

Dissanayake sworn in as Sri Lanka's President

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS





Mr. Dissanayake, 55 was sworn in as the President of Sri Lanka. Mr. Dissanayake secured 42.31 % of the votes to win the September 21 presidential election, that he closely fought with Leader of Opposition Sajith Premadasa and former President Ranil Wickremesinghe. His National People's Power (NPP) Alliance campaigned on a plank of anti-corruption and has promised to change the country's political culture. Mr. Dissanayake's victory marks a shift in Sri Lankan politics, away from the country's traditional parties and political elite. He leads the NPP's chief political constituent, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP or People's Liberation Front), a party with Marxist-Leninist ideology.

Watching 'child sex abuse' material is an offence: SC

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The Supreme Court criminalised viewing in private, downloading, storing, possessing, distributing or displaying pornographic acts involving children attract criminal liability under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the Information Technology Act. The apex court evolved the principle of 'constructive possession', according to which a person was accountable if at any point of time he had an invariable degree of power and knowledge to control, manipulate, alter, modify or destroy the material. Just Right for Children Alliance, a non-governmental organisation filed an appeal against a Madras High Court decision

 Any visual depiction of a sexually explicit act which any ordinary person of a prudent mind would reasonably believe to *prima facie* depict a child or appear to involve a child, would be deemed as 'child pornography' for the purposes of the POCSO



SUPREME COURT

decriminalising mere possession or storage of any pornographic material. The High Court had concluded that watching or downloading pornographic acts involving children in private domains was not a crime.

The court reasoned the term 'child pornography' a misnomer which failed to capture the full extent and horror of the crime. The Supreme Court urged Parliament to "seriously consider" amending the POCSO Act to substitute the term "child pornography" with "Child Sexual Exploitative and Abuse Material" or CSEAM. The court directed courts across the country to replace 'child pornography' with CSEAM in their judgments and orders. Justice Pardiwala said the description of the act as CSEAM would more accurately reflect the reality that these images and videos were not merely pornographic but were records of incidents during which children were sexually exploited and abused.

Section 15 of the POCSO Act criminalised storage and possession of child pornographic material. The court reasoned keeping such material without deleting them amounted to 'possession' or even intent to transmit them to others. Section 67B of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000 penalised not only the use, transmission and publication of obscene materials, including child pornography but also made browsing, creation, collection, online facilitation or enticement of children into any sexual act or conduct an offence. The judgment referred to ingenious ruses used by people to cover their tracks online. One of them was the circulation and sale of links containing child pornographic material. The court referred to how a person could view and delete these links to evade liability under POCSO and the IT Acts.

Reform of global institutions must for development: Modi

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaking at the two-day United Nations 'Summit of the Future' conference noted global peace as contingent on the reform of global institutions. Mr. Modi added permanent membership of the African Union to the G-20 at the New Delhi Summit was an important step in this direction.

India at forefront

India has been at the forefront in calling for reform of the United Nations and specifically its Security Council, calling for an expansion in the number of permanent members, including representation for itself, Africa and other regions. Modi noted terrorism to be a serious threat to global security, while identifying the cyber, maritime and space domains were emerging as new theatres of conflict. He called for global digital governance which ensured that national security and integrity were upheld. India is ready to share its digital public infrastructure with the entire world.

Centre, State set to review scope of AFSPA in Manipur

INTERNAL SECURITY

The Centre and the Manipur government are set to review the scope of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act in the north-eastern State. The six-month extension of the AFSPA in Manipur comes to an end on September 30. The Union government and the State have differing views on the inclusion of more areas under the AFSPA. While the "disturbed area" status continues in all hill districts, the Act was gradually withdrawn from all valley districts from 2022 following a "significant improvement" in the security situation. The provisions of the Act were withdrawn from the Imphal municipal area in 2004.

A huge increase in the number of armed men in the State was a cause of concern and the rising cases of extortion and abductions were also being taken into consideration. While the presence of armed men or village volunteers is prevalent in both valley and hill districts, the absence of the AFSPA in the valley districts makes it difficult for the armed forces to operate smoothly.

At least 237 people have been killed since ethnic violence between the tribal Kuki-Zo and the Meitei people erupted in the State on May 3, 2023. The valley districts are where the Meitei people are concentrated, while the Kuki-Zo and the Nagas live in the hills.

