

● POLITY

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INTERNAL SECURITY

## Search on for militants after IAF convoy attack

**CONTEXT:** An Indian Air Force (IAF) convoy was attacked by militants at Surankote in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir, which left one jawan dead and four injured.



Militants belonged to an infiltrators' group sneaked in recently from the Samba-Kathua belt of Jammu into the Rajouri-Poonch area is suspected to be behind the attack on remained untraced on Sunday even as helicopters provided aerial support for combing operations in the forests.

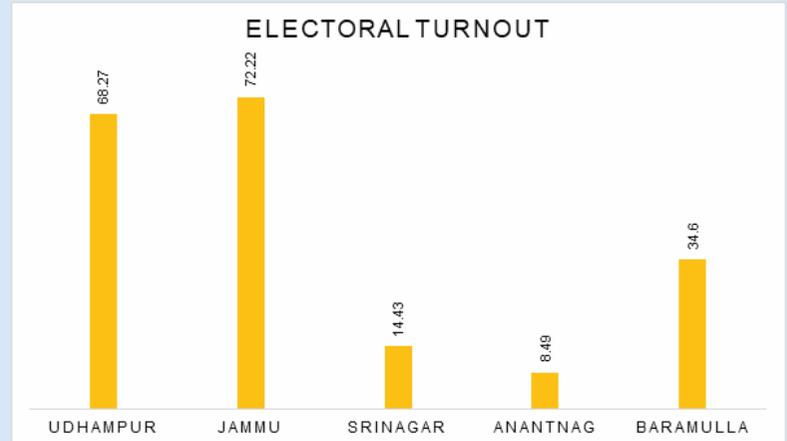
A high alert has been sounded in the Rajouri-Poonch belt after the attack on Saturday. Security agencies suspect the use of metal-piercing bullets fired from U.S.-made M4 carbines. One person was arrested by the police for using a Virtual Private Networking (VPN) application on his mobile.

All kinds of VPNs are banned till the culmination of the Lok Sabha election in the Anantnag-Rajouri seat, polling for which is on May 25.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

## Yearning for change

**CONTEXT:** The constituencies in Jammu have already voted in the first and second phases while elections have been postponed from the third to the sixth phase in the Anantnag-Rajouri constituency. Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh, the Union Territories bifurcated from the legacy border State of J&K.



**FIGURE:** Column chart representation of the electoral turnout of Lok Sabha constituencies.

This was largely due to a sense of disillusionment among the electorate over the dissolution of the erstwhile State's Assembly. Since 2019, the Valley has been subject to persistent central rule that has led to phases of severe repression followed by attempts to rejig its polity and electoral map. The abrogation of special status for the erstwhile State and the continuance of J&K as a UT have not helped reverse the alienation. But the polls could provide a platform for the disenchanted electorate to air their grievances in the form of a decisive mandate.

The NC and PDP have revived their political hostilities in the Valley; the former is in alliance with the Congress as part of the INDIA bloc. As for the Bharatiya Janata Party, its triumphal talk of "unifying" the country by abrogating J&K's special status sounds hollow: it has limited its contest to the Hindu-majority Jammu and Buddhist-majority Ladakh. In Ladakh, the campaign led by activist Sonam Wangchuk has brought the question of Statehood and environmental concerns to the fore. But that has not been enough to rev up the Opposition. The Congress and NC could not come up with a consensus candidate for the Ladakh constituency that includes the Leh and Kargil areas, leading to the Congress fielding a candidate from Leh, while the Kargil units of both parties are supporting an independent from that area.

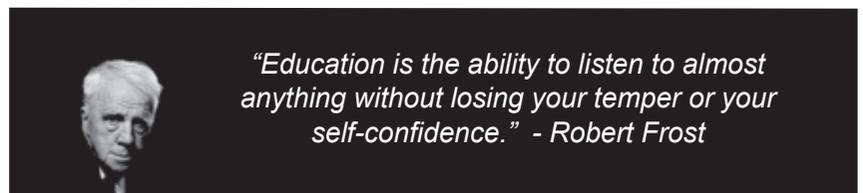




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## INTERNAL SECURITY

## It is time to operationalise the Indian Defence University

**CONTEXT:** Several nations have established 'defence universities' to promote academic rigour and enhance strategic thinking in their armed forces. In India's own neighbourhood, it is reported that Pakistan has created two universities for its armed forces, while China has three.

