20/11/2024 WEDNESDAY

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**DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS** 

POLITY

ECONOMICS

TECHNOLOGY

ECOLOGY

### Maharashtra set to vote today in single phase

### **POLITY & GOVERNANCE**

## The people's choice

Assembly elections will be held today for all seats in Maharashtra, and 38 constituencies in the final phase in Jharkhand. Bypolls will also be held in 15 Assembly constituencies across four States and a Lok Sabha seat in Maharashtra



**Poll prep:** A polling official in Mumbai arranges election material on the eve of the Maharashtra Assembly polls

Туре	Seats
Assembly	288
Lok Sabha	1
Assembly	38
Assembly	1
Assembly	1
Assembly	4
Assembly	9
	Assembly Lok Sabha Assembly Assembly Assembly Assembly

■ 14 seats that were to hold polls on Nov. 13 were postponed due to requests

Source: FC

**CONTEXT:** The Assembly elections in 288 constituencies across Maharashtra and for 38 seats in the final phase in Jharkhand will be held on Wednesday. Votes will be counted on November 23.

Maharashtra has 9.7 crore registered voters, including 5 crore men, 4.69 crore women, 6,101 transgender voters, 6.41 lakh Persons with Disabilities (PwD), and 1.16 lakh armed forces service voters. Approximately one lakh

polling stations have been established, up from 96,654 in 2019, to accommodate the increased voter list. In the upcoming elections, the ruling Mahayuti alliance sees the BJP contesting 149 seats, Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde faction) 81, and NCP (Ajit Pawar faction) 59. The Opposition features Congress fielding 101 candidates, Shiv Sena (Uddhav Thackeray faction) 95, and NCP (Sharad Pawar faction) 86. Additionally, BSP is contesting 237 seats and AIMIM 17.

In Jharkhand, where the ruling Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)-led coalition is eyeing a repeat, the BJP is contesting 32 seats and the All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU) six seats, whereas in the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance bloc, the JMM has fielded 20 candidates, the Congress 13, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) four and the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) two candidates.

### 'Friendly contest'

On Monday, enforcement agencies had seized cash, liquor, drugs, freebies, and other inducements amounting to over ₹ 1,000 Cr as part of the ongoing Assembly elections in Maharashtra, Jharkhand and by-elections till now. In the run-up to the Maharashtra election, the enforcement agencies seized cash and goods worth ₹ 252.42 Cr. since the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) came into effect on October 15. This includes ₹ 63.47 Cr. in cash, 34.89 lakh litres of liquor worth ₹ 33.73 Cr., and drugs valued at ₹ 32.67 Cr. Precious metals worth ₹ 83.12 Cr, jewellery worth ₹ 2.79 Cr, and other items worth ₹ 36.62 Cr have also been confiscated. Besides, 2,469 complaints of MCC violations were received via C-Vigil app, with a 99.31 % resolution rate.

### **Heated rallies**

In Jharkhand, Of the 38 seats going to polls in the second and final phase, 27 are general category seats, three are reserved for Scheduled Castes and eight for Scheduled Tribes. About 1.23 crore voters are listed in the electoral rolls for this phase. The first phase held on November 13 covered 43 constituencies.

Among the prominent candidates are Chief Minister Hemant Soren (Barhait constituency), his wife Kalpana Soren (Gandey), his brother Basant Soren (Dumka), BJP State president Babulal Marandi (Dhanwar), Leader of the Opposition in the Jharkhand Assembly Amar Kumar Bauri (Chandankiyari), Shibu Soren's daughter-in-law Sita Soren (Jamtara) and the All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU) chief Sudhesh Mahato (Silli). Jharkhand Chief Electoral Officer K. Ravi Kumar said the second phase of voting will be held at 14,218 booths. Bypolls to the Nanded Lok Sabha constituency in Maharashtra, one Assembly constituency in Kerala, four seats in Punjab, nine in Uttar Pradesh and one in Uttarakhand will also be held on Wednesday.

