



THE HINDU ANALYSIS

15th March 2024

by saurabh
pandey



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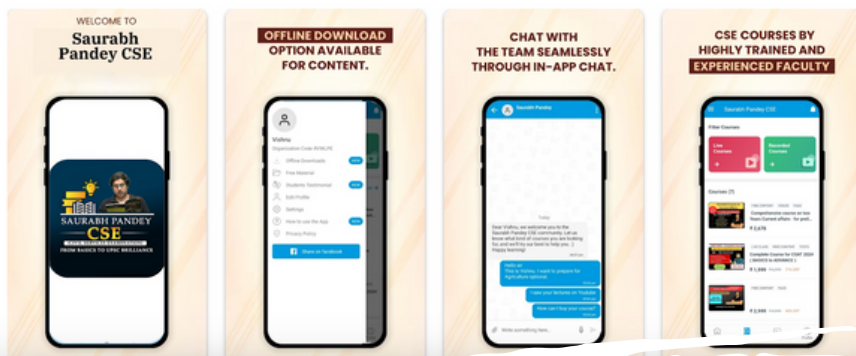
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RHODAMINE



Rhodamine-B is a fluorescent dye used in cosmetics, textile and leather industries. It is used as a food colouring agent not only in cotton candy but also in sweets, various manchurian items and pakodas. GETTY IMAGES

Why govts. are seeing red on Rhodamine B in street food

The Hindu Bureau

On February 17, Tamil Nadu banned the sale of cotton candy or candy floss after analysis confirmed the presence of Rhodamine-B, an industrial dye, in samples lifted from stalls in Chennai. Since then, the Karnataka government has banned the use of harmful colouring agents in cotton candy and "Gobi Manchurian", while Andhra Pradesh has begun lifting samples for analysis.

Rhodamine-B is a textile dye, and its use in food has a huge impact on health. Meenakshi Bajaj, dietician, Tamil Nadu Government Multi Super Speciality Hospital, explains: "Rhodamine-B is a fluorescent dye used in cosmetics, textile and leather industries. It gives you brilliant pinks, greens and blues. Unfortunately, it is used as a food colouring agent not only in cotton candy but also in the preparation of sweets, various manchurian items and pakodas and in the preparation of sauces for Chinese food."

Rhodamine-B can cause cell death. In long-term use, it can damage the cerebellum tissue and brainstem. There is recent evidence that it damages the kidney, liver and increases the risk of stomach tumour. It is not a food colour but is toxic to the human body and is a carcinogen

"The problem has existed for many years," Prasad Eswaran, senior consultant, Medical Oncology, Apollo Proton Cancer Centre, Chennai, said. "Rhodamine-B has been routinely used in many coloured foods such as cotton candy to make it look appealing and attractive to young persons and children. Fortunately, the government has woken up to a longstanding request from the medical fraternity. When taken in small quantities for many years, it can cause a lot of health problems including cancers," he added.

Long-term consumption can cause allergies that can manifest in the form of irritation of the lip, tongue as well as eyes and also cause upper respiratory allergies, Ms. Meenakshi said. "Studies have shown that Rhodamine-B can cause cell death. In long-term use, it can damage the cerebellum tissue and brainstem. There is recent evidence that it damages the kidney, liver and increases the risk of stomach tumour. It is not a food colour but is toxic to the human body and is a carcinogen."

Dr. Eswaran said, "While health issues such as gastric burning sensation, irritation and acidity can be managed with medicines and lifestyle modification, Rhodamine B can cause cancer too."

FSSAI has approved certain food colours and flavors as safe for consumption. These include: Caramel, Riboflavin (Lactoflavin), Saffron, Annatto, Curcumin (Turmeric), Carotene and carotenoids, including Beta-carotene, red colour from Ponceau 4R, Carmoisine, and Erythrosine, yellow colour (Tartrazine and Sunset Yellow FCF), blue colour (Indigo Carmine and Brilliant Blue FCF) and green colour (Fast Green FCF).