### Professional Military Education

While the nature of war remains constant, its changing character imposes a premium on military education and the academic preparation required to cope with current and future security challenges. The dynamic and chaotic character of warfare currently on display in Europe and West Asia means that military officers are expected to produce results in the face of nebulous initial information and rapidly changing circumstances. To meet complex challenges, officers are empowered through a well-constructed Professional Military Education (PME) continuum that augments their abilities to correspond with changing assignments and increasing responsibilities over long career spans.

The evolution of PME in the U.S. is of interest to us, since it has parallels with Indian theaterisation aims. While the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act, 1986 brought wide-ranging structural reforms, the U.S. military's professionalism is perhaps owed in large measure to 'Ike' Skelton, whose report to the U.S. Congress significantly reformed military education in the U.S. armed forces. This report advised the Department of Defense to focus educational institutions on specified learning objectives, enhance the quality of both civilian and military faculty, establish a two-phased system for the education of joint officers, and form an Institute for National Strategic Studies at National Defense University, among other things.

### Slow progress

The Indian armed forces, like others, need a broad-based education system, founded upon academic rigour. This realisation came soon after independence when, in 1967, the Chiefs of Staff Committee mooted the setting up of a Defence Services University. In 1982, a Study Group constituted by the COSC emphasised the need to set up an apex educational body for the armed forces in the form of an IDU.

Two decades later, in the wake of the Kargil conflict, a committee was established under the chairmanship of Dr K. Subrahmanyam to examine this issue. Based on its recommendations, in May 2010, 'in principle' approval was accorded for setting up of the IDU in Gurgaon. Despite some optimistic reportage in 2017-18, the progress on setting up of the IDU has been rather slow.

The several world-class training and education institutions run by India's armed forces constitute a rich and vast ecosystem of professional training. However, they lack an overarching integrated PME framework and a multi-disciplinary approach to strategic thinking. Although the armed forces have affiliations with universities for degree courses, this is not the optimal solution. The IDU would remedy such shortcomings in India's PME system by providing a central institution of higher military learning through a well-qualified faculty with a mix of academicians along with serving and retired officers from the military and civil services. In effect, this would unite

theory with practice.

### An idea whose time has come

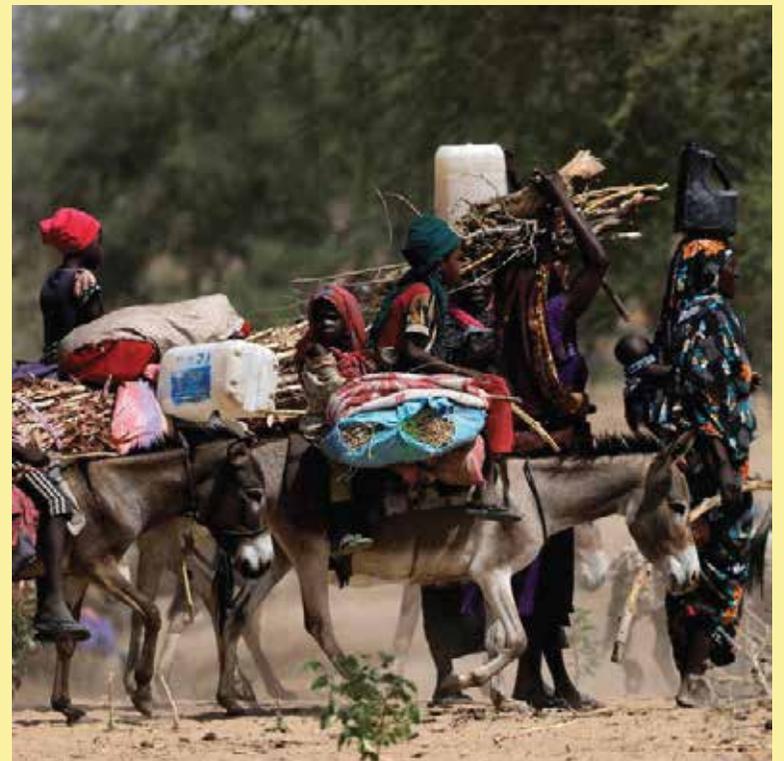
The realisation of the IDU is long overdue. Some experts have suggested that after the establishment of the Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU) in Gujarat, there may not be a need for IDU. This argument is flawed, because comparing the IDU and RRU is like comparing apples and oranges. Neither does the RRU Act specify education related to 'defence' in its objectives, nor is its curriculum focused solely on military requirements for management of war and execution of plans.

