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**Be so good they
can't ignore you.**

— Steve Martin

U.S. gains access to Ukraine's minerals

Associated Press

WASHINGTON

The U.S. and Ukraine on Wednesday signed an agreement granting American access to Ukraine's vast mineral resources, finalising a deal months in the making that could enable continued military aid to Kyiv. The development comes amid concerns that President Donald Trump might scale back support in ongoing peace negotiations with Russia.

The two sides offered only the bare bones about the structure of the deal, which they called the United States-Ukraine Reinvestment Fund.

But it is expected to give the U.S. access to Ukraine's valuable rare earth minerals while providing Kyiv a measure of assurance about continued American



U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent (left) with Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko. AFP

support in its grinding war with Russia.

'Commitment to peace'

"This agreement signals clearly to Russia that the Trump administration is committed to a peace process centered on a free, so-

vereign, and prosperous Ukraine over the long term," Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a statement.

"President Trump envisioned this partnership between the American people and the Ukrainian pe-

ople to show both sides' commitment to lasting peace and prosperity in Ukraine."

Oval office meeting

The signing comes two months after a different but similar agreement was nearly signed before being derailed in a tense Oval Office meeting involving President Donald Trump, Vice-President J.D. Vance and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Mr. Trump said on Wednesday night that the deal, "in theory," means that the U.S. will get more from Ukraine than it contributed.

"I wanted to be protected," he said, adding that he didn't want to look "foolish" by not getting money back for the investment.

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Content.

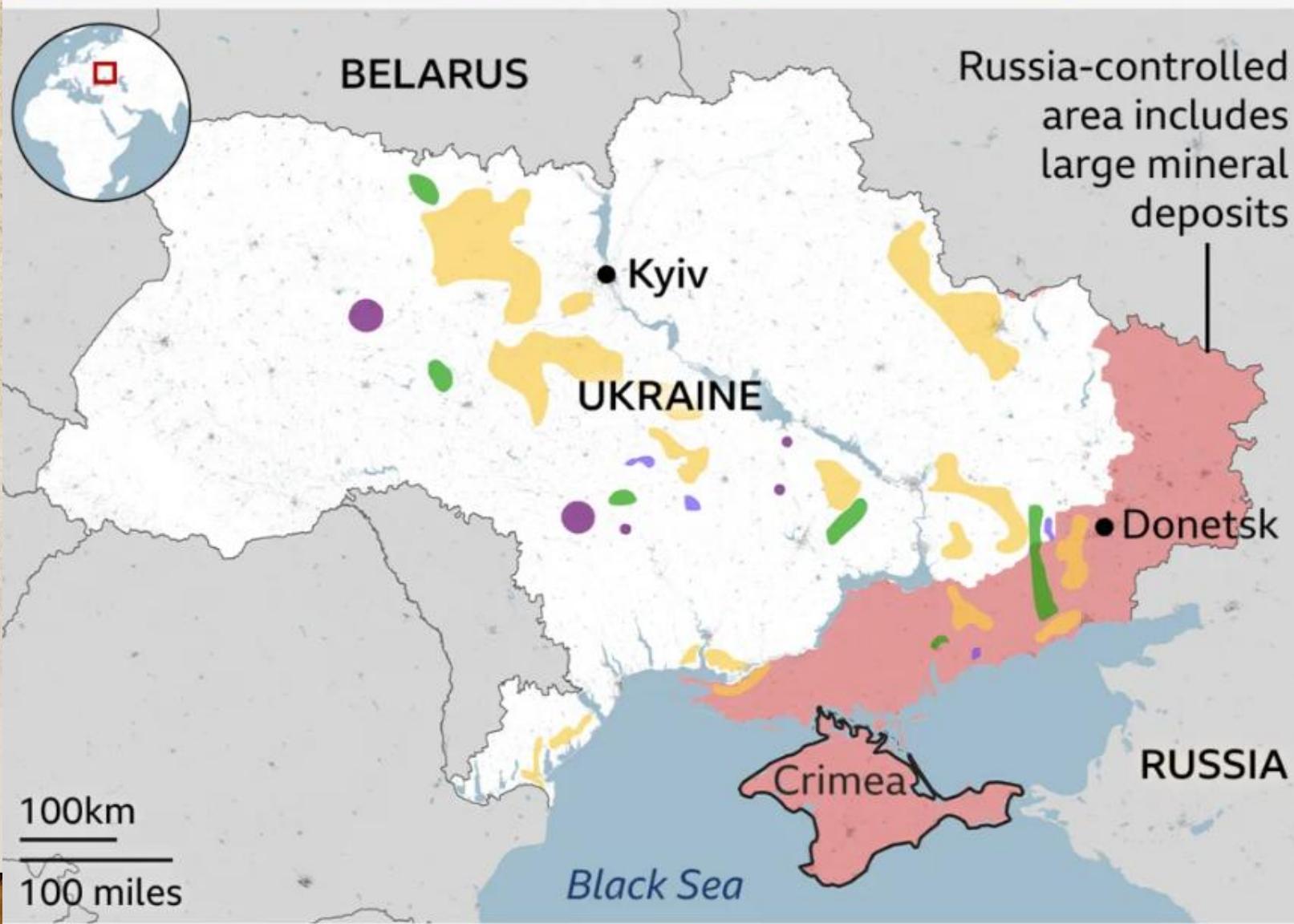
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Fact

- The US seeks rare-earth elements, titanium, gallium, and other critical minerals for weapons systems, clean energy, and reducing dependence on China.
- Ukraine possesses significant reserves of rare-earth minerals essential for various high-tech industries, including aerospace, defence, and renewable energy.
- According to data from the Ukrainian geologic survey, Ukraine possesses 5% of the world's mineral resources, including 23 of the 50 materials deemed critical by the U.S. government.

