



Topics



- bathymetry
- membranous nephropathy
- Inflammatory Bowel disease
- Payment aggregators
- New Telecom law
- India in the 'priority watch list'
- civilisation of Tartessos
- Mains



By saurabh pandey sir.



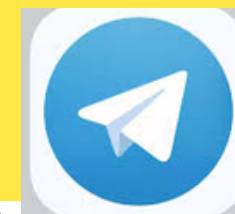
Target Mains 2024/25



Q“ Ocean regulates the climate and climate shapes marine ecology” Discuss

प्रश्न" महासागर जलवायु को नियंत्रित करता है और जलवायु समुद्री पारिस्थितिकी को आकार देती है" चर्चा करें

**send your answer - Saurabh pandey
upsc telegram channel**



Dr. 15/4/24

Saurabh Pandey CSF

Bhargavi
Sai Kousha

प्रश्न संख्या
(Question No.)

306 words

U.P.S.C.

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ISM

"Human Rights at sea can be protected with good maritime security and good ocean governance". Discuss.

The safety and security of Indian seafarers have become increasingly concerning.

India has proactively addressed these issues by submitting three papers to the International Maritime Organisation's legal committee, emphasising the need for comprehensive maritime security and improved contractual conditions for seafarers.

MARITIME SECURITY CHALLENGES

1. Resurgence of piracy & Armed robbery:-

(eg) recent incident off the coast of Somalia, hijackings of vessels.

2. Extremist attacks & regional conflicts:-

with geopolitical tensions rising in sensitive regions such as Red Sea & the Strait of Hormuz, the safety of commercial vessels and seafarers navigating these areas is of concern.

3. Unlawful recruitment practices:-

• exploitation of seafarers (over 200 cases)

U.P.S.C.

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have been reported to the Indian Maritime Administration since 2020.

4. Vulnerability to incidents:-

- India with 9.35% of global seafarers & ranking 3rd globally.
- and endanger the safety of seafarers, also disrupt their livelihoods.

5. Lack of legal representation & awareness

6. Psychological impact:-

- constant threat of piracy leads to stress, anxiety, trauma.
- (eg) Maritime Union of India highlighted a 40% increase in kidnappings in the Gulf of Guinea.

INDIA'S INITIATIVES TO PROTECT SEAFARER'S RIGHTS: HUMAN RIGHTS AT SEAFARERS

1. Aims - to raise awareness of human rights issues.

2. Highlights cases of abuse, exploitation & illegal detention.

3. The initiative seeks to hold ship owners & other stakeholders accountable.

4. Documenting cases of seafarers with evidences.

5. It engages in advocacy & awareness campaigns.
6. It Advocates for the establishment of mechanisms to protect seafarers rights, including grievance mechanisms, legal aid services.

WAY FORWARD

- comprehensive approach to address policy
- Government support to ensure safety by providing assistance & resources.
- Enhanced protection measures - strengthening security protocols, improving contractual conditions etc.
- Financial and social support to their families.

Ensuring the safety & security of Indian seafarers is paramount in maintaining the validity of the maritime industry and safeguarding international trade. Sustained international cooperation and government support are essential to effectively protect the rights and well-being of Indian seafarers.

TOPERS FIRST FULL LENGTH TEST -2 (PRELIMS VIJAY SERIES)



- 1- Ankur
- 2- Puja yadav
- 3- Nikki Aggarwal

Prelims Vijay series TEST-2 (full length) ×

Student leaderboard

Student name	Marks	Grade	Rank
Ankur	137.93/200	B	1
Puja Yadav	118.6/200	B	2
Nikki Aggarwal	101.92/200	B	3
MAYANK AWASTHI	101.26/200	B	4th
Renu	93.23/200	C	5th
Asmita	89.94/200	C	6th

Skin lightening creams laden with mercury take a toll on the kidney

Researchers from Kerala have reported a series of cases from Malappuram district where the regular use of fairness creams has been linked to nephrotic syndrome. Heavy metal screening of the blood and urine samples of these patients revealed high levels of mercury, the toxic effects of which are well-known

C. Maya

In the heels of recent news reports on how keratin-based hair-straightening products containing glycolic acid derivatives led to severe kidney injury in women, researchers from Kerala have reported a series of cases wherein the use of fairness creams has been linked to nephrotic syndrome.

In a study published in the latest issue of *Kidney International* ('NELL-1 associated membranous nephropathy linked to skin fairness cream use – insights from an Indian case series'), doctors describe a series of 15 cases of Membranous Nephropathy, reported by Aster MIMS Hospital, Kottakkal, Malappuram district, that were traced to the regular use of fairness creams. Heavy metal screening of the blood and urine samples of these patients revealed high levels of mercury, the toxic effects of which are well-known. An analysis of the fairness creams also showed that these contained high levels of mercury – in some instances, 10,000 times above the permissible limit of 1 ppm.

High proteinuria

Since 2021, Ranjith Narayanan, a nephrologist practising at two busy private hospitals in Kozhikode, had noticed a specific pattern in cases of membranous nephropathy diagnosed amongst his patients. They all had non-specific symptoms – fatigue, mild edema and frothy urine – but high levels of proteinuria, in the range of 6.5-22.2 g/day.

Membranous nephropathy (MN) is an autoimmune disease resulting in nephrotic syndrome, a condition when too much protein is released into the urine (proteinuria), ultimately resulting in renal failure. In approximately 70% to 80% of cases of MN, the target antigen has been phospholipase A-2 (PLA2R). However, in early 2023, when four or five cases of MN with a similar profile turned up consecutively in OP clinics, Dr. Narayanan and his colleagues decided to dig deeper. In this instance, most of the MN cases turned out to be PLA2R negative.

Recently, another antigen, Neural epidermal growth factor-like protein 1 (NELL-1), has been linked to a rare form of MN. A lab in Chennai identified all these patients to be positive for NELL-1. "In Tamil Nadu, most cases of MN caused by NELL-1 have been traced to use of traditional medicines, most of which have high levels of mercury. But all our patients



A skin lightening procedure being done at a beauty salon. S. SIVA SARAVANAN

denied using any indigenous medicines. The link between face creams containing mercury and nephrotic syndrome is well-established worldwide, which naturally led us to probe the use of cosmetics," says Dr. Narayanan.

Fairness cream

The patients admitted to fairly regular usage of fairness creams before they began experiencing non-specific or subtle symptoms. The research team then began prospectively evaluating all cases of MN and they also revisited cases from the past two years. Their study reports 15 cases of MN linked to NELL-1 and in 13 cases, patients had a history of use of fairness creams, most of which were unregulated brands offering rapid results and sold rampantly in local shops and on online platforms.

The key to limiting further kidney damage was recognising the actual cause of nephrotic syndrome by diligently focussing on the patient's clinical history. The mercury levels in blood/urine samples dropped within three months of the patients stopping the use of their fairness creams. Also, all patients responded well to RAAS

(renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system) blockade (the gold standard therapy for chronic kidney disease) and did not need immunosuppression.

