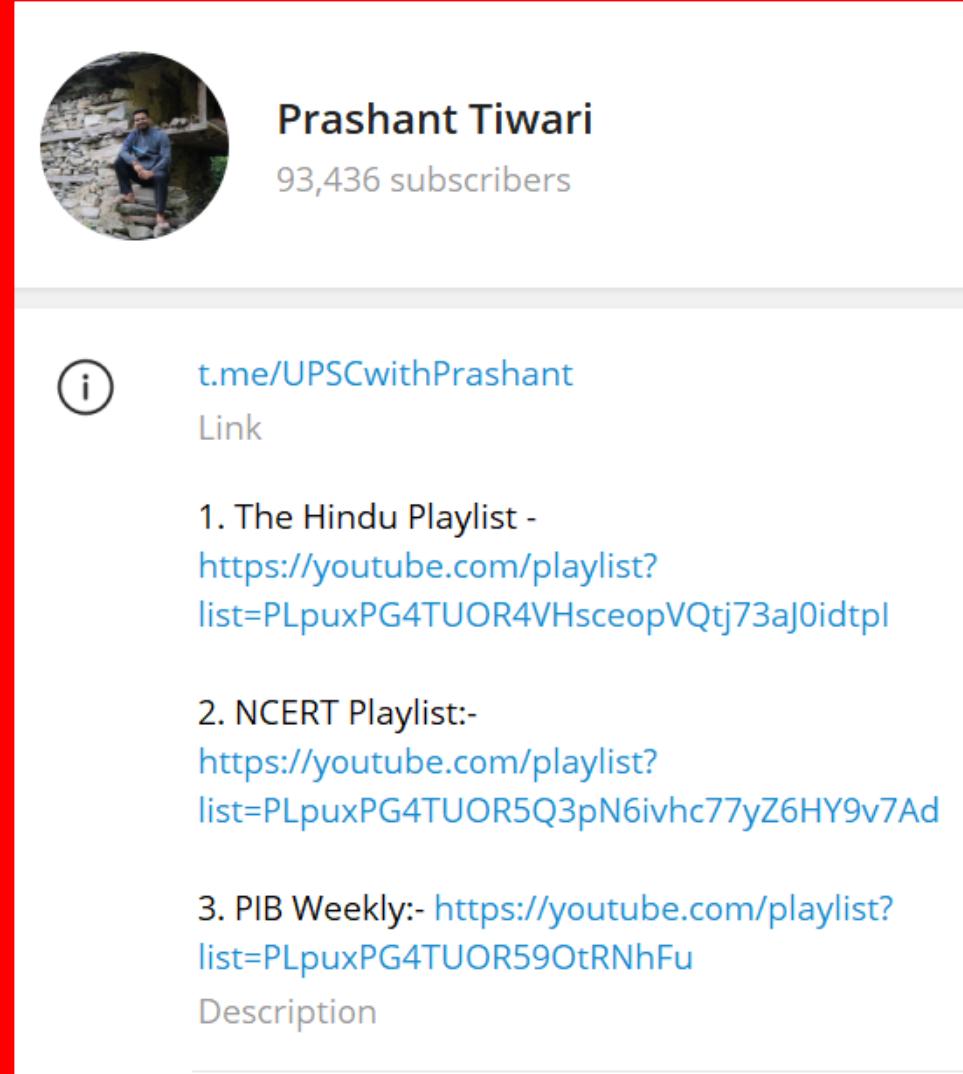
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