—20/11/2024 Wednesday — November -

### India, China discuss return of flights at G-20 summit

#### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



**CONTEXT:** India and China agreed to discuss the "next steps" in their relationship, including the resumption of direct flights, visas, journalist permissions, river-data sharing and allowing Indian pilgrims to Kailash Mansarovar, a month after India and China announced troop disengagement along the Line of Actual Control.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the G-20 summit in Rio de Janeiro, their first interaction since the LAC disengagement agreement on October 21, and a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Russia. India had been "principled", "consistent", and independent in its actions, and was "against unilateral approaches to establish dominance". The Ministers recognised the

disengagement in our border areas had contributed to the maintenance of peace and tranquillity. A meeting of the Special Representatives and of the Foreign Secretary-Vice Minister mechanism will take place soon, referring to talks on the boundary question between National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Mr. Wang, as well as between Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and his counterpart.

### On the global stage

Mr. Jaishankar and Mr. Wang referred to the "constructive" engagement between India and China at BRICS at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and G-20. Mr. Modi held bilateral talks with the leaders of a number of countries, including Brazil, Indonesia, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Australia, while exchanging greetings with others on the sidelines of the summit. No formal bilateral meeting had been scheduled with the Chinese President.

The two Foreign Ministers last met during the BRICS summit in Kazan, accompanying their leaders, and held talks in June and July that are believed to have set the pace for military and diplomatic talks to resolve the impasse on the LAC. In particular, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Wang mentioned the lack of direct flights, which were originally suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic, but were never restored due to the tensions at the LAC, and called for Delhi and Beijing to plan to commemorate the 75th year of their diplomatic engagement in 2025.

## 'India's vision for free, open maritime network is finding resonance across the world'

### **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**CONTEXT:** At the ongoing inaugural edition of the thought leadership summit 'Sagarmanthan: The Great Oceans Dialogue' organised by the Union Ministry of Ports, Shipping and waterways in partnership with Observer Research Foundation (ORF), Prime Minister Narendra Modi noted a shared heritage for nations and societies, as well as the lifeline for international trade, over the last decade, the capacity of the country's ports has been doubled.

India have transformed India's shoreline enhancing port efficiency, reducing turnaround times and strengthening last-mile connectivity through expressways, railways and riverine networks. Prime Minister Narendra Modi noted intimate connection of oceans to the security and prosperity of nations, and recognising the potential of oceans, several transformative steps have been taken to bolster India's maritime capabilities. The 'Indo Pacific Oceans Initiative' envisions marine resources as a key pillar for growth for nations. This dialogue on oceans further strengthen the rules-based world order and enhance peace, trust and friendship between nations.

### **Maritime traditions**

Highlighting India's rich maritime legacy and steps taken to build the sector, Mr. Modi noted India's maritime tradition goes back several millennia and is among the richest in the world. The thriving port cities of Lothal and Dholavira, the fleets of the Chola dynasty, the exploits of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj are great inspirations.

## India and Italy to negotiate defence industrial road map, focus on maritime sector

#### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**CONEXT:** India and Italy in the Joint Strategic Action Plan 2025-29, which outlines their vision for the next five years agreed to negotiate a defence industrial road map, and agreement for the mutual protection and exchange of classified information as also an agreement on cooperation in the maritime and port sector.

#### On G-20 sidelines

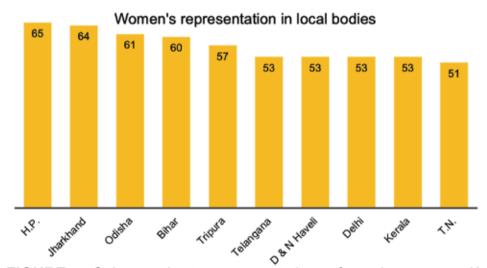
The Joint Strategic Action Plan 2025-29 was issued after the meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Italian counterpart Giorgia Meloni on the sidelines of the G-20 summit on Monday in Brazil. The India – Italian bilateral talks centred around deepening ties in defence, security, trade and technology and to boost cooperation in culture, education and other such areas.