"Our patients were lucky that we pinpointed the incriminating agent (fairness creams) early, so that renal function could be preserved in all patients



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The obsession with fair skin and the use of skin lightening products extends well beyond India and is said to be widely prevalent in African and Asian countries. However, despite widespread use, the serious systemic health issues that toxic cosmetic creams can induce are yet to be perceived as a global public health issue.

Impact of mercury

Mercury is a highly toxic heavy metal which is used in fairness/anti-ageing creams as in its inorganic form (mercury salts) it can inhibit the formation of melanin resulting in a lighter skin tone. The higher the levels of mercury in face creams, the better the whitening effect. This is naturally perceived as the product's effectiveness by gullible consumers, who become loyal customers of the product.

Chronic mercury poisoning from cosmetics is often missed because different organs and tissues respond differently to mercury, resulting in

atypical clinical presentations. Physicians need to be made more aware of the possibility of mercury poisoning when patients present with non-specific symptoms like pain, fatigue, cognitive decline or systemic issues like membranous nephropathy. However, the concept of equating beauty with fair skin is so ingrained in the minds of people that even after abundant cautioning, they are reluctant to stop the use of fairness creams, doctors say.

The larger public is unaware that mercury in face creams can be absorbed through the sweat glands, sebaceous glands, and hair follicles and absorbed by all tissues. Repeated topical use results in systemic toxicity, manifesting as damage to the kidneys and nervous system. The other adverse effects listed by WHO include skin discolouration and scarring, reduction in the skin's resistance to bacterial and fungal infections, anxiety, depression, psychosis and peripheral neuropathy. "We find that there is little acceptance from people to stop the use of a particular face cream because as soon as they stop using it, the skin becomes dark again.

Changing the attitude of society about skin colour is thus the larger challenge," Dr. Narayanan says. The Minamata Convention on Mercury, to which India is a signatory, is a global treaty "to protect human health and the environment from anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds" and it has been in force since 2017.

According to a new Zero Mercury Working Group (ZMWG) report released in October 2023, despite being banned by a global treaty, mercury-containing skin lightening products are still sold by some of the world's biggest online retailers to unsuspecting consumers. It said that of the 213 fairness products from 12 countries purchased and tested by NGOs, 191 (90%) had mercury concentrations ranging from 1.18 to 74,800.00 ppm of mercury, way above the 1 ppm limit mandated for cosmetics by many governments as well as the Minamata Convention.

"The strength of the current study was that it could establish the temporal relationship between the use of fairness creams and the occurrence of nephrotic syndrome. However, larger, multi-centric systemic studies on chronic mercury poisoning are required not just to understand the extent of the problem but also to persuade policy makers and regulators to clamp down on all cosmetics containing mercury at all," the researchers say.

(maya.c@thehindu.co.in)

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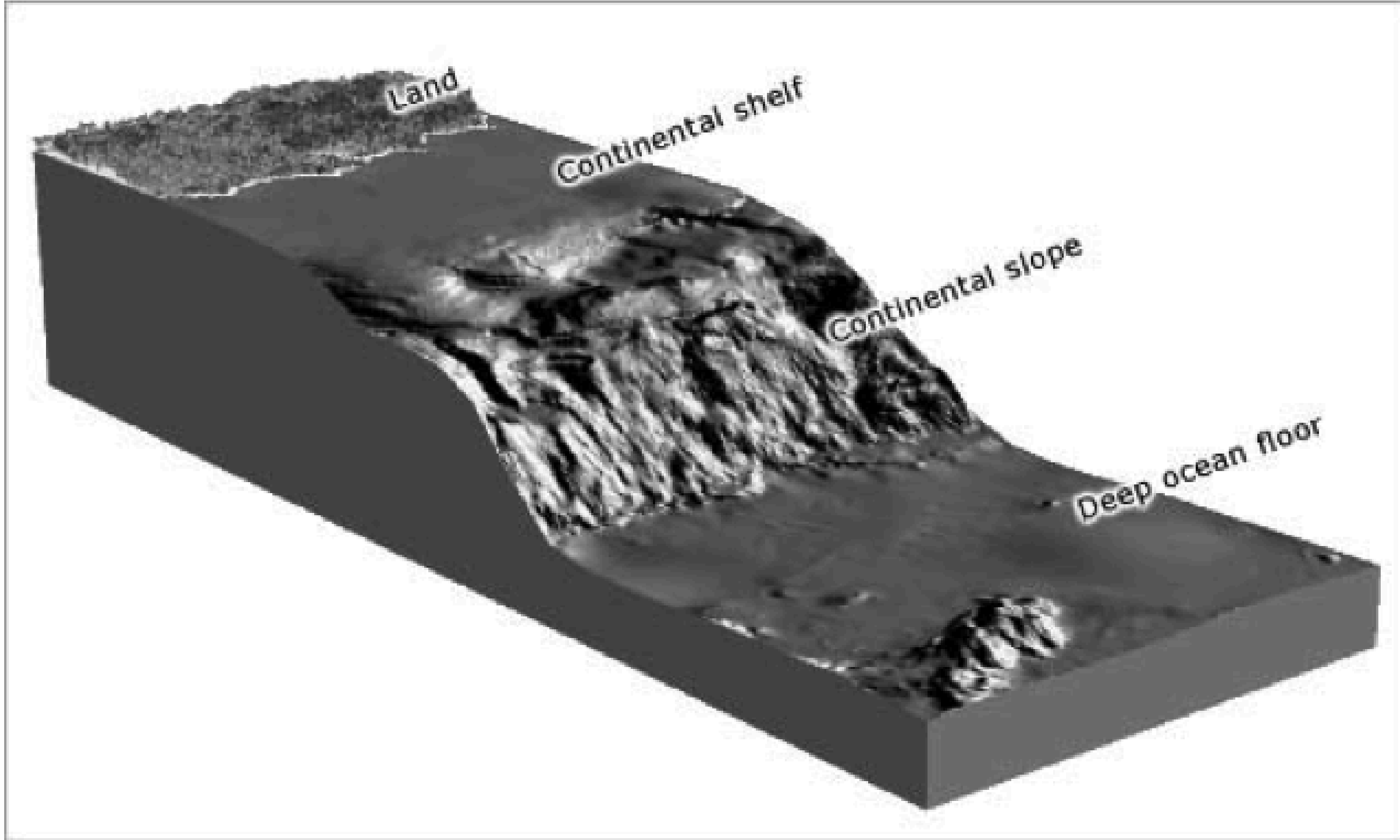


bathymetry

- A recent study of the Indian Ocean floor or the bathymetry.
- there is a significant improvement in the upper ocean salinity, temperature, and currents, particularly near the coast.
- “Oceans play a critical role in both weather and climate prediction and the maritime industry.
- Due to the vast economic benefits, it is essential to accurately forecast specific oceanographic parameters such as currents, temperature, and salinity of surface and subsurface on different time scales,

The Hindu analysis by saurabh pandey sir





- the study has highlighted the importance of bathymetry in advancing the understanding of ocean dynamics to improve the ocean state forecast, weather, and climate forecast over the Indian rim countries and subcontinent.
-

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Rising incidence of IBD cases across the globe is a cause for concern, say experts

Serena Josephine M.

The rising incidence of Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) across the globe has become a concern for doctors. While early diagnosis is lacking, diagnosis in itself is challenging considering that other conditions could mimic IBD.