(serena.mg@thehindu.co.in)





Rhodamine-B

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Bhutan's opening move, its Gelephu gambit

In an age where connectivity projects, mega-highways and smart cities are in currency worldwide, Bhutan's plans for a regional economic hub at Gelephu, a town bordering Assam in India, are high on Bhutan Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay's agenda in Delhi this week in talks with the government in Delhi and India Inc. in Mumbai. The plan, launched by Bhutan's King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck in December 2023, is to build a "Gelephu Mindfulness City" (GMC) with a unique Bhutanese architectural blueprint across 1,000 square kilometres, as a special administrative zone with separate, investor-friendly laws.

As a carbon-neutral city, Gelephu would include only non-polluting industries (mainly IT, education, hotel and hospital sectors), and would be promoted as an investment destination and health and wellness hub in the middle of the region. In that sense the city is more like newer global peers – planned cities such as Saudi Arabia's Neom and Indonesia's Nusantara than financial hubs with glass-cased skyscrapers such as Dubai, Hong Kong and Singapore. It would also lie at the crossroads of India's "Act East" plans for connectivity to Myanmar, and on to Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Indo-Pacific region as well as the new India-Japan connectivity plans between India's north-eastern States through Bangladesh to the Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean. At the 7th Indian Ocean Conference 2024 in Perth in February, External Affairs Minister highlighted the "need for lateral land-based connectivity across the Indian Ocean region,... essential to supplement and complement the maritime flows" through "initiatives like the IMEC [India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor] to India's West and the Trilateral Highway to India's East".

Despite the lofty ambitions, the Gelephu gambit will require a major leap of faith from India. To begin with, the geography of Gelephu, a rare broad plain in an otherwise mountainous country, poses challenges. With warmer temperatures than in the mountains, Gelephu gets high amounts of rainfall during a monsoon season that lasts several months, leading to considerable flooding each year. The surrounding forests and wildlife populations place Gelephu right in the middle of elephant corridors. Insurgencies in Assam and the northeastern States and just across the Indian border in Myanmar have been an area of great concern in the past, leading to a major military operation (Operation All Clear) by Bhutan's former (Fourth)



Suhasini Haidar

king in 2003, working with the Indian Army to drive out militant groups sheltering in the area. As Gelephu is landlocked, it is dependent on other countries, primarily India, to provide the infrastructure for trade and transport out of the special administrative region.

A necessity for Bhutan

For Bhutan, the Gelephu project is necessitated by its economic challenges. Apart from hydropower, tourism is Bhutan's mainstay, but the kingdom has always discouraged mass tourism, preferring instead a "high value, low volume" motto to ensure sustainability. However, if Bhutan wants to increase these revenues, it must scale up its capacity to take in more tourists and visitors and land bigger planes, which need a much larger airport than the present one in the narrow Paro valley.

The first part of the Gelephu project involves scaling up the Gelephu airport and tarmac to international standards, which will need financing and expertise from India. The growing "outmigration" of Bhutanese youth in search of jobs abroad is another challenge, and the government hopes a mega project such as Gelephu will stem that. Finally, there is Bhutan's most pressing geopolitical concern: pressure from its northern neighbour China to conclude a boundary resolution deal and to establish diplomatic ties. Far away to the south, Gelephu offers Bhutan a way to open itself up in a controlled manner to the rest of the world, while also continuing negotiations with Beijing for a stable border.

For India too, the worry of Bhutan – its only direct neighbour not currently in Beijing's orbit – broadening its ties with China should keep it focussed on the Gelephu project. India and Bhutan have thus far built an idyllic relationship, based on a strong understanding between every Bhutan's king and Indian Prime Minister over the past 75 years. Bhutan's requests have seldom ever been rejected, and India is the leading source of investments in Bhutan, comprising 50% of its total foreign direct investment. New Delhi would also be wary of "missing an opportunity" of the kind seen in Sri Lanka's Hambantota a decade ago, which sent the close neighbour to China, caused unsustainable debt and is a project that risks becoming a "white elephant". When it comes to investment in infrastructure, Gelephu's needs will dovetail with New Delhi's own plans for the region: railway lines right up to the border with Bhutan; better roads to feed into the

trilateral highway to Myanmar and South East Asia; cooperation with Japan to coordinate roads and bridges construction in Bangladesh in order to access Chattogram and Mongla ports; and upgrading border posts with all three land neighbours to allow efficient trade. In addition to climate-friendly solar and wind power generation projects, India's plans for a South Asian power grid that would draw electricity from Nepal and Bhutan, with supply to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka would lend itself to more consistent power supplies needed for Gelephu.