Critical mineral deposits across Ukraine

Titanium, zirconium Graphite Rare earths Lithium



Note: Russia annexed Crimea in 2014





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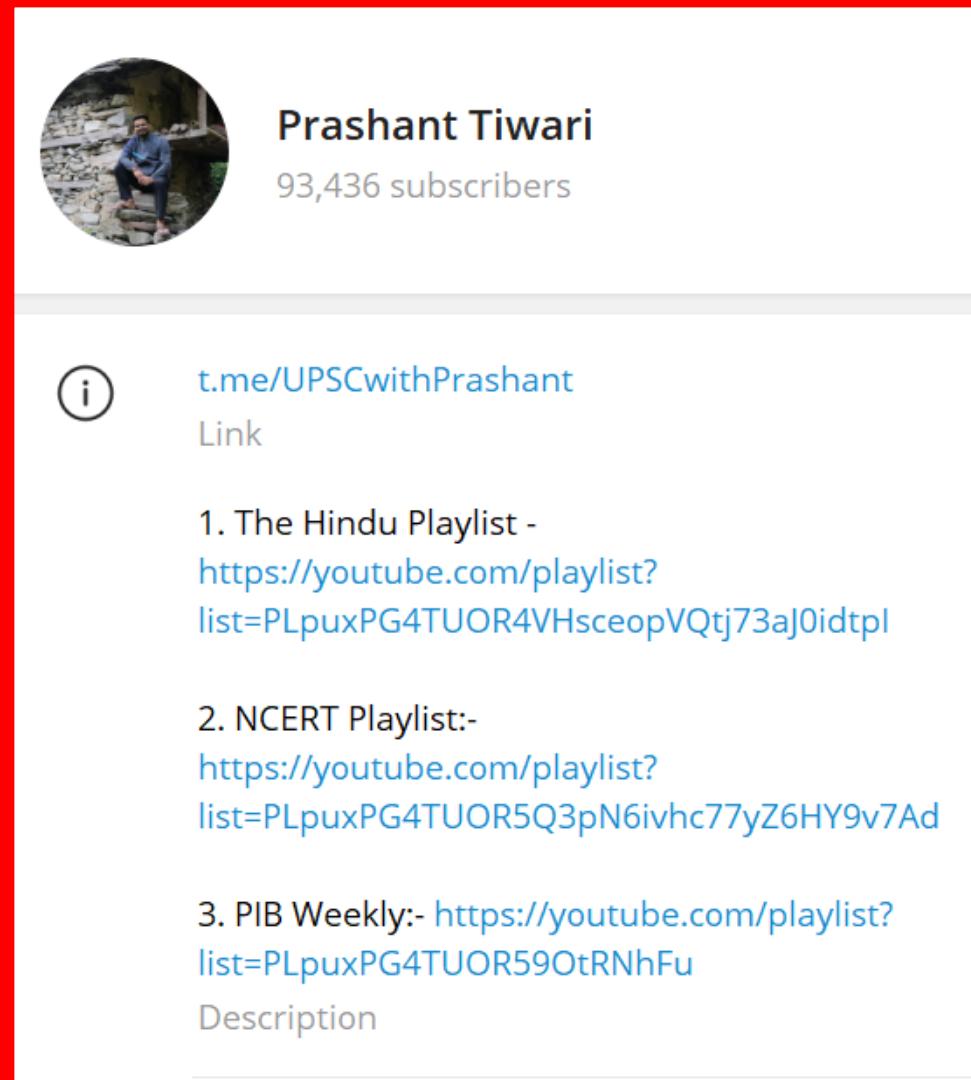
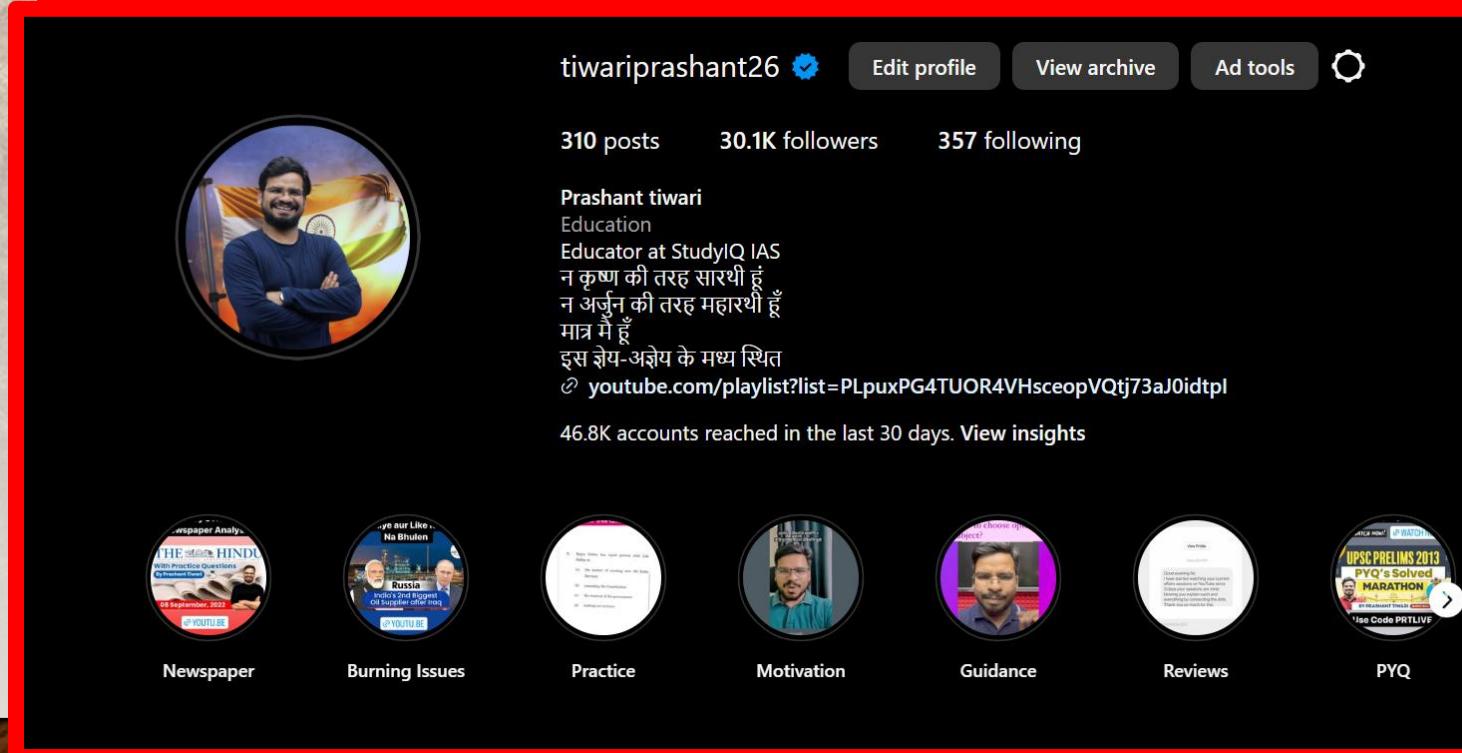


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(Prashant Tiwari)**



Modi champions 'orange economy' at WAVES

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit

MUMBAI

Appealing to global companies to create content in India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said that the strength of Indian culture lies in respecting the cultures of other countries.