"IBD is a significant problem. It comprises Ulcerative Colitis and Crohn's Disease and is characterised by inflammation. It is different from Irritable Bowel Syndrome which is predominantly non-inflammatory," Jonathan Leighton, president, American College of Gastroenterology, USA, said.

"Both Ulcerative Colitis and Crohn's Disease are complex immune-mediated diseases; there is a dysregulated immune response. We do believe there are genetic markers that contribute to the disease but not in isolation. There is a synergy between the external environment and gut bacteria," he added. There is an increasing incidence of IBD across the globe, including in North America and western Europe. "The prevalence is also rising... From 0.5% right now, the prevalence will increase to 0.6% in America," he said.

Early onset

There is also a rise in early onset cases among those under 18. For the Indian perspective, Vineet Ahuja, Professor of Gastroenterology, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, has pinpointed a challenge in diagnosing Crohn's disease. "We have peculiar issues such as intestinal tuberculosis, which is common in India and resembles Crohn's disease. The phenotype is very similar, and so is the clinical presentation. As a result, the challenge is greater,"

he said.

On incidence in India, Dr. Ahuja observed that lifestyle changes have contributed. "What was an uncommon condition three decades ago has become more common. Changes in lifestyle, a Westernised diet with high fat and high sugar, processed and packaged food cause an insult to the gut epithelium, precipitating inflammation."

T. S. Chandrasekar, founder and chief gastroenterologist, MedIndia Hospitals and Academy, and the Governor of American College of Gastroenterology, India region, said the incidence of IBD has almost doubled in India from 1990 to 2019, with a rise in the death rate as well.

A study in Tamil Nadu showed that there were more cases of Crohn's Disease than Ulcerative Colitis. Nearly 50% of IBD were Crohn's Disease and 40% were Ulcerative Colitis. It is important to catch patients early so treatment is better, he said.

Dr. Leighton noted that there is still a delay in diagnosis, particularly among the young. "The symptoms of IBD overlap with Irritable Bowel Syndrome. This does delay diagnosis. Individuals with alarming symptoms such as bleeding and severe abdominal pain need a complete evaluation," he said.

Delay in diagnosis

There are other diseases that mimic IBD, and there is a need to rule out infections. "There is no single diagnostic test for Ulcerative Colitis or Crohn's Disease. It is a combination of a physical, laboratory, and endoscopy. We have come a long way in the treatment of IBD. Over the last 25 years, biological therapy has emerged that

uses monoclonal antibodies directed at inflammatory pathways. Biologics have been developed to target different parts of the inflammatory pathways to control the disease thereby decreasing hospital stays and surgeries. In addition, we have developed small molecules that can be given orally that have had a significant impact."

Both stressed that the cost was a challenge. "There is no cure. It is a lifelong disease. So, in India, we are looking at low cost therapy such as faecal microbiota transplantation along with regular medication," Dr. Ahuja added.

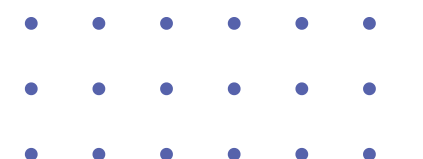
Environmental factors play a big role in IBD, Dr. Leighton said, adding: "This includes smoking and antibiotics. There are no human studies that have proved the role of diet, but we do think some foods such as super processed foods have the potential to be pro-inflammatory. A healthy diet avoiding highly processed food, and consuming wholesome food – for instance a Mediterranean diet – is recommended."

Dr. Ahuja said patients are advised to avoid being restrictive about their diet as they could become malnourished. "Avoid processed foods. We have an anti-inflammatory diet of curd and buttermilk, and less milk, more rice and millets, fruits, and vegetables. Avoid red meat and consume fish. This seems to be helpful," he said.

(Serena.m@thehindu.co.in)



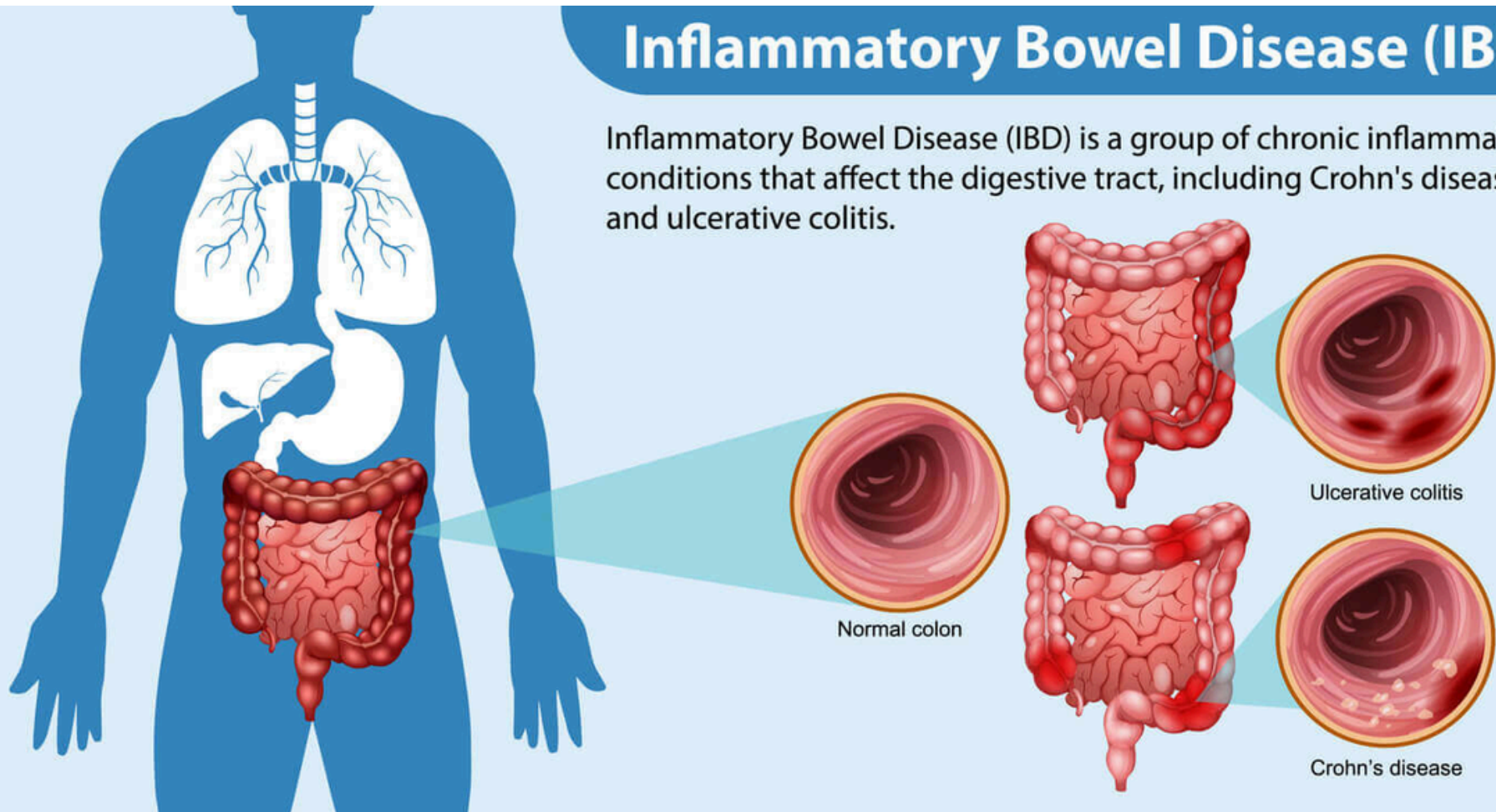
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Inflammatory Bowel disease

Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)

Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) is a group of chronic inflammatory conditions that affect the digestive tract, including Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.