Gelephu faces immense challenges, but New Delhi's other grand plans for connectivity confront challenges too. The International North-South Transport Corridor (through Iran-Russia via Chabahar to Central Asia) faces western sanctions, and the IMEC (through the United Arab Emirates-Saudia Arabia-Greece), and I2U2 initiative (Israel-India-UAE-U.S.) are challenged by Israel's bombardment of Gaza and Houthi attacks in the Red Sea. Meanwhile, nearly a decade of deteriorating ties with Pakistan have seen the Narendra Modi government virtually cut off any plans for land connectivity over India's western border.

It can recast ties

Obviously, the conditions for a mega-smart city with no immediate returns from the investment envisioned for the GMC, are not optimal at present. However, as the global setting grows more polarised and countries increasingly opt for "tribal" foreign policies that draw more from traditional allies in their respective neighbourhoods, India too must find its tribe in South Asia: a region that shares language, faith, culture, geography and climate. The goodwill generated by India's generous support to Sri Lanka during its economic crisis and steadfast relationship with Bangladesh can be multiplied by similar forays in other directions, such as helping Nepal defray the costs of its new airports by allowing overflight rights, continuing the projects committed to the Maldives despite recent setbacks in ties, and even considering a new chapter with Pakistan, amidst all its other political and economic turmoil. To that end, the Gelephu project offers a chance for the region to conjure an imagination beyond the problematic present – one that is a huge gamble for Bhutan, but also a potential gamechanger for the region, with help from India.

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The mega project is a huge gamble for Bhutan but can be a gamechanger for the region, with help from India



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GELEPHU

Bhutan's plans for a regional economic hub at Gelephu, a town bordering Assam in India, are high on Bhutan Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay's agenda



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GELEPHU - CHALLENGES

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GELEPHU - INDIA'S CONTEXT

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- When it comes to investment in infrastructure, Gelephu's needs will dovetail with New Delhi's own plans for the region: railway lines right up to the border with Bhutan; better roads to feed into the trilateral highway to Myanmar and South East Asia;
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CAA and status of judicial proceedings

How have the newly notified rules eased the process of granting Indian citizenship to specific communities under the CAA? What arguments have been presented for challenging its constitutionality? What is the significance of the government's assertion that the CAA does not affect legal, democratic, or secular rights?

EXPLAINER

Aaratrika Bhaumik

The story so far:

Four years after Parliament passed the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) notified the rules to implement the law on March 11. It fast-tracks citizenship for undocumented immigrants from six non-Muslim communities – Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Parsi, Christian and Jain – from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. The CAA is also under challenge before the Supreme Court, with several petitioners moving fresh pleas seeking a stay on the implementation of the rules.

What are the implications of CAA?

In December 2019, Parliament passed an amendment to The Citizenship Act, 1955 (1955 Act) introducing a new proviso to Section 2(b) which defines "illegal migrants." Accordingly, undocumented immigrants who entered India on or before December 31, 2014, and whom the Central government has exempted under the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920, or the Foreigners Act, 1946, would be eligible for citizenship under the 1955 Act. However, certain tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura were exempted from the legislation's ambit. To access these protected areas, an Inner Line Permit (ILP) is needed from the concerned State governments.

A key concern is that when viewed in combination with the proposed all-India National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC), the CAA has the potential to disproportionately impact Muslims residing in India. In the event of people being excluded from NRIC, non-Muslims may have an opportunity to get included through the CAA, while it may be denied to Muslims. A Supreme Court-monitored National Register of Citizens that took place in Assam in 2021 left out over 19 lakh people from the citizenship register.

On May 28, 2021, the Union government issued an order under Section 16 of the 1955 Act, granting District Collectors in five States with high migrant populations the power to grant citizenship to groups identified in the



Protest march: Petitioners challenge the Citizenship Amendment Act's constitutionality. AFP

2019 amendment. In its 2021-22 Annual Report, the MHA stated that in 2021, 1,414 citizenship certificates were granted under CAA provisions. However, after petitions were filed alleging that this order was a "ruse" to implement CAA, the MHA contended before the court that its order had "no relation whatsoever" with the CAA and that it merely delegated "the power (of granting citizenship by registration and naturalisation) to the local authorities in particular cases."