The IDU as an idea has come and delays attached in its commissioning come at the cost of defence preparedness, strategic culture, and inter-service integration. The need of the hour is to operationalise the IDU at the earliest, so that the first building-blocks of joint warfighting can be put in place through a well-calibrated and futuristic military education curriculum.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## An overview of Sudan's civil war

**CONTEXT:** Since independence, the Sudanese have experienced 35 coups and attempted coups, more than any other African country. In the country's southern region, a 56-year rebellion eventually led to the creation of South Sudan in 2011.



Sudan has a population of 49 million. It comprises 19 major ethnic groups and about 597 ethnic sub-groups speaking hundreds of languages and dialects. Sudanese Arabs make up the largest single ethnic group at about 70% of the population. Political and economic power and resources are concentrated in the country's centre (for example, Khartoum).

Achieving peace in Sudan requires a focus on the concerns of marginalised populations in conflict zones and

deprived regions. These include Darfur, South Kordofan and the Nuba Mountains. It also requires addressing the root causes of armed violence. Among them are issues of marginalisation, the relationship between religion and state, governance, resource sharing, land, social justice and equality at the national level. A Darfurian uprising in 2003 was sparked by accusations that the central government was discriminating against the region's non-Arab population. It led to ethnic killings and continues to simmer.

### The early years of independence

The Sudanese government that came to power in 1956 insisted on an Arab and Islamic identity. The state was based on the principles of Mahdism, an Islamic Sufi order established in the 1880s. It wasn't representative of diverse communities and sought to subject them to the will of the Mahdist state. It demanded a degree of compliance that many were unwilling to provide. Resistance against Mahdism was widespread.

In 1989, a new government seized control of the state under the rule of the National Islamic Front. This was an alliance between army officers and the Muslim Brotherhood, a fringe outfit that grew into a powerful political organisation. This coup brought to power Omar al-Bashir, who was supported by Islamist leader Hassan al-Turabi. Their government also endeavoured to establish an Islamic state.

The government set up an internal security apparatus, which arrested and tortured dissenters. In 1991, the regime introduced a new penal code to impose an Islamisation agenda, and created the "People's Police".

Two further developments would create the conditions for the war that continues to rage today. The first was the al-Bashir regime's decision in 2003 to enlist Janjaweed militias to quell an insurgency in Darfur. Second, the Islamist regime used this new militia to keep the elite in the Sudanese army away from conflict zones in the periphery.

In 2013, al-Bashir formally designated these tribal militias as the Rapid Support Forces through a presidential decree. This affiliated them with the national security and intelligence services. In 2017, Sudan's parliament ratified the Rapid Support Forces Law. This formally incorporated the militias into the government's military apparatus under the direct command of the president. The minister of defence was tasked with overseeing the Sudanese Armed Forces. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, alias Hemedti, was appointed by al-Bashir to lead the Rapid Support Forces. This enabled his power and influence to grow. It was to inform the dramatic and tragic events in Sudan in the coming decade.

After protests in 2018 swept through Sudan's major cities — driven by grievances around poverty, corruption and unemployment — the military intervened in April 2019. They removed al-Bashir from power and declared a state of emergency.

Despite establishing a transitional military government, demonstrations persisted demanding civilian leadership. With mediation from the African Union, an agreement on power-sharing was reached in August 2019. It resulted in a military-civilian transitional administration. Still, challenges persisted, including a failed coup attempt in September 2021. A month later, Sudan's top general, Abdel

Fattah al-Burhan, led another coup, derailing the country's democratic transition.

The months leading up to the war in April 2023 were marked by civilian protests that were violently repressed, and tensions between army and Rapid Support Forces leaders.

### Forging a militia-dominated state

The Rapid Support Forces emerged as a counterbalance to the armed forces. It strategically deployed thousands of battle-hardened fighters to the country's biggest cities, volatile border regions and economic hubs like gold mines. Concurrently, Russia forged ties with the Rapid Support Forces through the Wagner Group to secure access to Sudanese gold. Three conditions coalesced to foster the emergence of a militia-dominated state, with the Rapid Support Forces at its helm:

- 1) Civil strife in Darfur in 2003 presented an opportune moment. While the army focused on quelling rebellion in south Sudan, the suppression of the Darfurian uprising in the west was left to paramilitary forces.
- 2) Support from the Sudanese government enabled the self-styled militia to access financial resources and weaponry. It could then develop commercial ventures to attain and sustain autonomy from the state.
- 3) Ideologically, Hemedti portrayed the Rapid Support Forces as a militia representing marginalised Arabs from Sudan's rural and border regions.