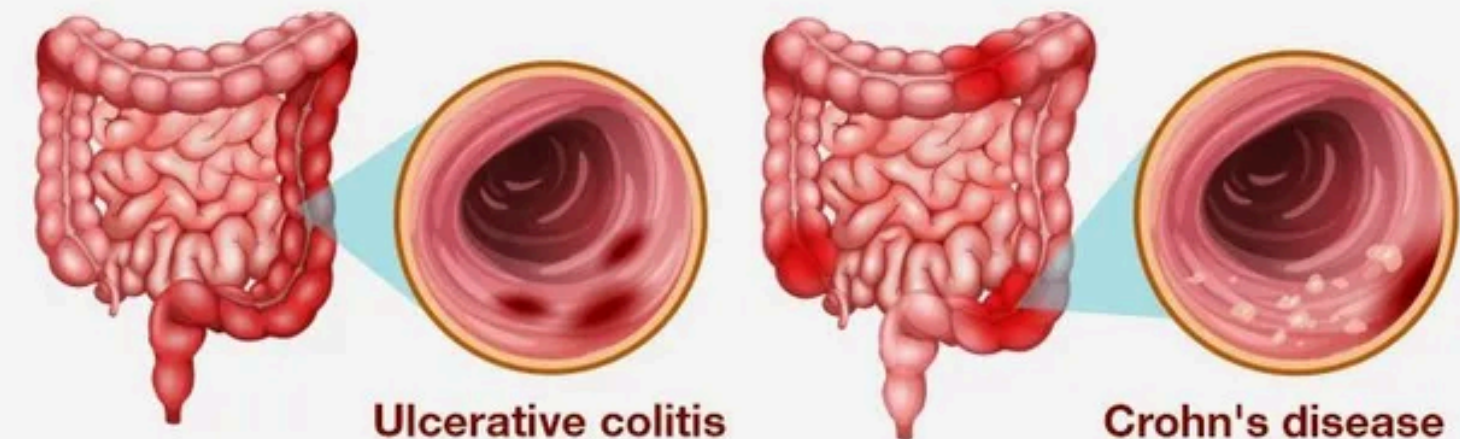


Types of Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)

There are two main types of IBD: Crohn's disease & Ulcerative colitis.

Ulcerative colitis only affects the inner lining of the colon and rectum. It is characterized by inflammation and ulcers that form in the lining of the colon.

Crohn's disease can affect any part of the digestive tract, from the mouth to the anus. It is characterized by inflammation that can spread deep into the layers of the affected tissue.



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RBI's draft rules for payment aggregators

Will non-bank payment aggregators need separate authorisation from the RBI? What lessons did the RBI incorporate from the Paytm Payments Bank crisis? What will happen to non-banking entities currently engaged in point-of-sale activities if they fail to comply with the RBI's approval-seeking timeframe?

EXPLAINER

Saptaparno Ghosh

The story so far: Following its announcement in June 2022 that it will seek better regulation of offline payment aggregators (PAs) facilitating proximity or face-to-face transactions, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) floated two consultation papers earlier this month. The first deals with activities of offline PAs, while the second proposes to strengthen the ecosystem's safety by expanding instructions for Know Your Customer (KYC), due diligence of onboarded merchants and operations in Escrow accounts. The RBI has invited comments/feedback by May 31.

What exactly are the norms about? Payment aggregators are entities that settle payments from customers to merchants – unbundling the latter from creating a payment integration system of their own. The existing guidelines cover their activities in e-commerce sites and other online avenues. The latest draft guidelines propose to extend these regulations to offline spaces, entailing proximity or face-to-face transactions. The RBI observed back in June 2022 that the nature of activities carried out by the PAs, both online and offline, is similar. It aspires to bring in “synergy in regulation covering activities and operations of PAs apart from convergence on standards of data collection and storage.”

The proposed norms incorporate lessons from what happened this year with Paytm Payments Bank (PPBL) – albeit in an unrelated space. With the expansion of the scope of operations of PAs, the RBI appears to be strengthening the ecosystem against any opacity. The PPBL crisis was triggered by, among other things, major irregularities in the bank's KYC adherence. The Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU-IND) had imposed a penalty of ₹5.49 crore having found that PPBL “engaged in a number of illegal acts,



Regulatory shift: To track transactions, entities would be allowed to store limited data. GETTY IMAGES

including organising and facilitating online gambling." It added that the money generated from it was "routed and channelled through bank accounts maintained by these (illegal) entities" with the PPBL.

Is registration with the RBI being made compulsory?

The primary focus here is on non-bank PAs and within them, the offline extensions. Banks providing physical PA services would not require any separate authorisation from the RBI. They are only expected to comply with the revised instructions within three months after they are issued.

Non-banking entities providing PA services at the point of sale (PoS), that is, offline, would have to inform the RBI within 60 days (after the circular is issued), about their intent to seek authorisation.

The entities would, however, be allowed to continue their operations. As for non-banking entities providing PA services online – both those authorised and whose applications are pending – would be required to seek approval, about their existing offline PA activity, from the Department of Payment and Settlement Systems and the regulator within 60 days of the directions being mandated. This would also apply to any authorised non-banking entity aspiring to

enter the online and/or offline PA space in the future.

The RBI's directions also stipulate that entities currently engaged in PoS activities must ensure they adhere to guidelines on merchant on-boarding, customer grievance redressal and dispute management, baseline technology recommendations, security, fraud prevention and risk management framework as per the previous framework within 3 months. For entities that would require fresh registration, the RBI has said continued adherence to existing guidelines framed in 2020 would be viewed positively while processing the applications.

Does it talk about provisions for sustainability?

The RBI proposes that non-banking entities currently providing proximity/face-to-face transaction services have a minimum net worth of ₹15 crore when they apply. This would be extended to ₹25 crore by March 31, 2028. The requirements are the same for new applicants, the difference being that a ₹25 crore net worth requirement would apply at the end of third financial year from when the authorisation is granted.

The RBI has proposed that existing offline operators unable to comply with the approval-seeking timeframe wind up their operations by July 31, 2025. Banks will also be directed to close all accounts

by the end of October next year should they fail to produce evidence of their application seeking authorisation.

What about KYC requirements?

The regulations aim to ensure that onboarded merchants do not collect and settle funds for services not offered on their platforms. While KYC is already mandatory, the regulations seek to make the provisions more nuanced.