India and Italy also agreed to explore avenues of enhanced partnerships and dialogue among public and private stakeholders, focusing on "technology collaboration, co-production and co-development of defence platforms and equipment". In the last few years, there has been an increase in military-to-military visits between the two countries' armed forces. In a historic maritime engagement, the navies of India and Italy carried out their maiden exercise by Carrier Strike Groups (CSG) off the Goa coast. The sea phase was led by INS Vikramaditya and ITS Cavour along with INS Visakhapatnam and ITS Alpino.

### T.N. has highest number of women councillors: report

### **POLITY & GOVERNANCE**

**CONTEXT:** Nearly 46 % of the councillors in India are women, and in 19 out of the 21 capital cities that have active urban local bodies, including Patna, Shimla, Ranchi and Bhubaneswar, the figure goes well over 60 %.



**FIGURE:** Column hart representation for the women's representation in local bodies.

According to the report "Road map for India's city systems reforms" by Janaagraha, a not-for-profit organisation, 17 States have legislated for 50 % women's quota, over the constitutional minimum of 33 %. Among the States, Tamil Nadu has the highest number of women councillors, according to a road map on urban transformation in India released on Tuesday. The other States in the top 10 are Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Bihar and Chhattisgarh.

The road map for India's urban transformation emphasizes three key pathways: place-based governance, decentralized participatory governance, and building State capacities. The report advocates for a rural-urban transition policy to guide the planned

urbanization of rapidly urbanizing villages, noting that around 1,000 villages have become cities since 2011. The report recommends reimagining the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and State Urban Departments as entities focused on regional economies and local governments, prioritizing local self-governance over sector-specific schemes and funding. Additionally, it underscores the need to strengthen local governments and enhance citizen participation by implementing the 74th Constitutional Amendment.

## WE AIM TO INSPIRE YOU

### **Prison tag**

### **POLITY & GOVERNANCE**

**CONTEXT:** The Supreme Court of India's Centre for Research and Planning in a research report mooted a pilot programme to make undertrials who pose low or moderate risk wear devices that will track and restrict their movements.

The Model Prisons and Correctional Services Act, 2023, includes a provision allowing prisoners to be granted leave if they consent to wear electronic tracking devices for monitoring their movements and activities, with the leave being subject to cancellation for any violations. Odisha was the first state to propose using tamper-proof electronic trackers for undertrials accused of non-heinous offences to alleviate jail overcrowding, extending the concept to bail grants. However, the absence of guidelines or standards on the appropriate use of such technology raises concerns about potential violations of prisoners' rights, highlighting the need for careful regulation.

Earlier this year, the Court criticized bail conditions that infringed on the accused's right to privacy, specifically disapproving of a requirement to pin their location on Google Maps and share it with the investigating officer. However, this does not imply that electronic tagging should be dismissed outright. A Parliamentary Standing Committee endorsed the use of cost-effective tracking devices with the accused's consent, highlighting benefits such as avoiding rights violations, lowering administrative costs, and reducing prison overcrowding. With prison occupancy at 131.4% of capacity, totalling 5,73,220 inmates as of December 31, 2022, measures like tracking technology to ease congestion are seen as welcome solutions.

Several jurisdictions in the world deploy devices to track the movement of certain categories of offenders. It would be logical to use them to ensure that prisoners released recently do not approach their victims again or enter locations associated with their crimes. If the trackers were to be compact in terms of size and visibility, it could also make the beneficiaries of bail shed their reluctance to wear them for fear of stigmatisation.

### Sri Lanka's Dissanayake to visit India mid-December

### **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**CONTEXT:** Sri Lanka's President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, who assumed office in September, will undertake his first state visit abroad to India mid-December.