### The unravelling

In Sudan's evolving democratic transition, Hemedti's rise to the vice presidency of the Sovereignty Council in 2021 was crucial, overseeing the path to elections. Disbanding the Rapid Support Forces or sidelining Hemedti risked sparking unrest, given the outfit's size and business interests.

Militia dominance over the state can prompt belated responses from the military, potentially making conflict worse. Initially, Hemedti refrained from seizing power by force. He aligned his troops as allies of the army, which also had substantial economic ventures.

But the October 2021 military coup halted Sudan's democratic progress. Amid repression and economic decline, the Rapid Support Forces expanded its influence through business ventures and engagements.

The army's attempt to integrate these forces backfired, leading to armed confrontations and the Rapid Support Forces' seizure of critical areas.

### What next

Sudan requires a collaborative effort from the international community to aid reconstruction. It needs to establish a transparent, civilian-led government that represents the Sudanese populace and hears their voices in decision-making processes. Urgent action is needed to reconstruct Sudan's post-colonial state as one that includes and safeguards the rights of all.



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

—Benjamin Franklin

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## Evaluation of bids for Navy's submarine deal under way

**CONTEXT:** The German government is expected to take up a stake in submarine manufacturer, the TKMS (Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems), and discussions are on, it has been learnt. Meanwhile, the Indian Navy's mega submarine deal under Project-75I, estimated to cost upwards of ₹43,000 crore, has moved to the evaluation stage with compliance checks of the two bids received, one of which is from the TKMS.



The German government's move to pick up a stake in the TKMS is in line with the company's desire to convince its stakeholders of the viability of the submarine business. An Indian Navy team visited TKMS in March and conducted the field evaluation trials (FET) and it has met the criteria specified. The FET of Navantia of Spain, the second bid, is expected to be completed before June, it has been learnt. An Indian Navy team visited the TKMS and carried out the FET from March 22 to 28, two sources independently confirmed.

The TKMS was initially not inclined to bid for P-75I due to its scope and complexity but was later convinced by the German government to bid for it. The war in Ukraine and change in Europe's security outlook also contributed to the German government's interest in expanding defence cooperation in a big way.

### Joint initiative

The design offered by the TKMS for P-75I is based on its highly successful Class 214 submarine as well as Class 212CD, with the submarine featuring angular design for minimised radar cross-section, it has been learnt. Meanwhile, Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), the Indian partner of the TKMS, has begun work on the first phase of submarine design, sources in the know said.

The Request For Proposal (RFP) issued by the Navy detailing the specifications states that the first submarine should have indigenous content (IC) of 45% which should go up to 60% for the sixth and last submarine. The final design will be done jointly by the TKMS and the MDL.

In a major decision as the deal moves forward, Germany early in April granted small arms licence to India, a significant exception given the ban on exports to third

countries, and in the last couple of months liberalised the licensing requirements for sale of military equipment as required under its BAFA (Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control).

Only Germany and Spain submitted bids for the deal, the deadline for which saw several extensions before finally culminating in July 2023. The deal is being progressed under the Strategic Partnership model of the defence acquisition procedure.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## India has stringent norms for pesticide residues limit: Centre

**CONTEXT:** The government on Sunday asserted that India has one of the most stringent norms for pesticides residues in food items and rejected reports suggesting that the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) allows high level of residues in spices and herbs.

The clarification comes amid a ban imposed by the Hong Kong food regulator on certain spice mixes of two leading Indian brands MDH and Everest on alleged presence of pesticide ethylene oxide in their samples. The Singapore food regulator too ordered a recall of one spice product of the Everest brand.

FSSAI is currently collecting samples of branded spices, including that of MDH and Everest, sold in the domestic markets to ensure they comply with its quality norms. It does not regulate the quality of exported spices.

In a statement, the Union Health Ministry clarified that maximum residue limits are different for various food products based on risk assessment. "Some media reports are claiming that the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) allows 10 times more pesticide residue in herbs and spices. Such reports are false and malicious. India has one of the most stringent standards of Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) in the world.

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## ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT

## Gold, silver surge on West Asia, U.S. Fed stalemate

**CONTEXT:** After a strong performance in March, precious metals edged higher in April. Aided by geopolitical tension in West Asia and rising demand from central banks, Comex gold breached the psychological \$2,400 per ounce mark in April.