"This is the right time for 'create in India, create for the world'. Global content will be respected here. I want to give confidence to everyone from outside that when you come here, you will get connected to India very naturally. India is becoming an orange economy. The Parsis and the Jews came here and became a part of our country. The strength of our culture is to respect the cultures of the other countries," Mr. Modi said, speaking at the

inauguration of the WAVES summit at Mumbai's Jio World Centre.

'Orange economy', also known as the creative economy, refers to economic activities that leverage creativity, culture, and intellectual property to generate wealth and jobs.

The PM hailed Indian content creators, even as he stressed the importance of responsible creativity. "Today, foreign consumers are consuming Indian entertainment with subtitles. Screen size is becoming smaller, but the consumption is growing, the message is becoming bigger. In this time of a booming orange economy, I want to tell all you content creators, you are bringing a new wave to India's creativity. Our government is with you in your efforts," he



PM's pitch: Narendra Modi addressing the World Audio Visual Entertainment Summit 2025 in Mumbai on Thursday. PMO

said. "Extra efforts need to be taken to take care of human sensitivities and sensibilities. We want to enrich humans and not turn them into robots," he said.

Creative, cultural waves
The WAVES, or World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit, has attracted major names from the

media and entertainment industry from over 90 countries, including superstar actor Rajinikanth and Reliance Industries' CEO and MD Mukesh Ambani, who both paid respects to the victims of the recent terror attack in Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir.

Lauding the PM, the two said the country stood with

Mr. Modi.

"Many said the government will postpone this event as it is about entertainment. But I was sure that this event will happen. I am confident about our Prime Minister. He is a fighter. My hearty congratulations to the government and to the media industry. Extending my support always. Thank you for the opportunity," Mr. Rajinikanth said.

"WAVES highlights India's creative strength on the global platform. WAVES is not just an acronym, it is a wave of culture, creativity and universal connectivity," said Mr. Modi, announcing that India will soon launch the WAVES Awards.

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- **WAVES (World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit)** is a global event organized by the Government of India.
- It aims to position India as a hub for media innovation, IP creation, and content development.
- Sectors covered include:
- Broadcasting, Films, TV, Radio, Animation, Gaming, Comics, Advertising, and
- Emerging tech like Generative AI, Augmented/Virtual/Extended Reality (AR/VR/XR) and Digital Media Platforms.

Protect vulnerable people from summer heat: NHRC to States

Commission suggests States to equip public spaces such as schools with adequate ventilation, fans, drinking water, and basic medical supplies

Ishita Mishra

NEW DELHI

Amid the ongoing heatwave, particularly in the northern, central and western parts of the country, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Thursday asked 11 States to take immediate pre-emptive measures to protect vulnerable people, especially those from poorer communities.

Highlighting data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) that reported 3,798 deaths between 2018 and 2022 due to heat and sun strokes, the commission has emphasised the urgent need for integrated and inclusive measures to protect outdoor workers, elderly citizens, children, and the homeless, who are at risk due to the lack of adequate shelter and resources.

In a letter to the Chief Secretaries of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan, the NHRC called for the provisioning of shelters and re-



Noon-time nap: A man and dog take shelter from the midday heat beneath a metro pillar in Hyderabad on Thursday. G. RAMAKRISHNA

lief materials, changes in working hours, and standard procedures to treat heat-related illnesses.

Treatment protocols

In its communication to the States, the commission reiterated the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) guidelines on mitigating the impact of heatwaves, including the need to establish and implement treatment protocols for heat-related illnesses.

The commission suggested that the States equip public spaces such as

schools, anganwadi centres, and community halls with adequate ventilation, fans, drinking water, and basic medical supplies.

"Ensure supply of fans, cool roof materials, and ORS sachets to families in informal settlements and labour colonies and amend working hours, provide shaded rest zones, hydration support, and encourage the use of protective clothing," the commission said.

The States were asked to submit action-taken reports in this regard.

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Fact

- The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) is an independent statutory body established to protect and promote human rights in India.
- It is responsible for reviewing and addressing human rights violations and making recommendations for the protection and promotion of human rights.
- NHRC was established under the Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA), 1993.
- It is an embodiment of India's concern for the promotion and protection of human rights.
- It is established in conformity with the Paris Principles (1991), adopted at the first international workshop on national institutions for the protection of human rights.

Chairman

A person who has been Chief Justice of India or a Judge of the Supreme Court

5 Members

- One Member who is or has been a Judge of the Supreme Court.
- One Member who is or has been the Chief Justice of a High Court
- Three Members to be appointed from amongst persons having knowledge of, or practical experience in, matters relating to human rights.
- **Note: Of the three members, at least one will be a woman.**

U.S. notifies potential sale of maritime surveillance tech worth \$131 million to India

Dinakar Peri

NEW DELHI

In an indication that the ambitious initiative of Quad grouping for the region – the Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) – is making progress, the U.S. Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) issued a notification stating that U.S. State Department has made a determination approving a possible Foreign Military Sale to India of IPMDA and related equipment for an estimated cost of \$131 million.

The Defence Security Cooperation Agency delivered the required certification notifying Congress of this possible sale on April 30, the notification said. “The Government of India has requested to buy SeaVision software (including requested software enhancements); Technical

The IPMDA was announced by Quad grouping at the 2022 Tokyo summit to track ‘dark shipping’

Assistance Field Team (TAFT) training; remote software and analytic support; access to SeaVision documentation; and other related elements of logistics and program support.”

Support foreign policy

The IPMDA was announced by the Quad grouping, comprising India, Australia, Japan and U.S., at the Tokyo summit in May 2022 to track “dark shipping” and build a “faster, wider, and more accurate maritime picture of near-real-time activities in partners’ waters” integrating three critical regions in the Indo-Pacific – the Pacific Islands, Southeast Asia,

and Indian Ocean Region.