The RBI's proposed instructions categorise merchants into small and medium merchants. Small merchants would constitute physical merchants with an annual business turnover of less than ₹5 lakh who are not registered under the GST regime. The regulator proposes that the PAs undertake 'contact point verification', that is, collect information physically to establish the existence of the firm. They must also verify the bank accounts in which their funds are settled. Medium merchants, defined as physical or online merchants with annual business turnover of less than ₹40 lakhs who are not registered under the GST, would also have to undergo contact point verification.

The PA would be expected to establish their existence by verifying one official document each of the proprietor, beneficial owner or attorney holder, and of the stated business.

The PAs must ensure that transactions undertaken by their merchants are in line with their business profile. They must assign risk-based payment limits to the merchants. Based on their transaction pattern, the merchant could be migrated to a higher degree of due diligence.

Does it propose storage of card data?

The draft regulations instruct that no entity, other than the card issuer and/or card network, can store data for proximity/face-to-face payments from August 1, 2025, and direct them to purge data stored previously. To track transactions and reconcile them, entities would be allowed to store limited data, that is, the last four digits of the card number and the issuer's name.

THE GIST



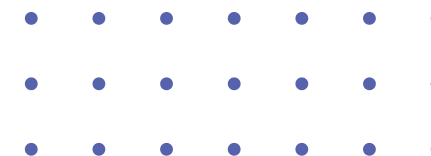
The Reserve Bank of India is proposing new regulations for offline payment aggregators (PAs) to enhance safety.



The proposed norms aim to extend existing guidelines to cover offline transactions and strengthen Know Your Customer requirements for merchants.



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Payment aggregators

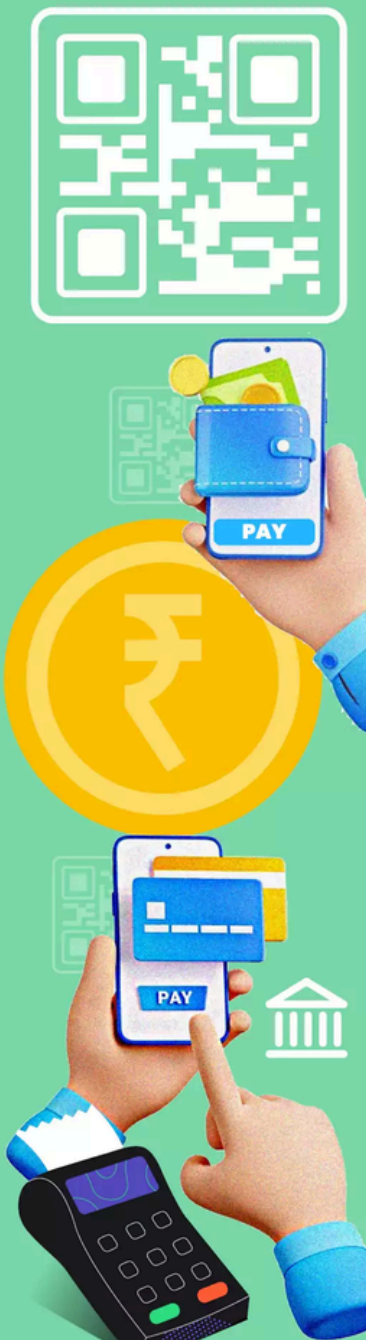
- Payment aggregators are entities that settle payments from customers to merchants – unburdening the latter from creating a payment integration system of their own.
- The existing guidelines cover their activities in e-commerce sites and other online avenues.
- The latest draft guidelines propose to extend these regulations to offline spaces, entailing proximity or face-to-face transactions.
- The RBI observed back in June 2022 that the nature of activities carried out by the PAs, both online and offline, is similar.
- It aspires to bring in “synergy in regulation covering activities and operations of PAs apart from convergence on standards of data collection and storage

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	Payment Gateway	Payment Aggregator
Role	<p>Payment gateways are software that process transactions</p> <p>Payment gateway can process only a specific mode of payment (e.g., a card PG can only process cards)</p>	<p>Payment aggregators are platforms that aggregate various payment modes and are also involved in fund movement</p> <p>PAs can process various payment modes (depending on the integration with banks, wallets etc.)</p>
Merchant Integration	A merchant has to integrate with an acquiring bank, which, in turn, uses the PG for transaction processing and fund settlement.	A merchant can integrate with a PA, which works with various acquiring banks, wallets, etc.
Examples	Cybersource, MPGS, FSS	Cashfree, PayU, RazorPay, Billdesk
Success Rate	<p>Depends on the PG's technical capabilities</p> <p>If a merchant's acquiring bank is dependent on a single PG, then that PG's performance impacts the success rate. Many acquiring banks use more than 1 PG to provide a higher success rate.</p>	<p>Payment aggregator works with various acquiring banks (ICICI, HDFC, Yes), who work with various PGs (CyberSource, MPGS, etc.)</p> <p>With routing logic, PA can deliver a higher SR if the PG of the acquiring bank has issues.</p>

List of new payment aggregators



Name of company	Existing Business	Previous Status
Razorpay	Online/Offline merchant payments	Under embargo
Cashfree	Online merchant payments	Under embargo
Paymentz	White labelled payment gateway	New entity
Google India Digital Services	UPI Payments	Existing Payment Aggregator
Open Financial Technologies	Neo-banking for SMEs	Existing Payment Aggregator
Enkash	Expense management for corporations	New entity
Tata Digital	UPI payments, ecomm quick commerce	New entity
DigiO	Digital identity verification	New entity

Source: ET Research

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Why does the Centre want to modify the 2G spectrum verdict?

Why does the Centre want the apex court to revisit its decade-old 2G spectrum scam verdict? Is the allocation of scarce natural resources like spectrum through auction the only way to ensure transparency?

Aaratrika Bhaumik

The story so far:

More than a decade after the Supreme Court cancelled 122 telecom licenses in the landmark 2G spectrum scam judgment, the Union government has moved an application to allocate spectrum administratively, bypassing auctions. An administrative allocation would give the government control over the selection of operators. On Monday, Attorney General R. Venkataramani, appearing for the Centre made a plea for urgent listing of the application before Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud. The development comes a month after the Delhi High Court admitted the CBI's appeal against the acquittal of former Union Telecom Minister A. Raja and other high-profile politicians in the scam.

What is the 2G spectrum scam?

The alleged 2G spectrum allocation scam is said to have originated in 2008 when the then Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government sold 122 2G

basis to specific telecom operators. In its charge sheet filed in April 2011, the CBI alleged that there was a loss of ₹ 30,984 crore to the exchequer as a result of discrepancies in the allocation process.

In the meantime, the Centre for Public Interest Litigation and Subramanian Swamy filed petitions in the top Court alleging a ₹70,000 crore scam in the grant of telecom licenses in 2008. In February 2012, a division Bench of the Supreme Court cancelled the licenses while cautioning that an FCFS basis for the allocation of scarce natural resources can be prone to misuse.

Advocating for competitive auctions instead, the Court said, "In our view, a duly publicised auction conducted fairly and impartially is perhaps the best method for discharging this burden and the methods like first-come-first-served when used for alienation of natural resources/public property are likely to be misused by unscrupulous people who are only interested in garnering maximum financial benefit and have no respect for the constitutional ethos and values." It emphasised that the burden lies on the

"non-discriminatory method" of the auction is adopted "by giving wide publicity so that all eligible persons can participate in the process".