With the newly notified rules, the Centre has eased the process of granting Indian citizenship to members of the specified communities by excluding the requirement of a "valid passport" of their origin countries or a valid visa from India. Instead, "any document" that shows one of the parents, grandparents or even great-grandparents of the applicant was from one of these countries is sufficient to prove their nationality. Additionally, a certificate issued by an elected member of a local body can be a replacement for a visa.

After the legislation's enactment in 2019, the Indian Union Muslim League (IUM) filed a petition challenging its constitutionality, which was joined by close to 200 petitioners. These petitioners challenge the law for violating Article 14 of the Constitution by making religion a qualifier for citizenship.

The CAA has also been dubbed as a move to subvert the Assam Accord of 1985 that deems any person who cannot prove his ancestry beyond March 24, 1971, as an alien and does not differentiate on grounds of religion. The petitions contend

that the law will further multiply the "uncontrolled influx of illegal migrants from Bangladesh to Assam."

How has the Supreme Court responded?

Calling the CAA a "benign piece of legislation," the Centre in its affidavit before the Supreme Court said that it seeks to provide amnesty to specific communities from specified countries with a clear cut-off date. It highlighted that the law does not in any manner affect the legal, democratic or secular rights of any Indian citizen.

The affidavit further stated that the "narrowly tailored legislation" was passed to "tackle a specific problem, i.e., the persecution on the ground of religion in the light of the undisputable theocratic constitutional position in these specified countries, the systematic functioning of these States and the perception of fear that may be prevalent amongst minorities as per the *de facto* situation in these countries."

On December 18, 2019, a Bench comprising former Chief Justice of India (CJI) S.A. Bobde refused to stay the operation of the law and instead suggested that the government publicise the actual intent of the Act. The court rejected a similar plea for stay on January 22, 2020, by underscoring that it needs to hear the government first.

On October 6, 2022, a Bench comprising former CJI U.U. Lalit passed an order stating that final hearings in the case would begin on December 6, 2022. However, the case has not been listed

since then. As per the Supreme Court's website, the petitions are currently listed before a Bench headed by Justice Pankaj Mishra.

Why are petitioners seeking a stay on the rules?

The IUM and others have moved the top court seeking a stay on the rules notified on March 11.

They have pointed out how the Centre had earlier averted a push for a stay of the CAA in the Supreme Court nearly five years ago by arguing that the rules had not been framed. It has also been highlighted that the rules have done away with the tiered scrutiny of applications for citizenship by District Collectors on the ground, and recommendations of State governments as to the wisdom of granting citizenship.

They said that the government ought to have waited for a final decision from the Supreme Court before implementing the rules.

What is the significance of the challenge to Section 6A?

The proceedings against the CAA are also dependent on the outcome of the challenge to Section 6A of the 1955 Act which was introduced in furtherance of a Memorandum of Settlement called the "Assam Accord" signed on August 15, 1985.

In December last year, a five-judge Constitution Bench led by CJI D.Y. Chandrachud reserved its verdict on the validity of Section 6A after orally observing that the provision was enacted as a humanitarian measure in the wake of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War and was deeply interwoven in the country's history.

Section 6A determines who is a foreigner in Assam by establishing March 24, 1971, as the cut-off date for entry – those who came to the State on or after January 1, 1966, but before March 25, 1971, were to be declared as "foreigners" and would have all the rights and obligations of Indian citizens except that they would not be able to vote for 10 years.

If March 24, 1971, is upheld as a valid cut-off date for entry into the State, then CAA can be held to be violative of the Assam Accord since it establishes a different timeline.

THE GIST

The Ministry of Home Affairs notified the rules to implement the CAA, which fast-tracks citizenship for non-Muslim immigrants from neighbouring countries. Despite delays, the Act faces challenges in the Supreme Court.

Petitioners challenge the CAA's constitutionality, arguing it violates Article 14 by making religion a qualifier for citizenship.

Petitioners seek a stay on the recently notified rules, criticising the bypassing of tiered scrutiny for citizenship applications and the government's decision to implement rules before a final court decision.