This proposed sale will support the foreign policy and national security objectives of the U.S. by helping to strengthen the U.S.-Indian strategic relationship and to improve the security of a major defence partner, which continues to be an “important force” for political stability, peace, and economic progress in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia regions, the DSCA noted. “The proposed sale will improve India’s capability to meet current and future threats by bolstering its maritime domain awareness, analytical capabilities, and strategic posture. India will have no difficulty absorbing these articles and services into its armed forces.”

The principal contractor will be Hawkeye 360, located in Herndon, Virginia.

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Fact

- The IPMDA, introduced by the Quad group (consisting of India, Australia, Japan, and the US) at the Tokyo summit, 2022, aims to monitor "dark shipping" and create a more comprehensive and precise real-time maritime overview of partner nations' waters.
- It focuses on integrating the Pacific Islands, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean region (IOR) in the Indo-Pacific.
- **Dark Shipping**
- Dark shipping is a term used to describe a vessel operating with its Automatic Identification System (AIS) turned off .
- AIS transponder systems transmit a ship's position at sea, alongside identification data and other useful information that vessels and maritime authorities can reference.

PICTURE OF THE WEEK

Taking the bull by its horns

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A gutsy tamer prevails over a ferocious bull during a jallikattu held at Chettipalayam in Coimbatore on April 27. PERIASAMY M.

Content.

- Jallikattu is a traditional sport that is popular in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu.
- The sport involves releasing a wild bull into a crowd of people, and the participants attempt to grab the bull's hump and ride it for as long as possible, or attempt to bring it under control.
- It is celebrated in the month of January, during the Tamil harvest festival, Pongal.
- The primary question involved was whether Jallikattu should be granted constitutional protection as a collective cultural right under Article 29 (1).
- Article 29 (1) is a fundamental right guaranteed under Part III of the Constitution to protect the educational and cultural rights of citizens.
- The court examined if the laws “perpetuate cruelty to animals” or were actually a means to ensure “the survival and well-being of the native breed of bulls”.
- The five-judge Bench heard parties on whether the new Jallikattu laws were “relatable” to Article 48 of the Constitution, which urged the state to endeavor to organize agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines.

Fact

- In 2011, the Centre added bulls to the list of animals whose training and exhibition is prohibited.
- The Supreme Court banned Jallikattu through a judgment in May 2014 in the Animal Welfare Board of India vs A. Nagaraja case on the grounds of cruelty to animals.
- In 2018, the Supreme Court referred the Jallikattu case to a Constitution Bench, where it is pending now.
- The bone of contention is the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Tamil Nadu Amendment) Act of 2017 and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Conduct of Jallikattu) Rules of 2017, which had re-opened the gates for the conduct of the popular bull-taming sport in the name of culture and tradition despite a 2014 ban by the Supreme Court.

Reviving a far-sighted but forgotten Bill mechanism

Private Member's Bills (PMBs) are a mechanism through which Members of Parliament (MP), who are not Ministers, can propose their own legislation. In India's parliamentary system, most laws are introduced by the government, drafted by Ministries and tabled by Ministers. In contrast, PMBs come from individual MPs, both ruling party or the Opposition. In each session, Fridays are usually reserved for discussion on PMBs. PMBs are perhaps the last remaining intervention wherein MPs are not strictly guided by party mandate.

However, this crucial intervention has steadily eroded. Frequent disruptions, pre-emptive adjournments, and the increasing prioritisation of government business have reduced the PMB to a symbolic gesture rather than a serious legislative exercise. Ignoring the PMB is a procedural lapse and also signals a democratic backslide.

PMB trends, 17th and 18th Lok Sabha

Since Independence, only 14 PMBs have been passed and received presidential assent and none has cleared both Houses since 1970. In the 17th Lok Sabha (2019-24), 729 PMBs were introduced in the Lok Sabha and 705 in the Rajya Sabha. However, only two in the Lok Sabha and 14 in the Rajya Sabha were ever discussed.

In the 18th Lok Sabha, only 20 MPs have introduced PMBs so far. During the inaugural and Budget Sessions of 2024, 64 PMBs were introduced in the Lok Sabha, but not a single one was discussed.

In the winter session, two Fridays in the Lok Sabha were lost to disruptions, while another was taken up by a general discussion on the Constitution. Even in the Budget Session, the first Friday, usually reserved for private members, was used for discussions on the Union Budget. Only one Friday in the Lok Sabha saw any private member business-related activity, and even this was limited to a resolution. In the Rajya Sabha, out of 82 PMBs listed during the Budget Session, only 49 were introduced on a single Friday, and discussion began on just one, only to be cut short as the House was adjourned *sine die*.

PMBs have long provided a platform for MPs to introduce pieces of legislation that reflect personal convictions, constituency demands, or emerging social needs, regardless of party affiliation.

A notable example is the 'Right to Disconnect' Bill introduced by Supriya Sule of the Nationalist Congress Party, in the Lok Sabha on October 28, 2019. The Bill proposed granting employees the legal right to disengage from work-related



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communication beyond official working hours, addressing the increasing intrusion of work into personal life in the digital age. Though it did not proceed beyond the initial stage, the Bill sparked an important national conversation on mental health, work-life balance, and labour rights in a hyper-connected economy. It exemplifies how PMBs can be vehicles for forward-looking and unconventional ideas.

In contrast, some PMBs have had a more tangible legislative impact. In 2014, Tiruchi Siva of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (Rajya Sabha), introduced the 'Rights of Transgender Persons Bill'. On April 24, 2015, the Bill made history by becoming the first Private Member's Bill in over four decades to be passed by the Rajya Sabha. Though it did not clear the Lok Sabha, it laid the groundwork for the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, introduced and passed by the government. This Bill is a powerful reminder of how private initiatives can shape the legislative agenda and compel government action on socially sensitive issues.

PMBs also offer space for MPs from the ruling party to express independent thought. Bharatiya Janata Party MP Gopal Chinayya Shetty's Bill calling for free medical and health-care facilities to the senior citizens in all Government and private hospitals is an example. His intervention demonstrates that even Treasury Bench MPs, often bound by government priorities, can use PMBs to introduce legislation based on personal insight or constituency feedback.