What is the Centre's plea?

In its plea, the Centre has pointed out that the assignment of spectrum is required to discharge sovereign and public interest functions such as security, safety, and disaster preparedness. The Centre elaborated that administrative allocation is required when demand is lower than supply or for space communication. In such cases, it would be "more optimal and efficient for spectrum to be shared by multiple players, rather than being broken up into smaller blocks for the sole purpose of exclusive assignment", it said.

The Court was apprised that following its 2012 ruling, the administrative assignment of non-commercial spectrum has been on a purely interim basis, subject to the government's final decision on pricing and policy. However, it was now time to "firm up a spectrum assignment framework in suitable cases to best subserve the common good", the

envisages the following prayer – "(a) Issue appropriate clarifications that the government may consider the assignment of spectrum through the administrative process if so determined through due process in accordance with the law, and if such assignment is in pursuit of governmental functions or the public interest so requires, or auction may not be preferred due to technical or economic reasons". The Union government has also placed reliance on the observations made by a Constitution Bench while deciding a Presidential reference concerning the February 2012 verdict. The Bench pointed out that the auction method prescribed in the verdict was not to be considered a "constitutional mandate" for the alienation of natural resources excluding spectrum.

What is the significance of the new telecom law?

The Telecommunications Act, 2023, passed by the Parliament last year empowers the government to assign spectrum for telecommunication through administrative processes other than auction for entities listed in the First Schedule. These include entities engaged in national security, defence, and law enforcement as well as Global Mobile Personal Communication by Satellites such as Space X, and Bharti Airtel-backed OneWeb. The government can also assign part of a spectrum that has already been assigned to one or more additional entities, known as secondary assignees, and even terminate assignments where a spectrum or a part of it has remained

THE GIST

More than a decade after the Supreme Court cancelled 122 telecom licenses in the landmark 2G spectrum scam judgment, the Union government has moved an application for a "certain class" of spectrum to be allocated through administrative processes.

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New Telecom Law

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- The government can also assign part of a spectrum that has already been assigned to one or more additional entities, known as secondary assignees, and even terminate assignments where a spectrum or a part of it has remained underutilised for insufficient reasons

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Intellectual property: India features yet again on U.S. 'priority watch list'

Amiti Sen
NEW DELHI

The U.S. has once again included India in the 'priority watch list' of countries, along with China, Russia, Venezuela, and three others, for alleged problems related to IP protection and enforcement, and has said there will be particularly intense bilateral engagement on the matter during the coming year.

There has been progress under the U.S.-India Trade Policy Forum in addressing issues of trademark infringement investigations and pre-grant opposition proceedings, but numerous long-standing concerns remain, per the U.S. Trade Representative's 2024 Special 301 report released on Thursday.

'High online piracy'
"These include inadequate IP enforcement, including high rates of online piracy, an extensive trademark opposition backlog, and insufficient legal means to



Under the radar: India has been on the 'priority watch' list of countries for many years. REUTERS

protect trade secrets," it said.

Among other things, India still needs to fully implement the WIPO Internet Treaties and ensure that copyright statutory licences do not extend to interactive transmissions," the report added.

The USTR releases the Special 301 Report annually, highlighting the state of IP protection and enforcement regimes in various countries it trades with.

India has been on the 'priority watch' list of

countries for many years, which, according to the USTR office, indicates that serious problems exist in the country concerning IP protection, enforcement, or market access for Americans relying on IP.

India's stance

New Delhi, however, has always maintained that its intellectual property laws were in strict adherence to the WTO's Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement and that it was not bound

by any global rules to make changes in its laws.

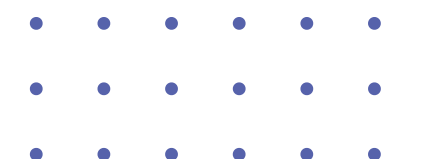
No action is threatened by the U.S. against countries on the 'priority watch list', but if a country slips further and is categorised a 'priority country', Washington may impose 'retaliatory' measures. Indonesia, Chile, and Argentina are the other countries on the 'priority watch list'.

Other trading partners

Twenty trading partners are on the 'watch list', including countries that the U.S. believes merit bilateral attention to address underlying IP problems but are better than the 'priority watch list' countries.

Algeria, Barbados, Belarus, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, Guatemala, Mexico, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, and Vietnam are on the 'watch list'.

(The writer is with *The Hindu businessline*)



India in the 'priority watch list'

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United States Trade Representative (USTR)



- The Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) was created in 1962 to advise the President on trade issues, lead international trade negotiations, and oversee the resolution of disputes, enforcement actions and other matters before global trade policy organizations such as the World Trade Organization.
- With more than 200 committed public servants, USTR meets with governments, business groups, legislators and the general public to gather input on trade issues and discuss the President's trade policy positions.
- With offices in Washington, Geneva, and Brussels, USTR is also part of the Executive Office of the President.

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Trying too hard: Archaeologists work at the Casas de Turunuelo Tartessian archaeological site in Guarena. AFP

In Spain, searching for lost civilisation of Tartessos

Agence France-Presse
GUARENÀ

For centuries, the lost civilisation of Tartessos has been shrouded in mystery. But 3,000 years after flourishing in the Iberian peninsula, its secrets are slowly emerging thanks to the meticulous work of archaeologists.

Viewed by historians as Western Europe’s oldest civilisation, Tartessos has long been considered a “mysterious” puzzle, but little by little the pieces “are falling into place”, archaeologist Sebastian Celestino Perez said.

A member of the Spanish National Research Council, he has led the excavation team since it began working at the site in 2015 where last year they discovered five stone faces.

Mr. Celestino Perez said at the time it represented a “profound paradigm shift” in their understanding of this ancient civilisation and why it suddenly disappeared after 400 years.

“It was the first time that human figures from the Tartessian world had been found,” said the bespectacled 66-year-old, who described the site as being in “excellent condition”.

