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04/03/2025 TUESDAY

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DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS

POLITY

ECONOMICS

TECHNOLOGY • ECOLOGY

Documentary feature Anora's night Cinematography **Production design** No Other Land The Brutalist Wicked (Nathan Crowley (Lol Crawley) Set Decoration: at the Lee Sandales) Visual effects Animated feature Dune: Part Two Flow (Lambert, James, Salcombe. Adapted screenplay Nefzer) Here are the winners in key categories at Conclave the 97th Academy Awards, held in (Peter Straughan) Sound Hollywood on Sunday Dune: Part Two **Original song** (John, King, International film El Mal Costume design **Documentary short** Bartlett. (Emilia Pérez) Wicked I'm Still Here The Only Girl Hemphill) Ducol, Camille, Audiard (Paul Tazewell) (Brazil) In The Orchestra Best actor Supporting Best Supporting actress actress actor Adrien Brody **Mikey Madison** Zoe Saldaña **Kieran Culkin** The Brutalist Emilia Pérez A Real Pain Anora Best picture: Anora Original screenplay Anora (Sean Baker) Editing Anora (Sean Baker) **Original score** The Brutalist (Daniel Best director: Sean Baker, Anord Blumberg)

SC seeks regulatory steps against 'vulgarity' online

POLITY & GOVERNANCE



Humour is an art. Humour is something that the entire family can enjoy and nobody feels embarrassed. That is talent. Using filthy language is not talent. Talent is using ordinary words to produce humour. We have excellent comedians in Bollywood. Writers of humour

JUSTICE SURYA KANT

The Supreme Court has asked Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta to suggest regulatory measures to curb the use of vulgar language in online content while ensuring free speech is not censored. A Bench led by Justice Surya Kant emphasized the need to distinguish between humour and perversity and called for a healthy debate involving stakeholders.

The court was hearing an application by YouTuber Ranveer Allahbadia, who sought modification of a previous order barring him from airing shows following criminal cases in Maharashtra and Assam over his comments in "India Got Latent". His lawyer argued that the ban affected his livelihood and that of 280 employees.

The court allowed Allahbadia to resume "The Ranveer Show", provided he maintained decency and morality. It also directed Guwahati Police to inform him of his required appearance for investigation. His request to travel abroad will be considered after he complies. The interim protection from arrest was extended, and the case will be heard again on April 1.

Police yet to understand fundamental right to free speech and expression: SC

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The Supreme Court questioned the Gujarat Police's decision to register a criminal case against Congress MP Imran Pratapgarhi for his poem, which it said merely conveyed "suffering injustice with love" and followed the path of non-violence advocated by Mahatma Gandhi.

A Bench of Justices A.S. Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan criticized the tendency to stifle artistic expression and emphasized the need for police to respect free speech. Justice Oka noted that even after 75 years of the Constitution, authorities struggle to uphold this fundamental right.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, representing Gujarat, dismissed the poem as "sadak chaap" (cheap) and opposed comparisons to Gandhi. He argued that the poem was open to multiple interpretations. The FIR was based on an edited video featuring Pratapgarhi's poem, which authorities claimed was provocative and harmful to national unity.

The court reserved its judgment on Pratapgarhi's plea to quash the FIR, which the Gujarat High Court had earlier refused to dismiss in January.

HC halts ACB action against ex-SEBI chief, others till today

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The Bombay High Court directed the Maharashtra Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) not to act until Tuesday on a special court's order to register an FIR against former SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch and five others for alleged stock market fraud, regulatory violations, and corruption related to the 1994 listing of a company.

The special court, on March 1, ordered an FIR against SEBI officials Ashwani Bhatia, Ananth Narayan G., Kamlesh Chandra Varshney, BSE CEO Sundararaman Ramamurthy, and former BSE Chairman Pramod Agarwal. It found prima facie evidence of collusion and regulatory lapses, requiring an impartial probe under Section 156(3) CrPC.