Shrinking space for independent action

One cannot overlook the institutional changes that have contributed to the reduced space for individual legislative initiative. The 52nd Constitutional Amendment, which introduced the Anti-Defection Law through the Tenth Schedule, aimed to ensure political stability. However, it has also had the unintended effect of limiting the ability of MPs, particularly the Treasury Benches, to independently question or deviate from their party's legislative agenda. In such a structured environment, the PMB remains one of the few avenues through which MPs across party lines can suggest constructive policy alternatives.

While voters in India may cast their ballots for candidates contesting on party symbols, their choices are often equally influenced by the individual's integrity, expertise and track record within the constituency. MPs are elected not solely to reiterate the party's position, but to serve as a voice for the aspirations and concerns of their constituents.

To safeguard the PMB process, a series of

procedural and structural reforms must be considered.

Reforms to pursue

The first is the need to treat the time earmarked for PMBs as sacrosanct. Amendments to the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business should explicitly protect this time from being overridden, except in cases of a national emergency. Dedicated hours for PMBs must not only be preserved but also enforced with consistency, enabling meaningful debate and potential adoption of the PMB.

Parliament could consider instituting a review committee specifically for PMBs, responsible for screening Bills for quality, relevance, and constitutionality. It could even recommend a priority list for discussion based on public importance and cross-party support. A fast-track mechanism may also be introduced for high-impact or broadly supported Bills to reach the floor in a time-bound manner.

In instances where the government feels constrained by time to transact its own legislative business, it should consider extending the overall working hours of Parliament, rather than encroaching upon the Fridays reserved for PMBs. The working hours in both Houses typically run from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., which includes a lunch break. A modest extension, even by an hour or two, would significantly improve the productivity of Zero Hour and Question Hour, while ensuring that PMBs remain undisturbed. With the prospect of delimitation and a likely increase in the number of MPs in both Houses, the urgency of reform is greater than ever.

One compelling reform that could be adapted from international practice is the Ten-Minute Rule of the U.K. Parliament – any MP can make a short speech of up to 10 minutes in support of a PMB along with its introduction after which another MP may oppose it for an equal length of time. This allows Bills to be introduced, heard, and recorded without long time slots. Adopting a similar provision in the Indian context, either as an addition to or as a substitute for existing PMB procedures, could create a channel for a greater number of legislative ideas to enter the public domain.

The Vice President of India/Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, Jagdeep Dhankhar, has laid emphasis on the role of private member's business in deepening democracy. He described PMBs as "far-sighted, forward-looking, and a gold mine" for India's legislative landscape. These are words that reflect both the value and the potential of this mechanism when nurtured with sincerity.

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Content.

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China's strategic push — Asia ties amid tariff tensions

The President of China, Xi Jinping's three-nation tour of Southeast Asia (April 14-18, 2025) to Vietnam, Malaysia, and Cambodia, had one goal: to pitch Beijing as the only reliable partner of choice. Facing what is at the moment a 145% tariff on Chinese exports imposed by the Trump administration, China is actively recalibrating its external economic engagement, especially in geographies where it enjoys strategic proximity and relatively receptive partners.

This Southeast Asia outreach is not just routine diplomacy. It is a considered move by Beijing to mitigate external economic pressure, project stability, and cement its leadership narrative in the Indo-Pacific. The visit also comes in the wake of the "Central Conference on Work Relating to Neighbouring Countries" (April 8-9). This relatively rare workshop was attended by senior party leaders and underscored the importance of fostering a "community with a shared future" with neighbouring states.

As a buffer and bridge

China is keen to insulate itself from the ramifications of a deepening trade war with the U.S., which now extends beyond tariffs to export controls, technology bans and financial decoupling. In this context, Southeast Asia serves as a buffer and a bridge. It offers China resilient trade channels, manufacturing alternatives, and diplomatic partners to collectively push back against the narrative of de-risking or containment led by Washington.

Under U.S. President Donald Trump, Cambodia could face a combined tariff of up to 59% (including a 10% universal tariff and an additional 49% once a 90-day pause ends), while Vietnam and Malaysia would be hit with tariffs of 46% and 24%, respectively. Conversely, Mr. Xi's message was that China is open for business, supports multilateralism, and opposes unilateral coercion – a direct rebuttal to U.S. policies. In Vietnam, his meeting with key Vietnamese leaders resulted in the signing of 45 cooperation agreements. In Malaysia, discussions focused on enhancing economic cooperation and addressing regional security concerns. The two countries



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Beijing's Southeast Asia outreach may complicate the U.S.'s efforts to build a coalition to isolate or deter China economically

signed over 30 agreements, encompassing sectors such as the digital economy, artificial intelligence, agriculture and infrastructure development. The Cambodia visit (Mr. Xi's first since 2016), underscored China's role as Cambodia's largest investor and trading partner, with bilateral trade exceeding \$15 billion in 2024. All these agreements, particularly the Funan Techo Canal project in Cambodia, are an effort to show that China continues to offer public goods and economic opportunities, while the U.S. pivots toward protectionism.

To project a contrast

Beyond economics, the visit was also about ideological and normative competition as Beijing attempts to draw a contrast between its model of non-interference and economic engagement, and what it portrays as U.S. interventionism and ideological rigidity. This narrative particularly resonates in Cambodia, which has long been a close political ally of Beijing, and to a lesser extent in Malaysia, where the government has sought to mostly maintain a balanced foreign policy between major powers.

Mr. Xi's call to advance a code of conduct in the South China Sea, support for infrastructure development through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and lay an emphasis on cultural linkages are part of this soft power strategy. It seeks to recast China not just as a neighbour but as a normative leader in regional order-building, offering an alternative vision to the U.S.-led liberal international order.

The timing of this visit is politically significant. U.S. engagement with Southeast Asia has been episodic and often perceived to be reactive, despite Washington's measures to the contrary. The U.S.'s Indo-Pacific strategy is also often seen in parts of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as security heavy and narrowly focused on countering China. Mr. Xi's visit, in contrast, offers tangible deliverables: infrastructure projects, digital collaboration, trade facilitation, and security dialogues.

By visiting key ASEAN members, he also played into intra-ASEAN dynamics. For instance, the effort to deepen ties with Vietnam,

traditionally wary of Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea, is an attempt to reassure Hanoi. In Malaysia, China's emphasis on peaceful dispute resolution and BRI collaboration appeals to a government that is cautious about becoming a pawn in the U.S.-China rivalry. While Washington continues to emphasise security partnerships – through AUKUS (Australia, the United Kingdom, the U.S.), the Quad (Australia, India, Japan, the U.S.), and bilateral alliances – China is doubling down on economic diplomacy, where the U.S. is perceived to have underdelivered. Initiatives such as the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity have been criticised for lacking market access incentives, in contrast to China's clear offers of investment and trade.

