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1 May, 2024

Eggshell skull rule

Context: *The Supreme Court reinstated a Rs 5 lakh compensation in a medical negligence case, criticising lower courts for misapplying the 'eggshell skull' legal principle.*

- **Overview of the Eggshell Skull Rule:**
  - The rule dictates that a tortfeasor (someone who commits a tort) is responsible for all consequences resulting from their negligent actions, even if the victim suffers unusually high damage due to pre-existing vulnerabilities.
  - It considers the physical, social, and economic attributes of the plaintiff, as well as their family and cultural environment, which may make them more susceptible to injury.
- **Application in Law:**
  - Applies across all areas of torts, including intentional torts, negligence, and strict liability cases, as well as in criminal law.
  - No physical contact requirement; if a trespasser's presence causes a fatal heart attack in the victim due to fear, the trespasser is liable for damages.
- **Distinction from Crumbling Skull Rule:**
  - Differs from the crumbling skull rule, where a plaintiff suffers from a pre-existing condition that worsens due to the present tort.
  - In the crumbling skull rule, prior conditions are considered to differentiate them from new injuries and to apportion damages fairly.
- **Explanation by the Supreme Court:**
  - The Supreme Court stated that individuals with an eggshell skull are more susceptible to severe impacts from an act, unlike a "normal person" who could withstand it, emphasising the rule's application in judgment.
- **Purpose and Application:**
  - This rule is invoked to claim enhanced compensation beyond what could have been expected under ordinary circumstances, considering the defendant's actions.
  - It ensures that defendants are held accountable for damages that exceed typical anticipations due to the victim's condition.
- **Origin and Legal Precedents:**
  - The origins of the Eggshell Skull Rule are often traced back to the 1891 Vosburg v. Putney case in Wisconsin, US, where a kick exacerbated a prior injury, establishing legal liability.
  - Subsequently, in a King's Bench case, damages were awarded to a pregnant woman who suffered severe shock, leading to premature birth, emphasising the principle's application regardless of the victim's condition.
- **Variations and References:**
  - The Eggshell Skull Rule is sometimes referred to as the 'thin skull rule,' reflecting its application in various legal contexts where victims' vulnerabilities are considered.

India to be among top 4 contributors of microplastics

Context: *A new report states that by the end of 2024, 217 countries will collectively release 3,153,813 tonnes of microplastics into the world's waterways.*

- **Microplastics Release by Countries:**
  - By the end of 2024, 217 countries will collectively release 3,153,813 tonnes of microplastics into waterways.
  - China, India, the United States, and Japan will contribute 51% of this volume.
  - India's contribution will be 391,879 tonnes, making it the second-largest polluter after China.
- **Impact of Microplastics and Chemical Additives:**
  - Microplastics, particles smaller than 5 millimetres, result from sources like tyre abrasion and improper waste disposal.
  - Chemical additives in microplastics, including heavy metals and flame retardants, accumulate in waterbodies and pose health risks.
  - In 2024, 291,071 tonnes of chemical additives will be discharged into waterways, with India ranking as the second-largest contributor after China.
- **India's Efforts and Recommendations:**
  - India acknowledged the presence of microplastics in its waterbodies in 2023.
  - At the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-4), India advocated for scientific innovation to prevent plastic release into waterways.
  - India emphasised the importance of domestic waste management infrastructure and extended producer responsibility (EPR).
  - It suggested that decisions regarding chemicals used in plastic manufacturing should be based on scientific evidence and transparent processes.
  - India reiterated the stance that EPR mechanisms should remain within national boundaries and not encompass international supply chains.
- **Global Plastic Waste Management:**
  - Despite improvements in waste management, plastic waste generation has increased by 7.11% since 2021.
  - The world generated 220 million tonnes of plastic waste in the current year.

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- The authors caution against relying solely on recycling and waste management to solve the plastics crisis.
- They emphasise the need for comprehensive strategies to address plastic production and consumption.

Country	Microplastics in waterways (in tons)	Chemical additives pollution in waterways (in tons)
China	787,069	59,208
India	391,879	31,483
United States	267,248	6,797
Japan	156,482	854
Indonesia	78,625	7,830
Germany	74,220	2,614
Pakistan	59,164	7,169
Korea	56,738	291
France	53,549	958
Saudi Arabia	51,195	4,852
Russian Federation	50,831	13,482
Brazil	49,717	10,847
United Kingdom	46,323	1,039
Italy	43,437	2,571
Bangladesh	40,909	5,132
Thailand	40,072	6,238
Spain	38,073	794
Mexico	32,511	9,076
Vietnam	30,713	8,653
Canada	30,341	686

Source: EA Earth Action · Get the data · Created with Datawrapper

Regional Economic Outlook for Asia and Pacific

Context: *The IMF says public investment is key for India's fast growth, according to its latest remarks on the Regional Economic Outlook for Asia and Pacific.*

➢ **Regional Economic Outlook for Asia and Pacific:**

- Asia and the Pacific are approaching a soft landing with rapid disinflation and resilient growth.
- Significant heterogeneity exists within the region regarding the pace of disinflation, growth levels, and cyclical positions.
- Policies need to be tailored to individual country-specific needs and circumstances.