The accused moved the High Court to quash the order, arguing they were neither issued notices nor heard before the decision. Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta and senior advocate Amit Desai sought an urgent hearing. The case originated from a complaint by legal reporter Sapan Shrivastava, alleging large-scale financial fraud linked to the listing of Cals Refineries Ltd. in 1994. The special court ordered the ACB to register the FIR and submit a status report within 30 days, with judicial monitoring. The High Court will hear the matter on Tuesday.

Supreme Court to examine plea against Rules on blocking of online content without notice

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The Supreme Court has sought the government's response to a plea challenging the IT Rules, 2009, which allow content blocking on social media without prior notice or a fair hearing for the original creator. A Bench led by Justice B.R. Gavai issued notice to the Union of India and the Ministry of Electronics and IT on a petition by the Software Freedom Law Center, represented by senior advocate Indira Jaising.

The plea argues that Rules 8 and 9 make it optional to inform content creators before blocking, with Rule 9 allowing emergency blocking without notice. Rule 16 further enforces confidentiality on blocking requests, preventing transparency. Jaising contended that this violates the right to free speech and due process.

She highlighted that intermediaries, protected under Section 79 of the IT Act, comply with government blocking orders without defending content creators. The petition seeks changes to ensure that both intermediaries and content creators receive notice and urges the court to strike down Rule 16 as unconstitutional.



INDIA'S TOP MOST CIVIL SERVANTS FOR COACHING

India launches multi-nation alliance for collaboration on sustainable development

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

India launched the Cities Coalition for Circularity (C-3), a multi-nation alliance promoting city-to-city collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and private sector partnerships for sustainable urban development. The forum will serve as a platform for policymakers, industry leaders, and researchers to discuss and implement solutions for waste management and resource efficiency in the Asia-Pacific region.

Reuse and recycle

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a message at the launch of the Cities Coalition for Circularity (C-3), emphasized India's Pro-Planet People (P3) approach and the importance of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle (3R) principles for sustainable urban development. He proposed forming a working group to finalize the coalition's structure.

At the launch event in Jaipur, a key CITIIS 2.0 MoU was signed. Union Minister Manohar Lal announced agreements worth ₹1,800 crore under the initiative, benefiting 18 cities across 14 states as model projects for urban sustainability.

Environmental issues

The Regional 3R and Circular Economy Forum in Asia and the Pacific, launched in 2009, promotes sustainable waste management, resource efficiency, and circular economy principles. It serves as a key platform for policy dialogue and capacity building to address environmental challenges from economic growth, resource depletion, and waste generation. A major milestone was the Hanoi 3R Declaration (2013-2023), which set 33 voluntary goals for transitioning to a resource-efficient and circular economy.

Visually challenged persons suitable for judicial service: SC

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

The Supreme Court ruled that visually challenged candidates cannot be deemed unsuitable for judicial service, emphasizing that "inclusivity" is a fundamental principle of the Constitution. A Bench of Justices J.B. Pardiwala and R. Mahadevan urged Parliament to amend Article 15 to include disability as a ground for non-discrimination.

The judgment stated that indirect discrimination, such as rigid cut-offs or procedural barriers, must be removed to ensure substantive equality. Qualified persons with disabilities (PwDs) should not be excluded, and relaxations in assessing suitability can be considered if enough PwD candidates are unavailable.

Separate cut-off

The Supreme Court directed that a separate cut-off be maintained for visually impaired judicial service candidates. The judgment was based on a letter from the mother of a visually impaired aspirant in Madhya Pradesh, which the court took up suo motu.

External Affairs Minister to visit U.K., Ireland to strengthen bilateral ties

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

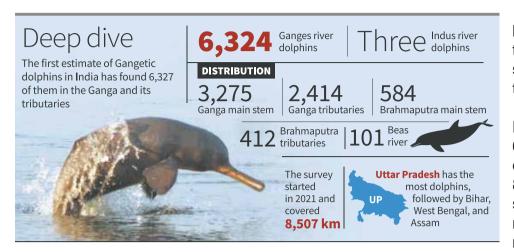
External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar will visit Ireland and the U.K. this week to strengthen bilateral ties. The visit follows the EU Commissioners' trip to India and the relaunch of India-U.K. trade negotiations.

In the U.K., he will open new Indian consulates in Belfast and Manchester, meet Foreign Secretary David Lammy, and deliver a speech at Chatham House on India's global role.