President Dissanayake installed Sri Lanka's new Cabinet following his party's big win in the November 14 general elections. A date is yet to be fixed for the visit. Colombo and New Delhi are in the process of working out a mutually convenient schedule, sources said.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar visited Sri Lanka early in October and extended Prime Minister Narendra Modi's invitation to the President. Mr. Dissanayake's interim government reportedly conveyed that high-level visits would be considered after the conclusion of the parliamentary polls. The ruling National People's Power has won a historic mandate, securing more than a two-thirds majority.

## SC to examine plea of actor Amol Palekar on film censorship

#### **POLITY & GOVERNANCE**

**CONTEXT:** The Supreme Court decided to examine veteran actor Amol Palekar's plea that the fate of cinematic art banked on the "erratic, subjective interpretation" of the members of the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), whose essential qualifications are not even specified in law.

A Bench of Justices B.R. Gavai and K.V. Viswanathan decided to hear in January Mr. Palekar's petition, pending since 2017, that the Cinematograph Act of 1952 does not specify any qualifications for the members of the Board and/or the examining committee or revising committee or even the Film Certification Appellate Tribunal.

Mr. Palekar, represented by senior advocate Arvind Datar, said this nebulousness in cinema law almost guaranteed the "subjective interpretation of overboard, imprecise guidelines in the hands of unqualified Members". How could members whose qualifications were not specified sanction what films were fit for public viewing and require filmmakers to make cuts, deletions, and alterations, he said. "This is a very unfair and unreasonable restriction on the filmmakers' freedom of speech,"

Mr. Palekar said in his petition.

The veteran actor and filmmaker had approached the top court after three of his documentaries — Aakriet, Daayara and Thaang/Quest — were subject to many hurdles for certification. Mr. Palekar argued that documentaries should be excluded from the purview of the 1952 Act. He contended that a documentary did not fall within the definition of a "cinematograph film" under Section 2(c) and 2(dd) of the Act.

## Daniel Barenboim and Ali Abu Awwad presented Indira Gandhi Peace Prize

#### **PERSONALITY IN NEWS**



**CONTEXT:** The Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament, and Development for 2023 was presented to classical pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim and Palestinian peace activist Ali Abu Awwad on Tuesday.

Mr. Barenboim was selected for his contribution to foster peace through musical and cultural dialogue initiatives and Mr. Awwad for his advocacy for dialogue through his organisation Roots, an outfit that he started after spending time in jail. Shivshankar Menon, former Foreign Secretary and member of the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust, described the initiatives by Mr. Barenboim and Mr. Awwad as "exemplary".

## Study finds 3 drug combos effective against high BP

#### **PERSONALITY IN NEWS**

**CONTEXT:** The Centre for Chronic Disease Control (CCDC), a non-profit organisation, on Tuesday announced the completion of a study on drug treatment optimisation for blood pressure in India.

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and Imperial College, London collaborated to demonstrate all the three combinations were equally effective and safe in regulating blood pressure. The research initiative tested the effectiveness of three double anti-hypertensive pill combinations in South Asian populations with uncontrolled hypertension. The study evaluated amlodipine and perindopril, amlodipine and indapamide, and perindopril and indapamide, and revealed that all three combinations were similarly effective in achieving blood pressure (BP) control.

South Asians account for 25 % of the global population, and India alone is burdened with over 300 million individuals with high BP. The study, the first randomised study to test the choice of anti-hypertensive in them will provide clinicians a road map for addressing the burden of hypertension. The key results notes that blood pressure control was achieved in approximately 70 % of the participants to less than 140/90 mmHg. This is five times the current BP control rates in India with just a single pill and that all combinations demonstrated an excellent safety profile, with less than 3 % of participants withdrawing due to adverse effects, attesting to the tolerability of study drugs.



### INDIA'S TOP MOST CIVIL SERVANTS FOR COACHING

-20/11/2024 WEDNESDAY -

### A consistent response

### **ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT**

**CONTEXT:** Every year, the first instance of the air quality index (AQI) vaulting to hazardous levels in Delhi is a bugle for pandemonium. On Monday, official measurements reported an average AQI of 488, with some private stations reporting over a 1.000.