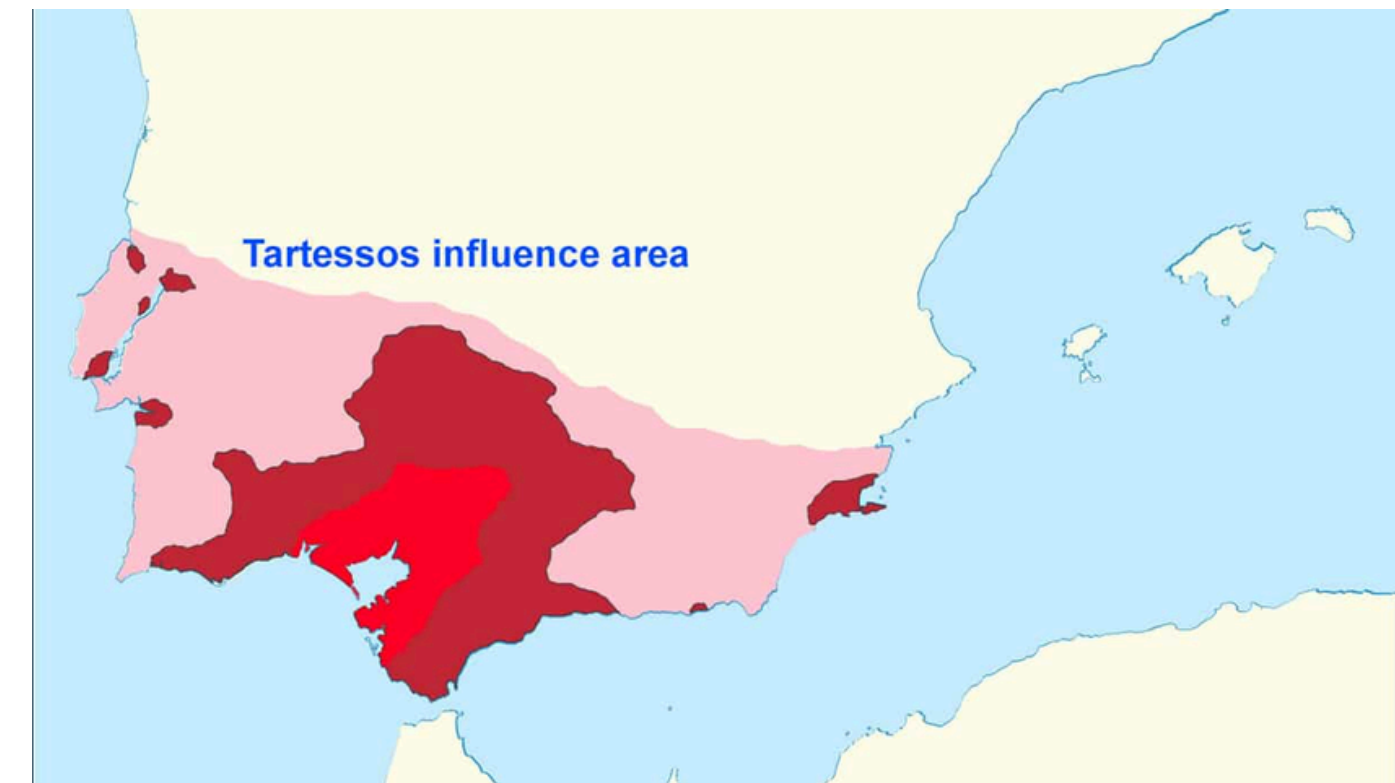
A society that emerged out of the contact between the indigenous Iberian population and traders either from Phoenicia or Greece, Tartessos flourished from the ninth to the fifth century BCE in an area extending from Extremadura to the southern Andalusia region and an adjoining area in Portugal.

In recent years many theories have been put forward to explain the disappearance of Tartessian civilisation, including severe drought or recurrent flooding, both of which would have left the land unworkable, forcing the inhabitants to leave.



civilisation of Tartessos

- The Tartessos were a Bronze Age society that flourished in the Iberian Peninsula in southern Spain some 3,000 years ago.
- They were a near-mythic civilisation, rich in resources and technologies. But the advanced society vanished mysteriously some 2,500 years ago.