Section 6A of the Citizenship Act

- section 6A of the Citizenship Act.
- This provision provided citizenship to illegal immigrants who entered and settled in Assam from erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) between January 1, 1966 and March 25, 1971
- and was inserted into the 1955 Citizenship Act in 1985, as a special provision to deal with the citizenship of people covered under the Assam Accord – a tripartite agreement signed by the All Assam Students' Union (AASU), the Assam government and the then Rajiv Gandhi-led Union government, to preserve and protect the cultural, linguistic and social identity of Assam.

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- petitions filed by All Assam Ahom Sabhawhich argue that section 6A is violative of Articles 14 (right to equality), 21 (right to life) and 29 (right to protection of interests of minorities) of the Constitution because it led to proliferation of illegal migrants in Assam, thus distorting the ethnic, demographic, social, cultural and economic profile of the state.

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What are the causes of the flare-up in eastern Congo?

What are the underlying reasons behind the renewed clashes between the Congolese army and the M23 rebels? How has the humanitarian crisis worsened as a result of the recent escalation in violence?

Sumeda

The story so far:

Renewed clashes in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have sparked global concern, worsening the humanitarian crisis. Fighting between the Congolese army and Rwandan-backed M23 group intensified around Sake and Nyanzale, resulting in deaths, displacements, and food security risks. The U.S. urged both countries to avoid war, calling for Rwanda to withdraw its personnel and missile systems. The United Nations and several Western countries have also denounced the attacks and called on the M23 rebels to cease their offensive.

What is the conflict?

An unending cycle of violence has

engulfed the eastern region of the central African country for decades, with the conflict originating in two civil wars. In 1994, an estimated eight lakh minority ethnic Tutsis and Hutu moderates were killed by extremist Hutus in 100 days, in what is now known as the Rwandan genocide.

In the subsequent days, around two million people crossed the Congolese border (then known as Zaire) to settle in refugee camps in the eastern provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu as a Tutsi government gained control of Rwanda.

Tutsi militias also banded together to fight extremist Hutus as tensions heightened between local Congolese and Rwandan emigrants. The ethnic tensions further set the stage for the First Congo War between the Zairean soldiers on one hand and the Tutsi militia and the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the

Liberation of Congo (AFDL) on the other, with the backing of Rwanda and Uganda which wanted to root out the remaining perpetrators of the genocide. In 1997, the AFDL captured the capital Kinshasa and Zaire was renamed as the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Another deadly war followed in 1998 after the new regime ordered Rwandan refugees and troops to leave the country. It feared that Rwanda would join forces with Uganda. The war that followed was dubbed 'Africa's world war.' A new Rwanda-backed rebel group, the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD), began invading parts of Congo. In response, Congolese President Laurent-Désiré Kabila allowed armed Hutu refugees to organise in the east to fight against Rwanda.

Since then, several agreements have been signed to put an end to what has

been called one of the world's deadliest conflicts since the Second World War, but fighting has continued.

Who are the M23 rebels?

The March 23 Movement or M23, formed in 2012, claims to defend Tutsi interests against Hutu militias. Originating from a 2009 ceasefire agreement, it broke away from the Congolese army, accusing the government of failing to integrate Tutsis. The group resurged in 2022, citing attacks by Hutu militias. Recent attacks near Goma have escalated the humanitarian crisis, prompting protests urging Rwanda's withdrawal of support.

The worsening violence has led to an escalation in tensions between the DRC and Rwanda, with Congo accusing the latter of backing M23 rebels. Rwanda has repeatedly denied these allegations. Rwanda has claimed the escalation is due to Congo's decision to send back regional peacekeepers.

The new fighting could lead to an escalation of regional tensions and involve more countries. The International NGO Forum in Congo said the escalation has involved artillery attacks on civilian settlements, causing a heavy toll and forcing many health and aid workers to withdraw. There are concerns a new disaster could go unnoticed because of the attention on the war in Gaza and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

THE GIST

Renewed clashes in eastern DRC between the Congolese army and Rwandan-backed M23 rebels have raised global concerns.

The conflict exacerbates the humanitarian crisis in the region, with increased fatalities, displacements, and food security risks.