The larger picture

Moreover, Beijing's ability to present itself as an indispensable economic partner may complicate U.S. efforts to build a coalition to isolate or deter China economically. If Southeast Asia increasingly leans further towards economic interdependence with China, Washington will find it harder to operationalise a robust economic counter-strategy. Mr. Xi's Southeast Asia tour is a forward-looking strategy to entrench Chinese influence in the Indo-Pacific at a time of systemic flux. In the contest between the U.S. and China for regional primacy, this kind of diplomacy is calculated strategic positioning, with long-term implications for regional alignment, economic integration, and rule-setting.

Finally, this tour is also about domestic political signalling. For Mr. Xi, the ability to show that China is not internationally isolated, despite mounting western pressure, is crucial. The optics of warm receptions, economic deals, and strategic dialogues serve to buttress his authority at home and offset negative headlines around the economic slowdown or diplomatic frictions with the West. At the same time, they signal to the region – and the Global South at large – that China continues to be there for them to lean on. How receptive Southeast Asia will be to Mr. Xi's outreach, despite Beijing's own unilateral tendencies, remains to be seen.

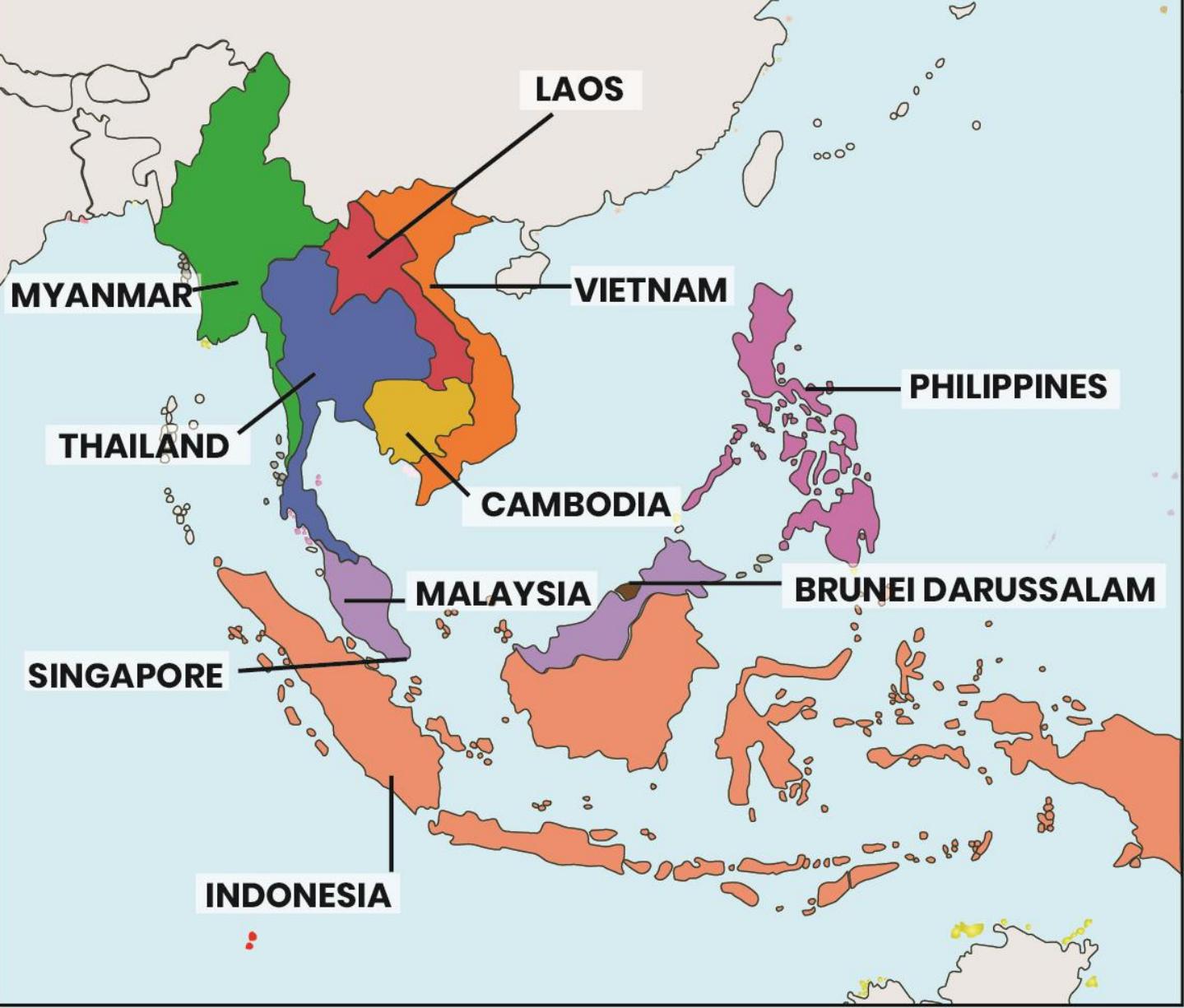
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Content.

- **The President of China, Xi Jinping's three-nation tour of Southeast Asia (April 14-18, 2025) to Vietnam, Malaysia, and Cambodia, had one goal: to pitch Beijing as the only reliable partner of choice.**
- **Facing what is at the moment a 145% tariff on Chinese exports imposed by the Trump administration, China is actively recalibrating its external economic engagement, especially in geographies where it enjoys strategic proximity and relatively receptive partners.**
- **This Southeast Asia outreach is not just routine diplomacy. It is a considered move by Beijing to mitigate external economic pressure, project stability, and cement its leadership narrative in the Indo-Pacific.**

Fact

- China is keen to insulate itself from the ramifications of a deepening trade war with the U.S., which now extends beyond tariffs to export controls, technology bans and financial decoupling.
- In this context, Southeast Asia serves as a buffer and a bridge. It offers China resilient trade channels, manufacturing alternatives, and diplomatic partners to collectively push back against the narrative of de-risking or containment led by Washington.
- Under U.S. President Donald Trump, Cambodia could face a combined tariff of up to 59% (including a 10% universal tariff and an additional 49% once a 90-day pause ends), while Vietnam and Malaysia would be hit with tariffs of 46% and 24%, respectively.
- Beyond economics, the visit was also about ideological and normative competition as Beijing attempts to draw a contrast between its model of non-interference and economic engagement, and what it portrays as U.S. interventionism and ideological rigidity.