In Ireland, he will meet Foreign Minister Simon Harris, sign an MoU for a diplomat exchange program, and announce the India-Ireland Joint Economic Commission. This marks the highest-level visit since PM Modi's 2015 trip.

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ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT



The first estimate of Gangetic dolphins in India has recorded 6,327 individuals in the Ganga and its tributaries. However, experts note that differing past survey methods make it difficult to assess population trends.

A World Wildlife Day press report by the Environment Ministry stated that the count includes 6,324 Ganges river dolphins and three Indus river dolphins. The survey, conducted from 2021 over 8,507 km, found 3,275 dolphins in the Ganga main stem, 2,414 in its tributaries, 584 in the Brahmaputra main stem, 412 in its tributaries, and 101 in the Beas river.

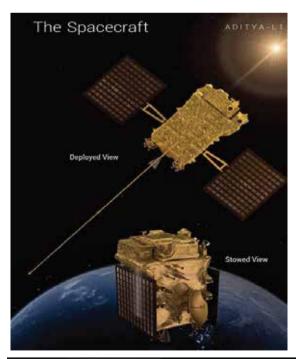
Counting riverine dolphins is difficult as they surface only briefly and lack unique identifiers like tiger stripes or elephant ears. Researchers used acoustic hydrophones and boat-based observers to detect and avoid double-counting. Qamar Qureshi of the Wildlife Institute of India explained that triangulation helped estimate their numbers accurately.

Next survey

The next Gangetic dolphin survey is expected in four years. Surveyors had to be trained in new techniques for the current study. Qamar Qureshi noted that the major threat to dolphins is entanglement in fishermen's nets, while the impact of pollution on their habitat is now being studied.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi officially released the dolphin report during a National Board for Wildlife meeting in Gujarat. He emphasized the role of local populations in conservation and suggested that schoolchildren be encouraged to visit dolphin habitats. The highest dolphin population was recorded in Uttar Pradesh, followed by Bihar, West Bengal, and Assam.

ISRO releases second set of scientific data from Aditya mission



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

ISRO has released the second set of scientific data from the Aditya-L1 solar mission. The data includes valuable information on the Sun's photosphere, chromosphere, corona, and in-situ particle and magnetic field measurements at the first Earth-Sun Lagrange Point (L1).

Widely accessible

The Aditya-L1 datasets are available on the Indian Space Science Data Centre (ISSDC) portal. Researchers and students can access the data via www.issdc.gov.in/adityal1.html or the PRADAN portal links. ISRO has also provided user manuals for data analysis. The first dataset was released on January 6, accompanied by a national meet.

Third revolution

The Aditya-L1 mission, launched by ISRO on September 2, 2023, aboard the PSLV C-57 rocket, is currently in its third revolution around the Lagrange Point (L1). On January 6, 2024, it was successfully placed in a halo orbit around L1, which is 1.5 million km from Earth toward the Sun.

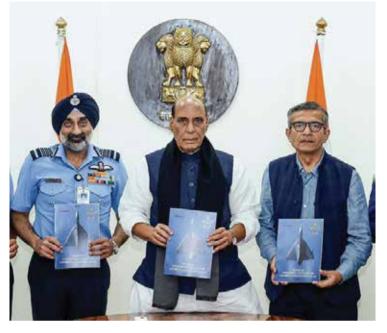


"If you invest more in your education, then you are likely to get more interest in it."

–Benjamin Franklin

High-powered defence committee identifies key thrust areas for modernisation of IAF

INTERNAL SECURITY



The Empowered Committee for Capability Enhancement of the Indian Air Force (IAF), led by Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, presented its report to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday, outlining key recommendations for addressing the IAF's fighter jet shortfall and long-term modernization. The report emphasized the need for Aatmanirbharta (self-reliance) in aerospace, with increased private sector involvement to boost efficiency and production.

The IAF currently operates 31 fighter squadrons against a sanctioned strength of 42.5, with delays in LCA-Mk1A deliveries and the phasing out of older aircraft (Jaguar, MIG-29UPG, Mirage-2000) by the decade's end. While the LCA-Mk2 is under development, the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) is still a decade away.