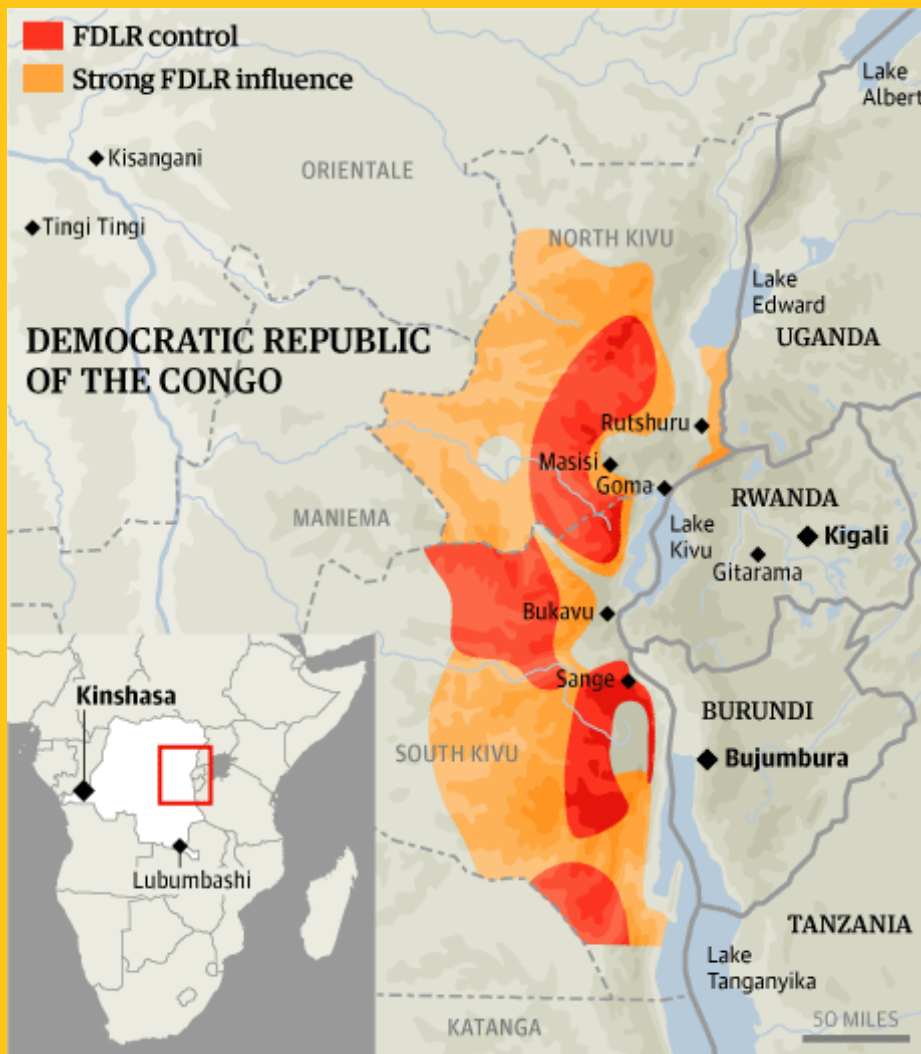
The United Nations and several Western countries denounce the attacks and urge the M23 rebels to halt their offensive.



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THE HINDU



- **Violent clashes have escalated between Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)'s army and Rwandan-backed M23 Tutsi-led rebels in eastern Congo,**

WHAT IS THE M23?

- **The M23, which refers to the March 23 date of a 2009 accord that ended a previous Tutsi-led revolt in eastern Congo, is the latest in a series of groups of ethnic Tutsi-led insurgents to rise up against Congolese forces.**
- **The group has accused the government of Congo of not living up to the peace deal to fully integrate Congolese Tutsis into the army and administration.**
- **It also vows to defend Tutsi interests, particularly against ethnic Hutu militias like the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), founded by Hutus who fled Rwanda after participating in the 1994 genocide of more than 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus**

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- **WHAT SET OFF THE LATEST REVOLT?**
- **In 2012 and 2013, M23 seized large parts of eastern Congo and entered Goma, a strategic economic hub, before they were chased out by Congolese and U.N. forces into Uganda and Rwanda.**
- **In March 2022, the group launched a series of attacks and seized large areas of eastern Congo, saying the move was a defensive response to attacks by the FDLR**
- .