According to data from the Union Home Ministry, 136 security-related incidents and 57 abductions were reported in Manipur from January 1 to July 31 this year, while 205 "extremists" were arrested. The ethnic violence is said to have helped insurgent groups gain a foothold in the region. The groups, mostly operating from Myanmar, advocate secession of Manipur.

The Kuki-Zo militant groups are in a suspension of operations pact with the Home Ministry. Eight Meitei insurgent groups have been banned by the Ministry. In November 2023, the Pambei faction of the United National Liberation Front, the oldest valley-based armed group, signed a peace agreement with the Home Ministry and the Manipur government.

The National Investigation Agency registered a suo motu case on July 19 last year to investigate transnational conspiracy by the Myanmar-based leadership of terror outfits to wage a war against the government by "exploiting the current ethnic unrest."

WE AIM TO INSPIRE YOU

Campaigning ends for second phase of Assembly polls in J&K

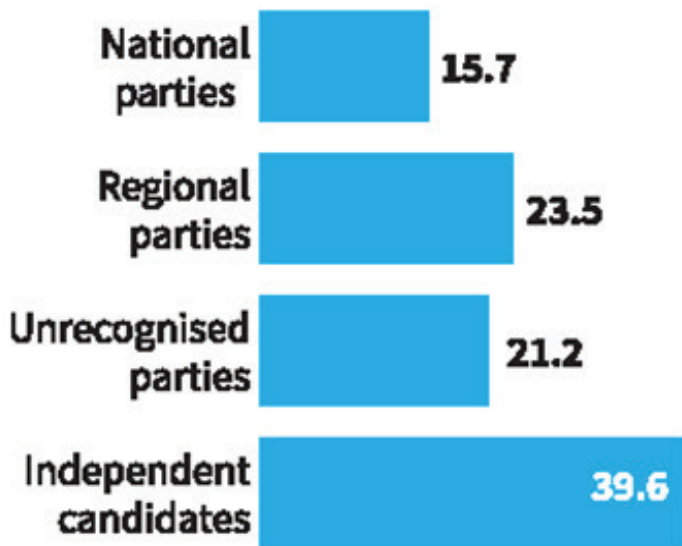
POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The second phase of campaigning for 26 Assembly seats in a Union Territory has concluded, with polling set for Wednesday. Over 25.78 lakh voters, including 13.12 lakh men, 12.65 lakh women, and 53 from the third gender, will choose from 239 candidates across Ganderbal, Srinagar, Budgam, Reasi, Rajouri, and Poonch districts. Among the voters, 1,20,612 are aged 18 or 19, comprising 11,294 male and 10,065 female first-time voters.

A total of 93 candidates are in the fray in Srinagar district with eight Assembly seats, followed by 46 in Budgam district with five seats, 34 in Rajouri with five seats, 25 in Poonch with three seats, 21 in Ganderbal with two seats, and 20 in Reasi with three seats. Security was beefed up across J & K, especially in Srinagar and the Pir Panjal valley for polling. Checkpoints were set up in Srinagar, and vehicles and pedestrians searched “to keep a tab on militant movement”.

Independents dominate

The chart shows the percentage split of the candidates contesting the 2024 Jammu and Kashmir Assembly election on the basis of the recognition given to their parties



SOURCE: ADR

Of the 873 candidates contesting the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly election, 137 are from national parties, 205 from regional parties, and 185 from registered unrecognised parties. There are only 43 women candidates of the total 346 contesting as Independents. The report also shows that the percentage of candidates with criminal cases has gone up from 6 % in 2014 to 17 % in 2024.

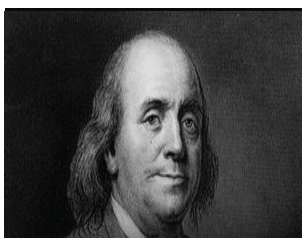
The Assembly election is being held in three phases on September 18 and 25 and October 1. Counting of votes will take place on October 8.

Criminal cases

Among the 872 candidates whose affidavits were analysed, 152 (17 %) have declared criminal cases against themselves.

In the 2014 Assembly election, out of the 831 analysed, 49 (6%) had declared criminal cases against themselves. A total of 114 (13 %) have declared serious criminal cases this time. The corresponding figure for 2014 was 33 (4 %).

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has nine candidates with serious criminal cases and the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress have five each. The Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) has three candidates with serious criminal cases, while the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) has one. There are 410 candidates who are crorepatis with the average assets of candidates amounting to ₹ 3.65 crore.



“If you invest more in your education, then you are likely to get more interest in it.”