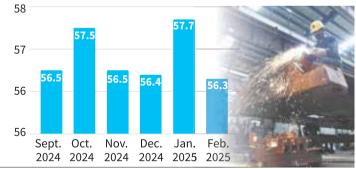
The Air Chief Marshal A.P. Singh recently stated that the IAF needs to induct 35-40 jets annually to bridge the gap. HAL has committed to producing 24 Tejas Mark-1A jets next year. The Defence Minister directed that the committee's recommendations be implemented in a time-bound manner.

Feb. manufacturing PMI slips on slowdown in sales growth

INTERNAL SECURITY

Gradual slide

Feb. manufacturing PMI growth slows on dip in sales and output



India's HSBC Manufacturing PMI slowed to 56.3 in February 2025, down from 57.7 in the previous month, marking a 14-month low in manufacturing sales and output growth. Despite this slowdown, the sector remained in growth territory for 44 consecutive months, supported by robust global demand.

Manufacturers saw an increase in new orders and export demand, leading to higher hiring activity. Business expectations remained strong, with one-third of firms anticipating higher output. However, firms passed on higher labour costs to clients. HSBC's India Chief Economist, Pranjul Bhandari, noted that while growth slowed, the overall momentum in the sector remained broadly positive.



Zelenskyy does not want there to be peace, says Trump

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Former U.S. President Donald Trump criticized Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on social media, stating that America would not tolerate his rhetoric much longer. He accused Zelenskyy of not wanting peace as long as he had U.S. support, referencing a report in which Zelenskyy suggested the war with Russia was far from over.

Trump also criticized European leaders for admitting they cannot support Ukraine without U.S. assistance, questioning their strategic stance against Russia. Meanwhile, Trump's top advisers met to discuss next steps on Ukraine, though reports of a possible military aid cutoff were not confirmed by the White House.

Additionally, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke with British Foreign Secretary David Lammy, reaffirming that the U.S. remains committed to negotiating peace in Ukraine alongside the U.K.

India's burden of rising obesity, the hefty cost to pay

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

India has witnessed a significant rise in overweight and obesity over the last two decades, yet the issue has not received enough public attention. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5, 2019-21) indicates that nearly one in four Indian men and women is obese, with prevalence ranging from 8% to 50% across different states and demographics. The World Obesity Federation highlights that India has one of the steepest increases in childhood obesity globally. Overweight and obesity rates in both adults and children have doubled in 15 years and tripled in 30 years. A nationwide study by ICMR (published in The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology, 2023) found that among adults over 20:

- 35 crore (one in three) have abdominal obesity,

- 25 crore (one in four) have generalized obesity,

- 21 crore (one in five) have high blood cholesterol levels.

These alarming trends underscore the growing health burden of obesity in India.

Why the subject needs urgent attention

Obesity and being overweight are often seen as personal issues in India, with societal attitudes normalizing them. While India has transitioned from calorie deficiency to calorie sufficiency, food insecurity remains—55% of the population (78 crore) cannot afford a healthy diet, and 40% lack adequate nutrients (State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World Report, 2024).

The rise of high-fat, salt, sugar (HFSS) and ultra-processed foods (UPF), coupled with urbanization and 50% of Indians failing to meet recommended physical activity levels (WHO), has worsened the obesity crisis. The 'thin-fat Indian' hypothesis suggests that even those with normal BMI may have excess body fat. Obesity is a major risk factor for diabetes, with one in four Indian adults (25 crore) being diabetic or prediabetic. Globally, obesity is linked to 3.4 million deaths annually and is recognized as a chronic disease by WHO.

The Global Obesity Observatory estimated that India's economic cost of obesity was \$28.95 billion (₹1,800 per capita, 1.02% of GDP) in 2019, projected to rise to ₹4,700 per capita (1.57% of GDP) by 2030. The Economic Survey 2024-25 highlights obesity as a growing health challenge and recommends higher taxes on UPFs.

However, India lacks structured programs to combat obesity, relying on individual responsibility through campaigns like Khelo India, Fit India Movement, and Eat Right India, while other key stakeholders' roles remain underemphasized.