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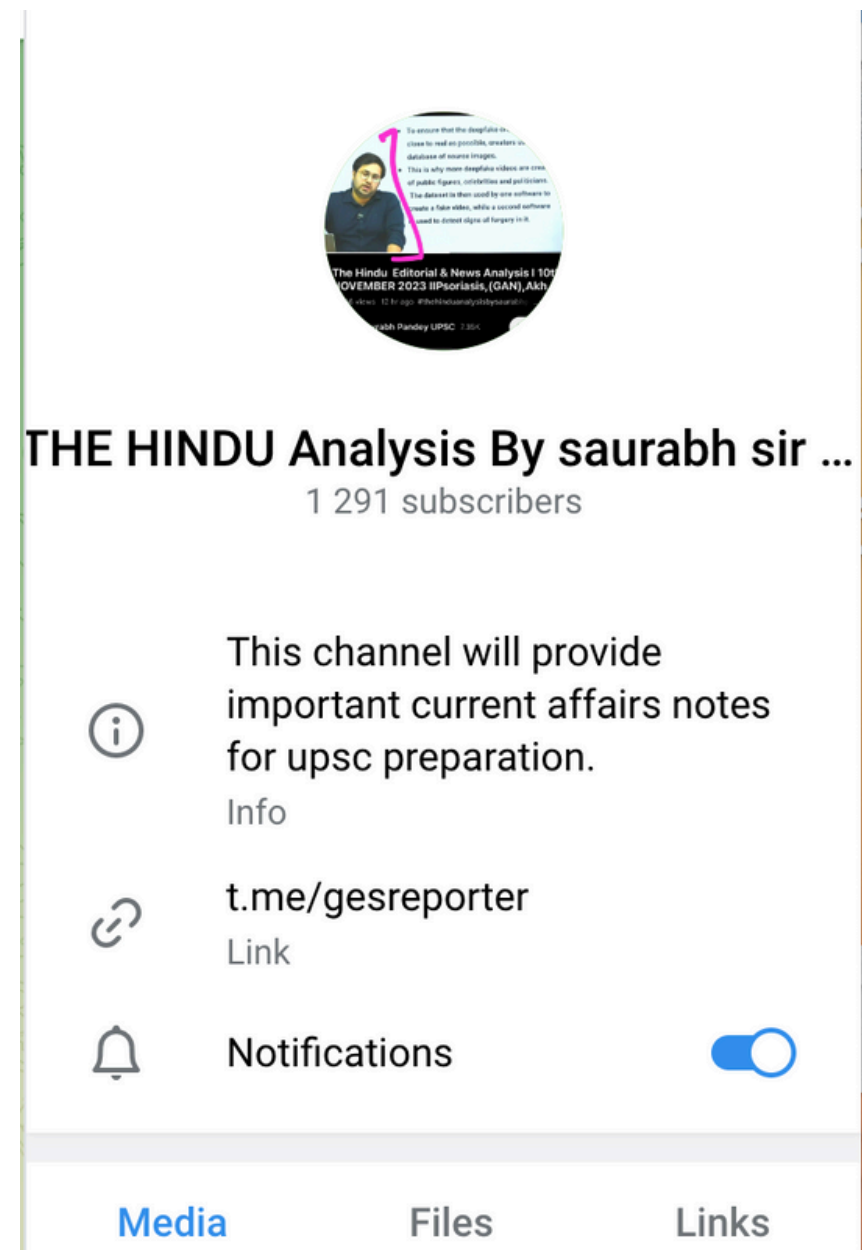
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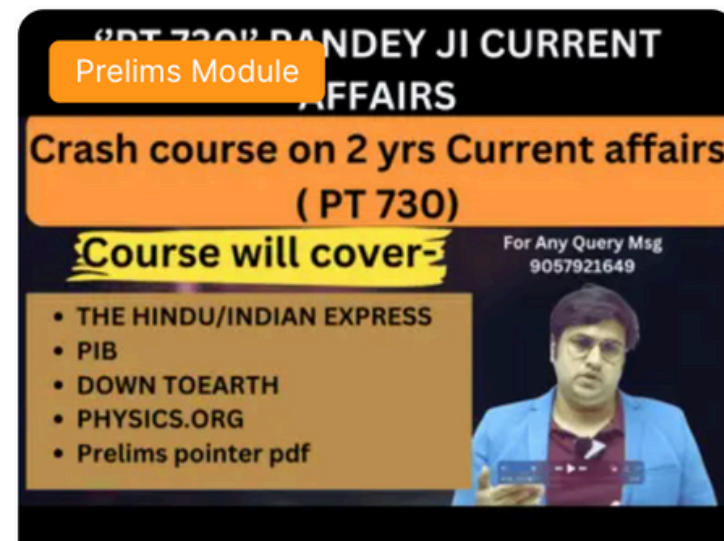
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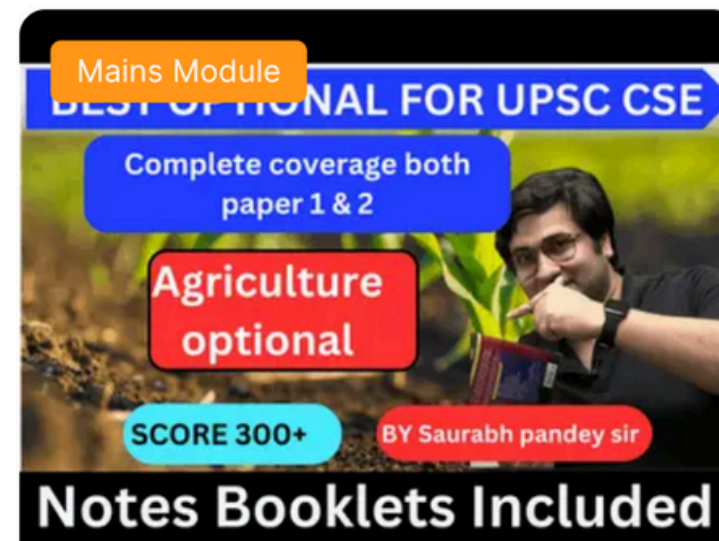
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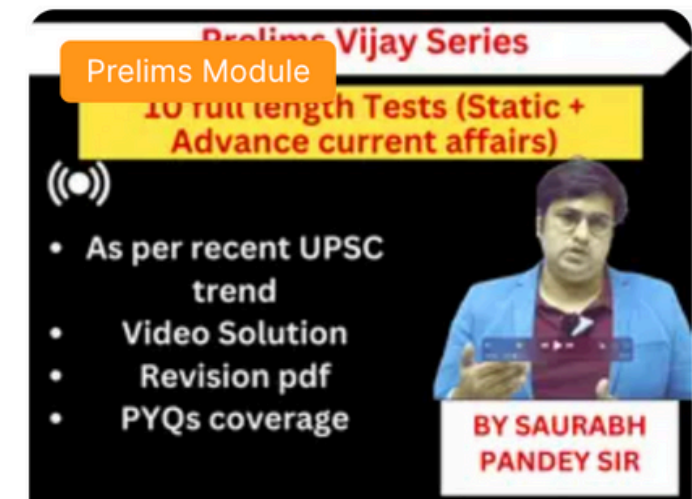
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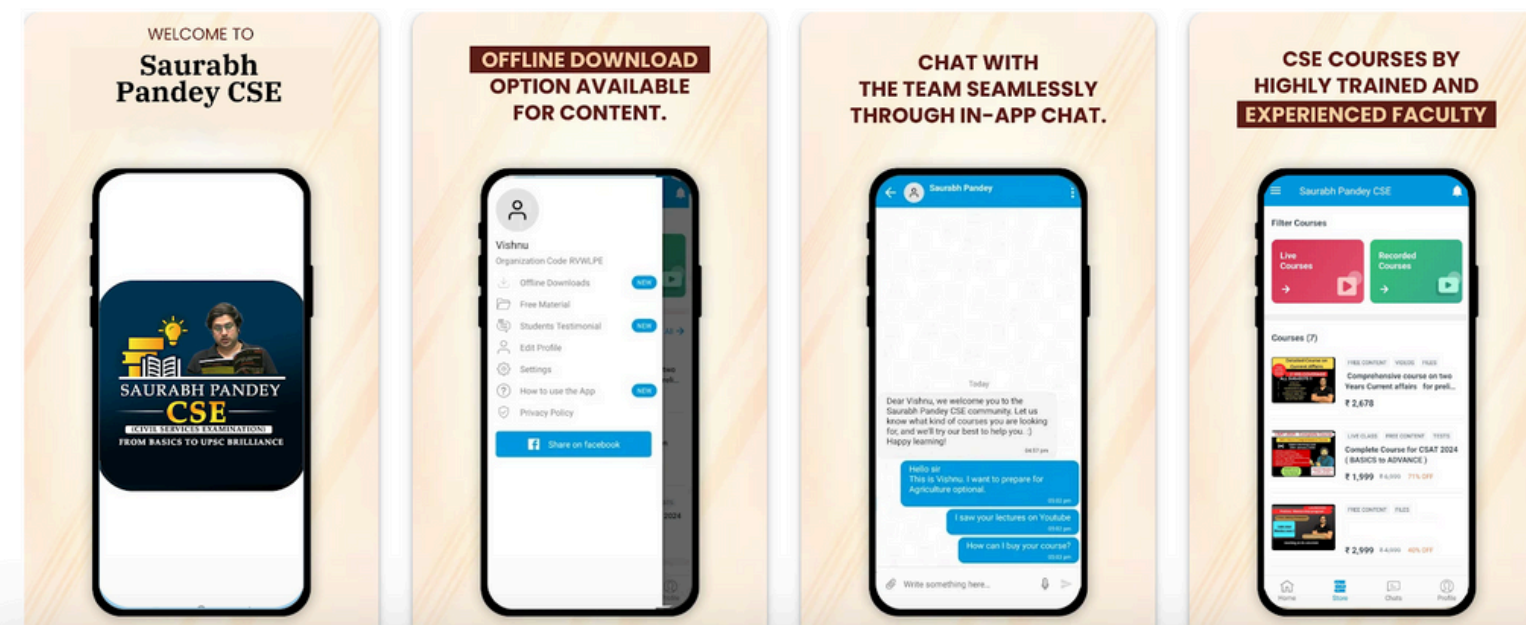
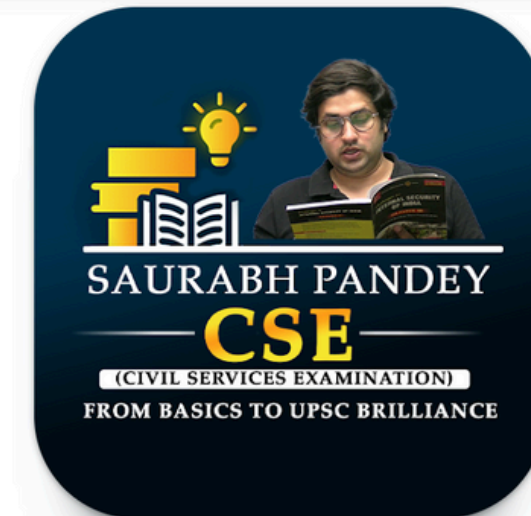
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