–Benjamin Franklin

Indian Army procure Robotic MULES

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

The Army has procured and inducted 100 robotic mules in forward areas, while logistics drones are undergoing trials which will significantly streamline support and movement to forward areas, especially in high altitude. A new tent for high-altitude areas is under evaluation for deployment at temperatures up to minus-40 degrees Celsius.

All of these were on display last week at the Himtech symposium organised at Leh, specifically showcasing high-altitude technologies. The Army has procured and has inducted 100 robotic mules under the fourth tranche of emergency procurements (EP). The fourth round of EPs was undertaken in the year to September 2023.

Contracts up to ₹300 crore can be placed under EP, and deliveries have to be concluded within one year. Since the 2020 stand-off with China in Eastern Ladakh, the Army has been looking for a series of technological innovations especially for high altitudes for a range of functions. The robotic mule is a high-endurance, agile and durable all-weather ground robot for use in a broad range of unstructured urban and natural environments for defence applications.

Extreme high-altitude clothing and habitat is a critical requirement for the Indian Army which is deployed in the world's highest battlefield of Siachen and also other super high-altitude locations. At Himtech, DTECH 360 Innovations announced the field launch of its Peak Pods, a high-altitude habitat (tent) designed for sub-zero temperature regions. The product has been under evaluation at three high altitude locations: Leh (11,500 feet), Daulat Beg Oldie (16,700 feet) and Durbuk (12,500 feet).

NBFC sector resilient under scale-based regulations framework: RBI bulletin

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

The RBI has identified several major Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) as part of the upper layer under the SBR framework. These include LIC Housing Finance, Bajaj Finance, Shriram Finance, Tata Sons, L&T Finance, Indiabulls Housing Finance, Piramal Capital & Housing Finance, Cholamandalam Investment and Finance, Mahindra & Mahindra Financial Services, PNB Housing Finance, Tata Capital Financial Services, Aditya Birla Finance, HDB Financial Services, Muthoot Finance, and Bajaj Housing Finance.

The Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFC) sector in India continues to demonstrate resilience within the scale-based regulations (SBR) framework, improving in asset quality and diversifying funding base. At the end of December 2023, the sector maintained double-digit credit growth, adequate capital levels, and low delinquency ratio, the officials said in an article 'Peeling the Layers: A Review of the NBFC Sector in Recent Times', published in the September 2024 edition of the RBI bulletin.

Since the introduction of SBR in October 2022, the performance metrics for NBFCs have shown significant positive trends. The asset qualities have improved, the article stated. The gross non-performing asset (NPA) ratio has decreased significantly, falling from a range of 4.4 % for government NBFCs and 10.6 % for non-government NBFCs in December 2021, to 2.4 % (for government NBFCs) and 6.3 % (for non-government NBFCs) by December 2023, reflecting improved asset quality and risk management within the sector.

According to the article, there has been a consistent rise in profitability, evidenced by improved return on assets (RoA) and return on equity (RoE). As of December 2023, NBFCs have demonstrated robust credit growth, adequate capital, and low delinquency ratios, signalling a resilient financial landscape. Moreover, the extension of prompt corrective action (PCA) norms even to government-owned NBFCs is expected to fortify the sector further. These regulations aim to enhance financial discipline and risk management.



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356 killed in Israeli strikes in Lebanon

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



Israeli air strikes, in the deadliest cross-border escalation since the Gaza war erupted killed at least 356 people and left over 1,200 injured in Lebanon on Monday. Israel hit about 1,300 Hezbollah sites in southern and eastern Lebanon in 24 hours, including a “targeted strike” in Beirut. A source close to Hezbollah said the strike in the Lebanese capital targeted Ali Karake, the group’s third-in-command. Hezbollah targeted five sites in Israel.

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Working women's double shift

POLITY & GOVERNANCE



Not enough time for rest

Charts were sourced from the Time Use Survey (2019) and the National Family Health Survey (2019-21)

Chart 1: Average minutes spent per day in 2019 on unpaid domestic and care activities across employment groups

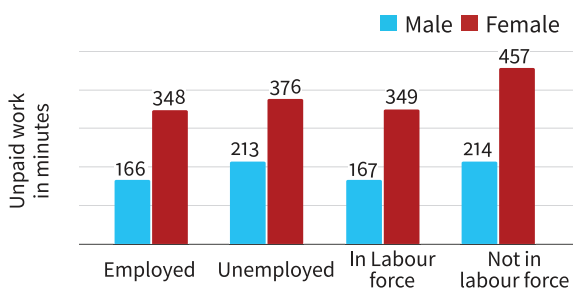


Chart 2: Average minutes spent on unpaid domestic and care activities in a day across marital status in 2019