New friends

India is making efforts to isolate Pakistan in the Islamic world

Amidst the shock over the Pahalgam terror attack, the resultant diplomatic measures against Pakistan and the likelihood of a military escalation, New Delhi's attempts to strengthen ties with three of Pakistan's closest allies may have been missed. But support from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan will be important to building India's case against the perpetrators. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was in Jeddah when he received news of the attack. Although he cut short his visit, he discussed the attack at some length with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The joint statement recorded their strong condemnation of the attack, rejecting any attempt to "link terrorism to any particular race, religion or culture". The wording marks the strongest such language used and is the culmination of the process begun in 2006 with the India-KSA Delhi Declaration, followed by the 2010 Strategic Partnership agreement that turned the compass in the Saudi Kingdom on terrorism. In 2012, Saudi authorities assisted India in securing the arrest of Sayed Zabiuddin Ansari alias Abu Jundal, an LeT Indian co-conspirator being tried for the 26/11 attacks. The assistance marked a turnaround in ties, given the Kingdom's history of funding Islamist extremist groups at madrasas in Pakistan and other countries. Ties have now been transformed with technological cooperation and the promise of \$100 billion Saudi investment.

With the UAE, India has made strides in cooperation, boosted by the signing of the Strategic Partnership in 2017, and at least six visits by Mr. Modi, leading to a stark turnaround since the 1990s, when India pleaded unsuccessfully for the extradition of Dawood Ibrahim and in intervening in the 1999 hijack of flight IC-814. In April, New Delhi rolled out the red carpet for Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and the UAE's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, cementing ties with a country that has been one of Pakistan's closest backers. Finally, this week saw a surprise visit to Kabul by the MEA's point-person for Pakistan-Afghanistan-India and a meeting with Taliban acting foreign minister Muttaqi as well as a "categorical condemnation" by the Taliban of the Pahalgam killings – a far cry from the Taliban's past in targeting Indian interests in Afghanistan in collaboration with Pakistani agencies and terror groups. It would not be pragmatic to assume a full change of heart with the Taliban, but the support against terrorism is bound to be one more pressure point on Pakistan. The salutary impact of well-timed diplomacy in turning around ties with countries that had refused India cooperation three decades ago is noteworthy.