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HOW AND WHY IS RWANDA INVOLVED?

- The government of Congo, U.N. officials and Western powers including the United States and Belgium have accused Rwanda of providing support for M23, including arms and soldiers, despite Rwanda's repeated denials.
- Rwanda and Uganda have a long history of military intervention inside Congo. The two countries invaded in 1996 and 1998, claiming they were defending themselves against local militia groups.
- The U.S. has urged Rwanda to withdraw its military personnel from Congo and remove surface-to-air missile systems.
- Rwanda has blamed the escalation on Congo's decision to end the mandate of regional peacekeepers.
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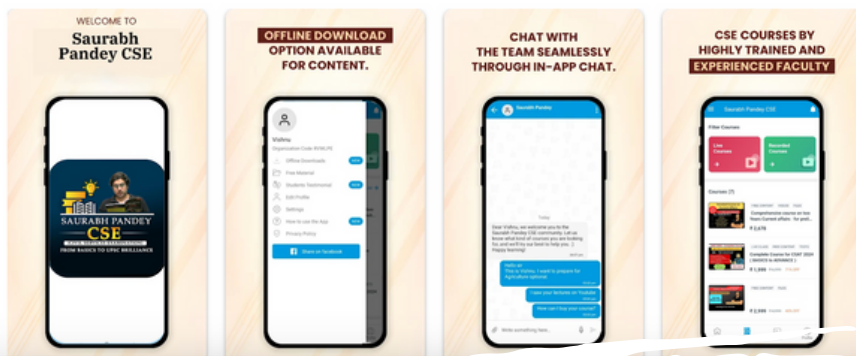
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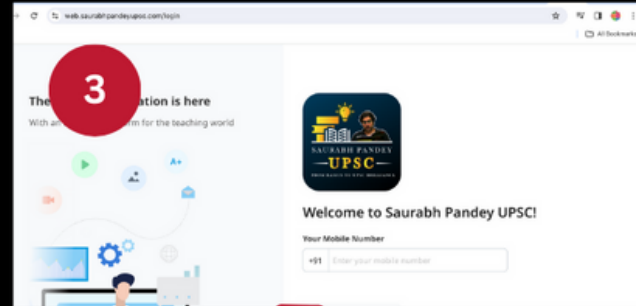
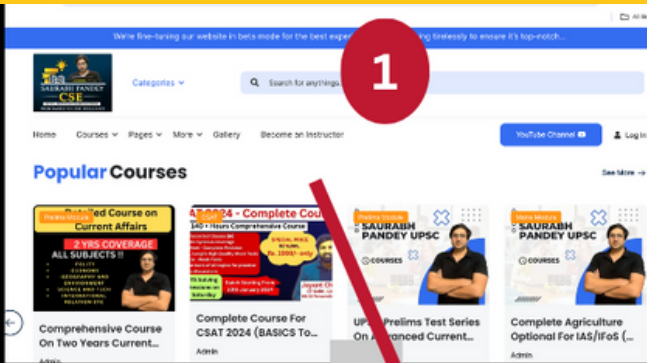
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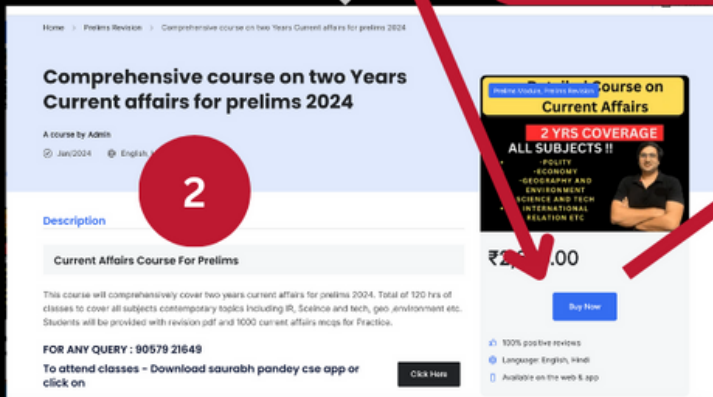
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