➢ **Economic Performance:**

- Economic activity surpassed expectations in the second half of 2023, growing by 5.0 percent in the region.
- Emerging markets experienced upside surprises driven by robust domestic demand.
- Headline inflation continued to decline, especially in emerging Asia, due to various factors including timely monetary tightening and retreating commodity prices.

➢ **Growth Projections:**

- Growth for Asia and the Pacific is projected to slow modestly to 4.5 percent in 2024, with the region contributing about 60 percent of global growth.
- Growth in 2025 is expected to moderate further to 4.3 percent, with China's structural slowdown being a key factor.

➢ **Risks and Challenges:**

- Near-term risks are broadly balanced, with increased likelihood of a soft landing due to retreating inflation.
- Geoeconomic fragmentation and geopolitical tensions pose serious downside risks to medium-term growth.
- A deeper-than-anticipated property sector correction in China is a downside risk, while increased policy support is an upside risk.

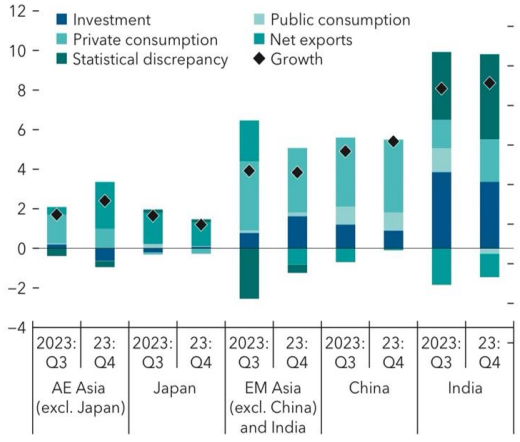
➢ **India's Growth and Inflation:**

- India's growth forecast for the financial year 2024-25 has been raised to 6.8 percent.
- Food price pressures, especially for rice, may slow headline disinflation in India.
- India and the Philippines have been sources of repeated positive growth surprises.

➢ **Policy Recommendations:**

- Central banks should ensure inflation returns smoothly to target and focus on domestic price stability.
- Policymakers should not overly depend on anticipated interest rate moves by the US Federal Reserve.
- Advancing fiscal consolidation is urgent to address medium-term structural challenges and lessen the burden of higher debt levels.

Figure 2. Contributions to Growth
(Year-over-year growth; percentage points)



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NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Shenzhou-17

Recently, the Shenzhou-17 manned spaceship's capsule landed safely at the Dongfeng landing site in North China, concluding a six-month mission with three astronauts aboard China's space station.

About Shenzhou-17:

- Shenzhou-17 is a **Chinese spaceflight** that launched on **October 26, 2023**, to the **Tiangong space station**.
- The spacecraft carried **three astronauts** (Tang Hongbo, Tang Shengjie and Jiang Xinlin) from the People's Liberation Army Astronaut Corps (PLAAC) on a Shenzhou spacecraft.
- The crew's primary tasks include conducting experiments in space medicine and technology, and installing and maintaining equipment inside and outside the station.
- The crew's average age is 38, making them the youngest team to go into space.
- The Shenzhou-17 spacecraft arrived at Tiangong about 6.5 hours after launching on a **Long March 2F rocket.**

International Labour Day

About the International Labour Day:

- International Labour Day, **also known as Workers' Day or May Day**, is observed annually on May 1st.
- It **commemorates the historic struggles** and **sacrifices** of the labour movement worldwide.
- This year the **focus is on ensuring safety and health at work in changing climate**.
- It is **celebrated in over 80 countries, including India, Cuba and China.**
- On **May 1st**, **1886, workers in Chicago organized a strike** demanding an **eight-hour workday**.
- The Haymarket affair occurred during a peaceful rally in support of workers' rights in Chicago.
- A bomb explosion at the rally led to a violent clash with the police, resulting in casualties and the designation of those who died as "**Haymarket Martyrs."**
- In **1889**, the **International Congress of Socialist Parties declared May 1st as International Labour Day** to honor workers' struggles globally.
- India celebrated its first Labour Day on **May 1st, 1923**, in **Chennai**, **organized by the Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan.**
- The Indian Constitution provides numerous safeguards for labour rights, including **fundamental rights** and **Directive Principles of State Policy**.
- **Articles 14, 19(1)(c), 21, 23, 24, 39(a), 41, 42, and 43** outline protections for workers' rights, such as equal treatment, right to form unions, and prohibition of forced labour.

Patachitra

Naya village in Paschim Medinipur's Pingla block, West Bengal, is a hub of traditional patachitra (scroll paintings) artists.