Policy and programmatic solutions

Tackling obesity requires a multipronged approach:

- Public Awareness & Dialogue Obesity must be recognized as a disease that contributes to diabetes, hypertension, and liver disorders. A structured science communication campaign is needed to promote prevention and management.
- Promoting Physical Activity Improved urban planning should include bicycle lanes, parks, and open gymnasiums to encourage exercise.
- Regulating Unhealthy Foods Higher taxes on high-fat, salt, sugar (HFSS) and ultra-processed foods (UPF) and subsidies for healthy foods (fruits, vegetables) should be implemented. The food industry must adopt ethical marketing practices.
- Routine Health Screenings Weight, height, and waist circumference should be measured during health check-ups, with discussions on optimal weight (height in cm minus 100 for men, 105 for women; waist >80 cm in women, >90 cm in men is unhealthy).

04/03/2025 TUESDAY

- Medical Management Guidelines for anti-obesity medicines should be developed for appropriate medical use.
- Workplace Initiatives Offices should raise awareness, provide weighing scales, and encourage regular body fat analysis.
- School & College Engagement Schools should serve healthy food, promote nutritional education, and adopt best practices from countries like Japan, where dietitians are part of school networks.

A holistic approach involving public policy, healthcare, urban planning, and education is necessary to combat India's obesity crisis.

Coordinated interventions

A Comprehensive Approach to Obesity Prevention in India

- Multi-Ministry Collaboration Addressing obesity requires joint efforts from the health, finance, education, agriculture, and urban planning ministries. Nutrition programs should shift from just feeding to "mindful under-feeding" and "rightful micronutrient supplementation" under a reimagined "Suposhan Abhiyan" initiative.
- Research & Public Awareness More epidemiological data on obesity is needed. The medical community must communicate findings in simple terms and train healthcare providers to tackle obesity effectively.
- Making Healthy Eating Affordable Healthy food is costlier than junk food in India. The food industry and online food platforms must facilitate access to healthy options. CSR funds from this sector should promote healthy lifestyles.

Obesity is a public health crisis requiring holistic, multipronged interventions. Addressing it is essential for India's health, economic growth, and development.

Australia, the partner for India's growth trajectory

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Australia believes in India's bright economic future, expecting it to become the world's third-largest economy by 2030. It supports India's claim for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, recognizing its growing global influence. Australia sees itself as a natural partner in India's growth due to their complementary economies, strategic alignment, and geographic proximity across the Indian Ocean.

The new Roadmap, the next phase of ties

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese launched a new economic roadmap to strengthen Australia-India ties, building on the 2018 strategy. The roadmap highlights how Australia can contribute to and benefit from India's rapid growth, emphasizing its resources, skills, and commitment to support India's economic rise.

The India-Australia trade relationship has flourished, driven by the Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA). Over the past five years, India's exports to Australia grew by 66%, nearly twice the rate of its global exports (35%), reflecting complementary economic strengths.

The roadmap identifies four key "Superhighways of Growth":

- Clean energy
- Education and skills
- Agribusiness
- Tourism

Additionally, it outlines seven major economic sectors for deeper collaboration:

- Investment
- Technology
- Sports
- Culture & arts
- Resources
- Defence & space
- Health

Australia is aligning its resources with India's ambitions, such as supporting India's electric vehicle (EV) expansion by supplying critical minerals like lithium, nickel, and cobalt. The roadmap showcases Australia's role in India's economic growth story and aims to further strengthen their strategic partnership.

Support for India's skill needs

Australia is closely aligning with India's skill development needs, recognizing that 2 crore Indians require training annually to sustain economic growth. Australian universities are actively responding by establishing campuses in India,

including in Gujarat International Finance Tech (GIFT) City and soon in Noida, with more expected in the future.

A key strength in Australia's economic engagement with India is the Indian diaspora, which is 10 lakh strong and the fastest-growing population group in Australia. Many Indian-Australians hold leadership roles in business, government, and community affairs.