Since 2016, Delhi has seen only two years with single-digit 'severe' air quality days, while 'poor' AQI days (over 200) have decreased from 200 in 2016 to 121 in 2024, though this year's worst is yet to come. Meteorological conditions remain a critical factor in worsening air quality. However, advancements in public and private analytical tools now enable daily tracking of pollution sources, providing valuable insights for mitigation efforts.

Recent spikes in Delhi's air pollution are attributed to household sources and road dust, following earlier contributions from stubble burning in Punjab. Despite improved understanding and the establishment of the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) for coordinated action, both the central and Delhi governments have failed to address public concerns effectively. Key central Ministers are occupied with election duties and international conferences, while Delhi Ministers dispute satellite data on stubble fires and propose stop-gap measures like cloud seeding.

The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) appears ineffective, acting mainly under Supreme Court pressure, reinforcing perceptions of its lack of independence. While stubble burning is a short-term issue, road dust poses a year-round challenge with significant air quality impacts but limited immediate political benefits. To demonstrate seriousness in addressing the crisis, authorities must prioritize consistent communication and transcend political interests.

### How India could counter the CBAM

Protectionist measures like the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive, and Deforestation Regulation threaten the collaboration needed between developed and developing nations to tackle climate issues. Developing countries, including India, have raised concerns, with India specifically criticizing the EU-CBAM as "arbitrary."

### A 'discriminatory' tool

The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) aims to ensure imported goods face a carbon emission cost similar to that of EU-produced goods. Starting January 1, 2026, exporters must provide emission data and purchase certificates matching their emissions. This could impact India's international trade, as the EU accounts for 20.33% of India's total merchandise exports, with 25.7% of these exports affected by CBAM. Iron and steel make up 76.83% of these exports, followed by aluminium, cement, and fertilizers.

India has criticized the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) as "discriminatory" and urged developing countries to form a united response to what it sees as an unfair transfer of responsibilities. The CBAM is a key issue at COP29 in Baku, but if India presents weak arguments, it risks damaging its credibility as a leading voice for the Global South.

Not all developing countries share India's economic goals or are equally affected by climate change, leading to diverse views on the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) within the developing world. Trade relationships and cultural ties between developed and developing nations influence their positions. The current production-based accounting under the UNFCCC holds exporting nations responsible for emissions from goods they produce, even if those goods are consumed elsewhere. This has led to criticism of developing economies, which may have less stringent emission reduction measures, being blamed for climate change as their exports increase.

### The proposed arguments

To effectively lead, India's arguments should align with the broader agenda of other developing countries. One key argument could focus on the time allocated for preparing for CBAM. The EU demonstrated administrative efficiency by setting a target to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 20% from 1990 levels by 2020, as part of the EU Climate Action and Renewable Energy Package in 2008. After achieving this goal, the European Green Deal was introduced in 2019, aiming for a 55% reduction in emissions below 1990 levels through the "Fit for 55" Package. The question is whether CBAM provides developing economies with sufficient time to adapt.

The second argument concerns empowerment. The EU has chosen to retain the revenues generated by CBAM for its own use, directing them to fund the NextGenerationEU recovery tool and to manage the CBAM. The additional revenue from CBAM is expected to range between €5 to €14 billion annually by 2030, depending on the final design of the mechanism. The question is whether it is fair for the EU to keep this revenue without sharing it with non-EU trading partners.

Sharing the funds could support capacity building and technology transfer in developing economies.

Third, there is the issue of determining emission reduction responsibilities. India can rightly propose an alternative approach called Equity-based Accounting (EBA) for Nationally Determined Contributions, which emphasizes shared responsibility for emission reductions among trade partners, based on the principles of horizontal intra-generational equity and vertical inter-generational equity. In relation to the EU-CBAM, India could introduce the concept of EBA to the developing world as a basis for retaliation measures. Using EBA, a formula could be developed to calculate tariffs on EU imports, factoring in elements such as relative per capita GDP, per capita emissions, trade benefits, and emissions avoided through trade. This approach would express the emissions embedded in imports in a way that accounts for the developmental and historical differences between trade partners, providing a more equitable and impartial assessment of climate actions for developing economies under the new system.