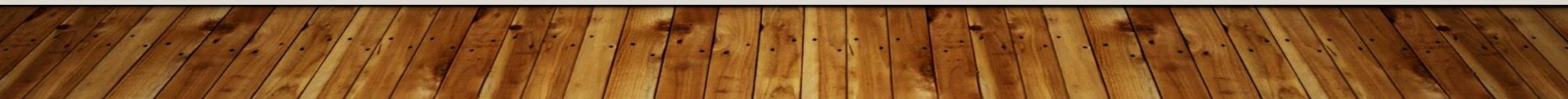
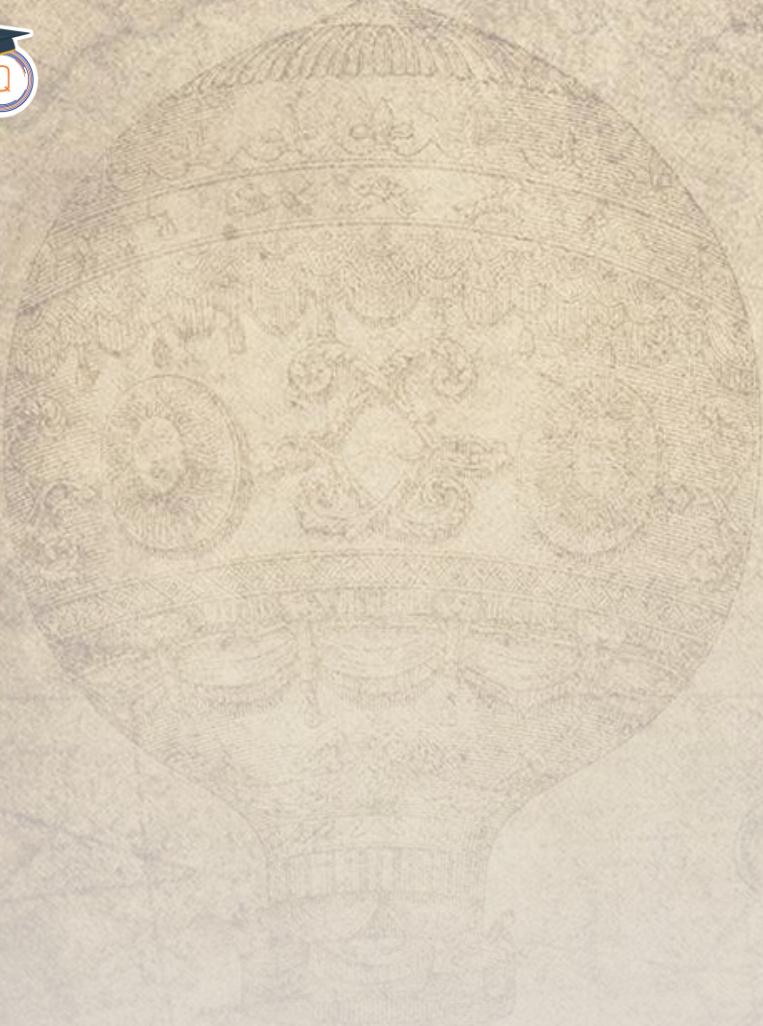
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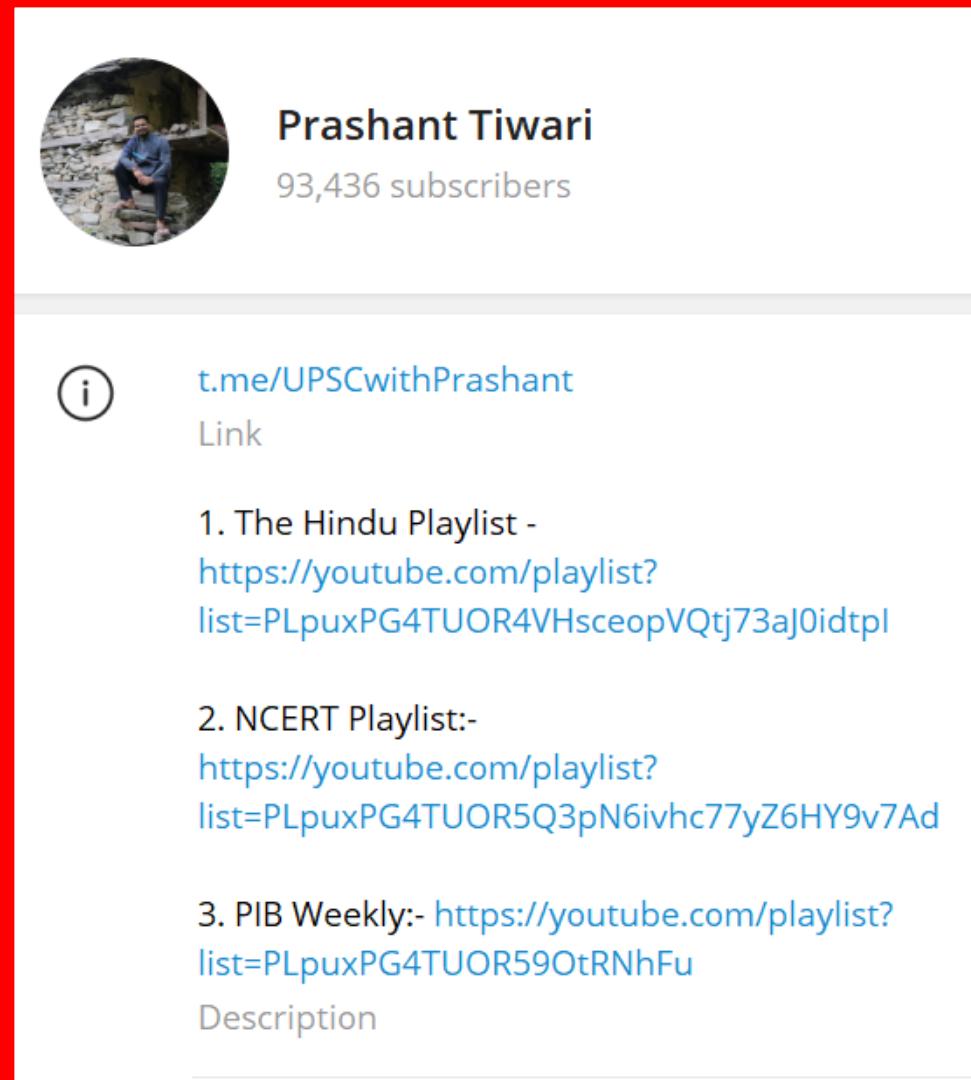
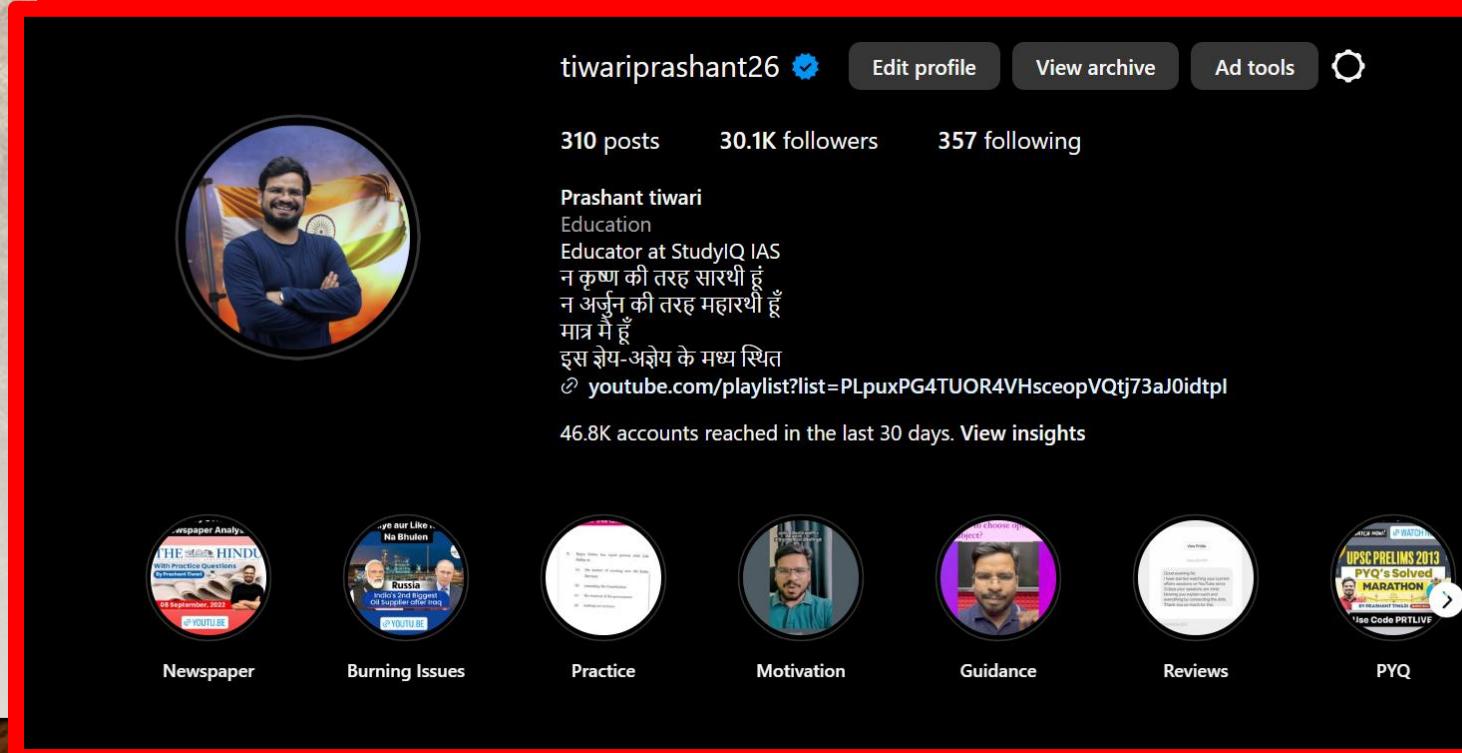


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