About Patachitra:

- Patachitra, meaning "cloth painting," is a **traditional art form** originating from the eastern Indian states of **West Bengal** and **Odisha**.
- Patachitra paintings are characterized by intricate detailing, **vibrant colors** and **elaborate storytelling.**
- They often depict scenes from **mythology**, **folklore**, **religious themes** and everyday rural life, showcasing the artist's creativity and imagination.
- Patachitra artists typically use natural materials such as **cloth**, **handmade paper**, **natural pigments** and **brushes made from animal hair.**
- **Pingla has become a global market** for patachitra art, supported by non-profits and international organizations like **UNESCO**.

Patuas:

- Patachitra artists, **known as patuas,** play a significant role in preserving and promoting this traditional art form.
- Patuas are a community of traditional **scroll painters** predominantly found in the eastern Indian states of West Bengal and Odisha.
- They are often part of **close-knit communities** where **artistic skills** are passed down through generations, ensuring the continuity of the tradition.
- For many Patuas, **Patachitra painting** is not only a cultural tradition but also a means of livelihood, **providing income for their families.**
- Efforts are being made to **support** and **promote** the economic sustainability of Patuas through market access, training programs, and government initiatives.
- Women patuas, including Swarna, **sell their artwork online** and **customize products**, ensuring the continuity of the art form and community livelihood.

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Taam Ja' Blue Hole

Recently, the researchers have found the world's deepest blue hole Taam Ja' Blue Hole (TJBH), in the Latin American country of Mexico.

- Taam Ja' Blue Hole is an **underwater sinkhole located in Chetumal Bay**, Mexico and is the second **deepest known blue hole in the world.**
- It plunges to a depth of at **least 1,380 feet** (420 meters) below sea level, surpassing the previous record holder, the Dragon Hole in the South China Sea.
- Blue holes are geological formations formed by the **collapse of soluble bedrock,** creating vertical caverns filled with water.
- It was **first discovered in 2021** and recent measurements have revealed its true depth and dimensions.
- The vast expanse of the Taam Ja' Blue Hole suggests it could be connected to a network of **submarine caves** and **tunnels**, which remain unexplored.
- Like other blue holes, the Taam Ja' Blue Hole is a hotspot for biodiversity, hosting a diverse range of marine life, including **corals**, **sea turtles** and **sharks**.

Kendu Leaves

Recently, over 100 Gram Sabhas in Odisha have taken significant steps to exercise their forest rights by directly selling kendu leaves, bypassing traditional middlemen structures.

About Kendu Leaves:

- Kendu leaves, **also known as tendu leaves** in some regions, are the leaves of the Diospyros melanoxylon tree native to India.
- Kendu leaves are primarily used for **rolling beedis**, which are traditional Indian cigarettes.
- They are also utilized in traditional medicine due to their medicinal properties.
- Kendu leaves serve as a **vital source of income for many tribal communities** in India, particularly in states like **Odisha**, **Madhya Pradesh**, **Chhattisgarh**, **Maharashtra** and **Jharkhand**.
- The **collection and trade of kendu leaves are regulated by state governments**, often through Forest Departments.
- **Tribal communities often have customary rights** over forests where kendu leaves grow.
- **The Forest Rights Act (2006) recognizes these rights and empowers** communities to **manage** and **utilize** forest resources sustainably.

Place in News

Croatia

India and Croatia held the 11th session of Foreign Office Consultations in New Delhi on April 30, 2024.

Croatia (Capital: Zagreb)

Location: Croatia is a country located at the crossroads of Central and Southeast Europe.

Boundaries: Croatia shares its political borders with **Serbia** (East), **Hungary** (Northeast), **Slovenia** (Northwest), **Bosnia** and **Herzegovina** and **Montenegro** (Southeast) and **maritime** border with **Italy** (West).

Physical Features:

- The highest point in Croatia is **Dinara Peak**.
- Croatia has numerous islands along its coastline, the most famous being **Hvar**, **Korčula**, **Brac** and **Pag**.

Political Structure: Croatia is a parliamentary republic, with a **President as the head of state** and a Prime Minister as the head of government.

Membership: Croatia is a member of several international organizations, including the **United Nations** (UN), **European Union** (EU), **North Atlantic Treaty Organization** (NATO) and the **World Trade Organization** (WTO), among others.

POINTS TO PONDER

- Which country recently won the gold medal in the men's recurve event at the Archery World Cup? **– India**
- What is 'Fentanyl', recently mentioned in the news? **– Synthetic opioid drug**
- Where is Shergarh Wildlife Sanctuary, recently seen in the news, located? **– Rajasthan**
- Recently, which ministry has granted Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) status to the gem and jewellery sector? **– Ministry of Finance**
- What is a green taxonomy, recently seen in the news? **– A system for categorising environmentally friendly investments**