Even the Production-Based Accounting (PBA) principle follows the notion of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities, which is notably undermined under the CBAM framework. CBAM fails to recognize compensatory or distributive justice, meaning that the distribution of emission reduction responsibilities is not fairly assigned based on countries' historical contributions to climate change or their ability to mitigate its impacts. It is clear that through CBAM, the EU seeks to pressure non-EU nations into accepting its self-declared role as the global climate leader.

### India, U.K. to re-launch trade talks in new year: Starmer

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

**CONTEXT:** India and the U.K. decided to re-launch discussions to conclude a 'free trade' deal in the New Year, following the election of a new Labour government in the U.K.

The announcement of the imminent resumption of talks, which began in 2022 during the Boris Johnson Conservative government, was announced by U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer, following a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Rio de Janeiro, on the fringes of the G20 Summit. Bilateral trade between the two countries is valued at £42 billion (\$53.2 billion) in the twelve months to June 2024.

India and the U.K. have concluded most of the 26 chapters under discussion but talks have dragged on with over 14 rounds of trade talks which have outlasted two U.K. Prime Ministers (Mr. Johnson and Rishi Sunak). The last round of talks was held in March, after which India — and then the U.K. — went to the polls. India is the fifth largest economy in the world and a vital trading partner for the U.K. The U.K. is seeking to deepen cooperation in areas education, security, technology and climate change.

The prime ministers reaffirmed the strength of the cultural ties between the two countries as a basis for further cooperation. Prime Minister Modi announced the opening of two consulates in Belfast and Manchester, the government said in its readout of the meeting. PM Modi also brought up the issue of economic offenders with his counterpart.

### **Economic offenders**

The Prime Minister noted the importance of addressing the issue of economic offenders from India in the U.K. The two leaders also agreed on the need to make progress on issues related to migration and mobility. The government has been seeking the extradition of businessman and former politician Vijay Mallya and diamond merchant Nirav Modi. Both readouts refer to the India-U.K. Comprehensive Strategic Partnership but are silent on the '2030 Roadmap', a pathway to deepening the relationship, agreed in 2021 by the Johnson and Modi governments.



# Bima Sugam will help curb insurance mis-selling: IRDAI chief

### **POLITY & GOVERNANCE**

**CONTEXT:** Debasish Panda, Chairperson of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) noted resolution of the new Bima Sugam platform, a day after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman flagged 'forced selling' of insurance products by banks would help resolve the issue to an extent.

Bima Sugam, backed by the IRDAI, is a digital platform showcasing insurance products for customers to choose from. Mr. Panda, however, maintained that selling insurance through banks was a "useful system." Banks, with a long-standing and continuous relationship with customers, offer a unique opportunity to build trust and enhance distribution efficiency, creating a robust ecosystem for inclusion.

## Meta to appeal CCI's ₹ 213-cr. fine on WhatsApp privacy policy change

### **POLITY & GOVERNANCE**

**CONTEXT:** Meta, the parent company of WhatsApp would appeal against the ₹ 213.14 Cr penalty imposed by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) over the messaging app's 2021 privacy policy update.

As a reminder, the 2021 update did not change the privacy of people's personal messages and was offered as a choice for users at the time. Meta, the parent company of WhatsApp also ensured no one would have their accounts deleted or lose functionality of the WhatsApp service because of this update. The update was about introducing optional business features on WhatsApp, and provided further transparency about how we collect and use data.

Data protection laws apply universally to all entities handling personal data, the CCI, on Meta's stance that both competition law and privacy law should not simultaneously apply to WhatsApp. In contrast, Section 4 of the [Competition] Act specifically applies only to dominant entities, imposing additional obligations to prevent abuse of market power.





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