### Roller coaster ride

MCX Gold: ₹/10 gm



Comex gold gained 1.88% in April to settle at \$2,297.3 an ounce. Comex silver posted a much healthier gain of 5.86% to end at \$26.57 an ounce. Mirroring the trend in the global markets, MCX gold closed 4% higher in April and closed at ₹70,466 per 10-gram. MCX silver closed 5.7% higher at ₹81,310 per kilogram. Comex gold continued its uptrend in April and also achieved the target zone of \$2,295-\$2,320 mentioned last month. After reaching an all-time high of \$2,448.8 on April 12, the price has cooled off in the past few weeks.

The sharp rise since March has pushed Comex gold price into an overbought region and the price could consolidate in the \$2,220-\$2,350 zone in the near term. The long-term uptrend in Comex gold is likely to resume on the completion of the anticipated consolidation. A move past \$2,370 would be an early indication of the resumption of the uptrend and the price could then head to \$2,450-\$2,500. The de-escalation of tensions in West Asia along with the dent in the prospects of an interest rate cut in the U.S., led to a cool off in precious metal prices in the latter half of April.

#### Silver breakout

Comex silver managed to breakout past its prior range of \$21.9-\$26.4 range, which is a sign of strength. As observed last month, the breakout above \$26.4 resulted in a spike to the target zone of \$28.5-\$29 zone. The short-term outlook is positive and silver price could head to \$27.8-\$28.5 in the short-term. A fall below \$25.8 would indicate short-term weakness and would result in a delay in progress towards the target zone.

#### Ruling firm

Mirroring the global trend, MCX gold too ruled firm and reached the then mentioned target of ₹69,200-₹69,800. The short-term outlook is positive, and the gold price could head to ₹72,200-₹72,500 zone. A fall below ₹69,000 would invalidate this positive outlook.

MCX silver price continued its uptrend April and also hit the target zone of ₹78,200-₹78,600 mentioned last month. The near-term outlook is positive and MCX silver could head to next target zone at ₹83,200-₹83,500. The positive view would be under threat if the price drops below ₹80,000.

To summarise, the short-term outlook for both gold and silver is positive. While Comex gold could consolidate in the near term, silver looks relatively strong and could continue its short-term uptrend soon.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## Netanyahu orders news network Al Jazeera to stop work in Israel

**CONTEXT:** Israel ordered the local offices of Qatar's Al Jazeera satellite news network to close on Sunday, escalating a long-running feud between the broadcaster and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's hard-line government as Doha-mediated cease-fire negotiations with Hamas hang in the balance.



The extraordinary order, which includes confiscating broadcast equipment, preventing the broadcast of reports and blocking its websites, is believed to be the first time Israel has ever shuttered a foreign news outlet.

The network has reported the Israeli-Hamas war nonstop since the militants' initial cross-border attack October 7 and has maintained 24-hour coverage in the Gaza Strip amid Israel's grinding ground offensive that has killed and wounded members of its own staff.

Al Jazeera issued a statement vowing it will "pursue all available legal channels through international legal institutions in its quest to protect both its rights and journalists, as well as the public's right to information."

#### Heightened tension

The ban did not appear to affect the channel's operations in the occupied West Bank or Gaza Strip, where Israel wields control but which are not sovereign Israeli territory. The decision threatens to heighten tensions with Qatar at a time when the Doha government is playing a key role in mediation efforts to halt the war in Gaza, along with Egypt and the United States.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

# PMJAY did not reduce patients' health expenses: Chhattisgarh study

**Table 1A** shows the share of people in Chhattisgarh who were enrolled under different Public Funded Health Insurance (PFHI) schemes in 2004, 2014 and 2019. In 2004, there were no PFHI schemes. In 2014, around 40% were enrolled in a PFHI scheme and the share increased to 68% in 2019. The report studied enrolments in three PFHI schemes introduced in the State across various years — Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY), PMJAY, MukhyaMantri Swasthya Bima Yojana (MSBY). The RSBY scheme introduced in 2008 was later subsumed by PMJAY. The PMJAY scheme, launched in 2018, is active and supported by the Union government and is targeted at poor households. The MSBY is fully funded by the State government and takes care of the non-poor households. As shown in Table 1A, by 2019, PMJAY provided cover for about 46% individuals in the State while the MSBY covered less than half of that roughly. Also, the annual insurance cover provided by PMJAY is far higher than MSBY.