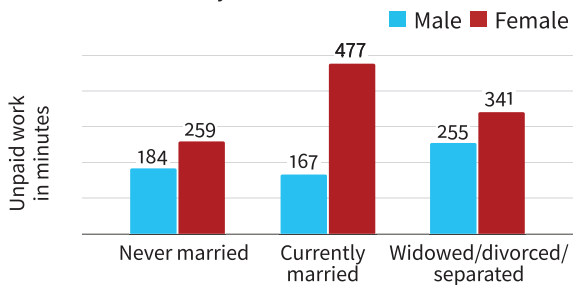
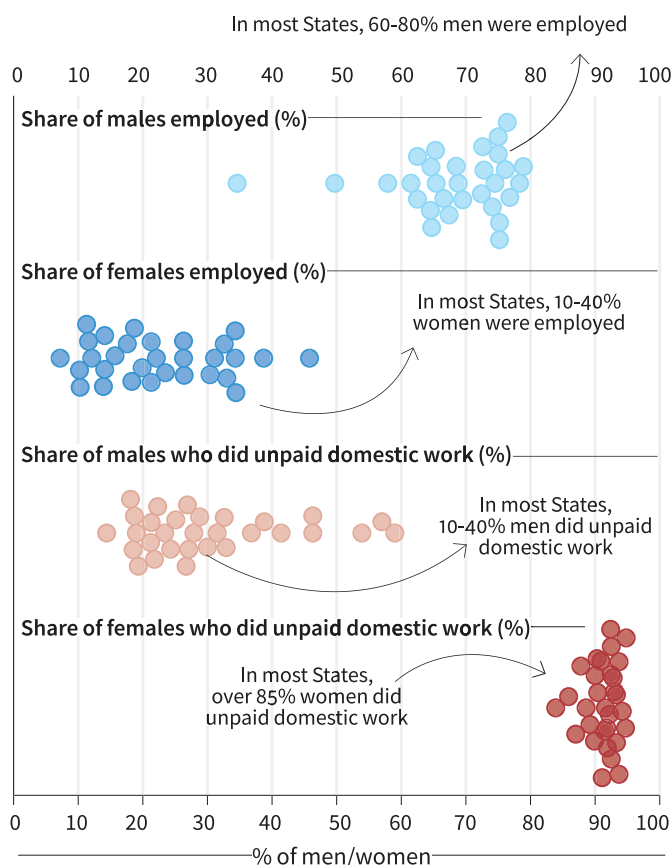


Table 3: The table shows the % of men/women aged 15-59 who participated in select activities in 2019

Area	Gender	Employment and related activities	Unpaid domestic services
Rural	Male	69.7%	29.2%
Rural	Female	22.5%	93.2%
Urban	Male	73%	22.5%
Urban	Female	19.9%	88.8%
Total	Male	70.7%	27%
Total	Female	21.7%	91.8%

Chart 4: Percentage of men and women aged 15-59 who participated in unpaid domestic work and employment across States. Each circle corresponds to a State



In all the States, close to 85% or more women were doing such chores, while in a majority of the States, the share was below 50% for men

Vignesh.r@thehindu.co.in

Chart 1 shows the average time (in minutes) that men and women across employment groups spent on unpaid domestic and care activities during a day in 2019. **Chart 2** shows the average time spent (in minutes) on unpaid domestic and care activities in a day by men and women categorised by marital status. **Table 3** lists the share of men/women aged 15-59 who participated in select activities in a day in 2019. **Chart 4** shows the share of men and women aged 15-59 who participated in unpaid domestic work and employment across States.



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Mercy Estate,
MG Road, Ravipuram,
Ernakulam-682 015,

Corporate office:
Vedhik IAS Academy
Samkalp Bhawan, Plot No.15,
Sector 4, Rama Krishna Puram,
New Delhi, Delhi-110022

Regional office
Vedhik IAS Academy
202, Raheja Chambers, 12,
Museum Road. Bangalore -
560001. Karnataka, India.

GCC Office:
Bobscoedu,
Bobsco Trading & Contracting Co. W. L . L
Office 22, Dream Tower 1,
Road: 2701, Adliya, Kingdom of Bahrain
www.bobscoedu.com