Additionally, Australia's Centre for Australia-India Relations, backed by ₹132 crore in government support, is led by two prominent Australians of Indian origin. The Australian Prime Minister launched the new economic roadmap alongside one of them, highlighting the importance of this initiative in strengthening bilateral ties.

The Indian diaspora is a bridge

The Indian diaspora in Australia plays a crucial role in enhancing mutual understanding and driving business opportunities. Recognizing this, the Australian government is investing ₹22 crore into the Maitri grants program, which aims to leverage diaspora connections for greater collaboration.

The new Roadmap encourages Australian businesses to explore more partnerships with Indian counterparts for mutual growth. A key priority is advancing the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) to strengthen trade ties.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese emphasizes that Australia-India relations are at their strongest but hold even greater potential for the future. With the Roadmap providing clear direction, both nations are poised for expanded economic cooperation and growth.

Battle for growth

ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT

India's real GDP grew by 6.2% in Q3FY25, up from the revised 5.6% in the previous quarter. However, this is the slowest growth rate since Q4FY23 (except for Q2FY25) and makes the government's 6.5% full-year target unlikely due to global trade challenges and a sluggish manufacturing and services sector.

The primary sector grew by 5.2%, up from 1.8% last year, while manufacturing (4.8%) and services (7.4%) slowed compared to 12.4% and 8.3% respectively in the same period last year. Chief Economic Adviser V. Anantha Nageswaran expressed optimism about 7.6% growth in Q4, though achieving this remains uncertain.

India's economy faces risks from global trade uncertainties, including the U.S.'s proposed 25% tariffs on steel and pharmaceuticals. The pharma sector, with 31% of exports (\$8.7 billion) going to the U.S. in FY24, is particularly vulnerable, with some firms considering shifting production to the U.S., potentially reducing India's trade revenue.

India's economy shows some positive trends, with government spending rising by 8.3% and private consumption growing by 6.9%, supported by moderating inflation. The RBI projects inflation at 4.8% in FY25, potentially easing to 4.2% in FY26, aligning with its 4% medium-term target.

However, concerns have emerged over data accuracy, as the NSO revised its methodology by incorporating industry-wise/institution-wise data but has not clarified its impact. The NSO attributes sectoral variations to updated benchmark estimates and new data but must provide transparency on these revisions to ensure informed economic analysis.



Republicans and Democrats remain divided on U.S. aid to Ukraine

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Along partisan lines

The data for the charts were collected from the Pew Research Center



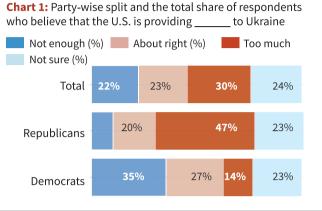


Chart 2: Percentage who say that when it comes to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the U.S. is providing _____ support to Ukraine

Not Enough 🔜 About right 🔜 Too much Total (%) Republicans (%) Democrats (%) 80 80 80 7 47 30 14 39 60 60 60 40 40 40 49 23 42 20 38 35 20 20 20 22 10 0 0 0 2025 2022 2022 2025 2022 2025

Chart 4: Percentage who think the U.S. benefits _____ from being a member of NATO

🗾 A great deal 📕 Not too much / not at all

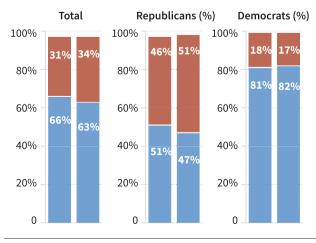


Chart 3: Percentage who say supporting Ukraine in its war against Russia ______ (on) U.S. national security

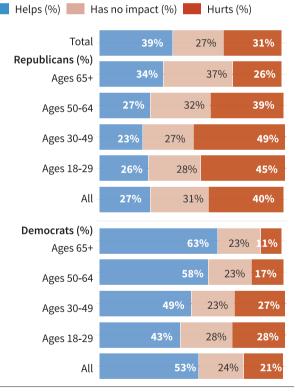
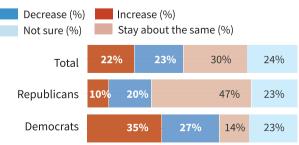


Chart 5: Percentage who say European allies' spending on national defense should _____



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