**Table 1B** shows that the share of the population who accessed hospitals has increased between 2014 and 2019. However, the increase was similar among those who were enrolled in PFHI schemes (an increase from 3.3% to 6%) and those who were not enrolled in one (2.9% to 5.7%). This shows that the PFHI schemes, in particular the PMJAY have not led to an increase in access.

**Table 1C** shows the share of hospitalisations which happened in a private hospital. Notably, among those enrolled in PFHI schemes, the share of hospitalisations in private hospitals increased from around 33% to 45% between 2014 and 2019. Among those who were not enrolled, this share reduced from about 54% to 29%.

**Table 2A** shows the mean OOPE in rupees for hospitalisations among those enrolled under various schemes across 2004, 2014 and 2019. Table 2B provides the median OOPE. Only OOPE for medical reasons were considered and spending on transport and stay were

ignored. As the expenditure in private hospitals was many times over the expenses in public facilities, the comparisons are focussed on private entities. There was no significant difference between the mean OOPE among those who were enrolled in PMJAY and those who were not enrolled. Both the set of patients spent around ₹20,000 per hospitalisation episode in private hospitals. Even if the median OOPE is considered, the difference was not considerable with those who were enrolled spending around ₹7,300 and those who didn't spend ₹8,750 per hospitalisation episode.

**Table 2C** shows the share of hospitalisations which resulted in catastrophic health expenditure (CHE25) in which the OOPE incurred was about 25% of the patients' annual expenditure. The share of such patients remained similar among those who were enrolled in PMJAY and those who did not. Tables 2A, B, and C hint at the possibility of double-billing as OOPE increases despite rising insurance coverage.

## Expense report

The tables are sourced from a study published by Samir Garg, Kirtti Kumar Bebartha and Narayan Tripathi in *BMC public health*, a peer-reviewed open-access scientific journal



**Table 1**

**Table 1A: The table shows the share of population in Chhattisgarh who were enrolled under various Publicly Funded Health Insurance (PFHI) schemes**

PFHI scheme	2004	2014	2019
RSBY		38.8%	
PMJAY			45.8%
MSBY			22%
Not enrolled in PFHI	100%	61.3%	32.1%

**Table 1B: The table shows the share of population in Chhattisgarh who accessed hospitals**

	2004	2014	2019
All	1.4%	3%	5.9%
PFHI-enrolled		3.3	6
Not enrolled in PFHI	1.4%	2.9%	5.7%

**Table 1C: The table shows the share of hospitalisation episodes which happened in private hospitals in Chhattisgarh**

Insurance Status	2004	2014	2019
All	47.5%	44.8%	39.9%
PFHI-enrolled		32.8%	45.1%
Not enrolled in PFHI	47.5%	53.6%	28.6%

**Table 2**

**Table 2A: The table shows the mean out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE in ₹) for hospitalisations**

PFHI scheme	Type of hospital	2004	2014	2019
All	Public	8,603	3,491	3,101
	Private	15,280	22,929	26,108
RSBY	Public	-	2,633	-
	Private	-	26,326	-
PMJAY	Public	-	-	3,078
	Private	-	-	19,375
MSBY	Public	-	-	3,506
	Private	-	-	41,154
Not enrolled	Public	2,912	1,800	2,974
	Private	7,922	13,650	20,261

**Table 2B: The table shows the median out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE in ₹) for hospitalisations**

PFHI scheme	Type of hospital	2004	2014	2019
All	Public	2,912	1,100	378
	Private	7,922	12,450	7,575
RSBY	Public	-	570	-
	Private	-	10,650	-
PMJAY	Public	-	-	530
	Private	-	-	7,299
MSBY	Public	-	-	303
	Private	-	-	13,447
Not enrolled	Public	2,912	1,800	417
	Private	7,922	13,650	8,759

**Table 2C: The table shows the share of hospitalisations which resulted in a Catastrophic Health Expenditure (CHE25) in which the OOPE incurred was about 25% of the patients' annual expenditure**

PFHI scheme	Type of hospital	2004	2014	2019
All	Public	14.9%	4.4%	7.2%
	Private	27.6%	32.1%	39.4%
RSBY	Public	-	4.8%	-
	Private	-	34.4%	-
PMJAY	Public	-	-	7.6%
	Private	-	-	43.6%
MSBY	Public	-	-	3.8%
	Private	-	-	32.4%
Not enrolled	Public	14.9%	4%	7.9%
	Private	27.6%	30.7%	39.5%



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