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**CURRENT
AFFAIRS**



**2026
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- Draft Regulations For Use of AI In Courts, 2026
- Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Rules, 2026
- CAG Report: State Finances 2024–25
- Adivasi Delisting Debate
- Kharif Preparedness Amid El Niño
- Rupee Slides Down

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Draft Regulations For Use of AI In Courts, 2026

The Supreme Court has released the **Draft 'Regulations for Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Courts, 2026'**. While the draft permits AI for administrative and research purposes, it prohibits its use in **adjudicatory functions** and **judicial decision-making**.

Rationale Behind the Restrictions

- AI systems may perpetuate biases present in training data, leading to unfair outcomes.
- Many AI models lack transparency and cannot adequately explain how a particular conclusion was reached.
- Judicial decision-making requires contextual understanding, constitutional values, empathy, and application of legal principles that AI cannot replicate.
- Generative AI tools may produce inaccurate or fabricated information, posing risks to the administration of justice.
- Judicial accountability must remain with human judges rather than automated systems.

Key Provisions

Prohibition on AI-Based Judicial Decision-Making

- AI cannot be used to determine judicial outcomes, assess bail eligibility, recommend sentencing, evaluate witness credibility, or otherwise influence the adjudication of cases.
- No personal data of any person shall be used to train, test, or refine any AI system without the prior approval of the appropriate authority, or to perform the function of adjudication or sentencing in any matter without mandatory human-in-the-loop.
- Final judicial decisions must remain the exclusive responsibility of judges and judicial officers.
- AI-generated outputs cannot substitute human reasoning, discretion, or judicial accountability.

Permitted Uses of AI

- AI may be used for case management, cause list preparation, hearing scheduling, transcription of court proceedings, translation of judgments, legal research, administrative functions including case filing assistance, defect scrutiny, record management and judicial resource allocation, conversational AI assistants and guided chatbots to assist litigants and other stakeholders in accessing court services and understanding procedural requirements, accessibility services for persons with disabilities or language barriers and anonymisation of court records.
- Such tools are intended to improve efficiency and assist judges and court staff without performing adjudicatory functions.

Human Oversight

- All AI-assisted outputs must be subject to meaningful human review.
- Judges and court officials must independently verify AI-generated content before relying on it.
- Responsibility for judicial actions and decisions cannot be delegated to AI systems.

A regulatory body

- The draft proposes a permanent, full-time apex body at the Supreme Court "to regulate and promote innovation, integration, governance, oversight, standard-setting and policy development on artificial intelligence in judiciary".
- Its proposed composition includes two Supreme Court judges nominated by the Chief Justice of India (CJI), one of whom shall serve as ex-officio chairperson; two high court Chief Justices nominated by the CJI; two high court judges nominated by the CJI; one member from an institution of national importance or any institution of repute, as may be nominated by the CJI; an officer not below the rank of joint secretary to the Government of India in the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology; a finance expert, to be nominated by the CJI; a cybersecurity expert, to be nominated by the CJI; one or more advocates of standing, nominated by the CJI with expertise in technology related laws or data privacy or related fields; and the professor heading the field of Artificial Intelligence at the National Judicial Academy, Bhopal.

Data Protection and Privacy

- AI tools deployed in courts must comply with applicable data protection and privacy standards.
- Sensitive judicial records and personal information must be protected from unauthorised access, misuse, or breaches.
- Adequate cybersecurity safeguards are required for AI-enabled systems.

Transparency and Accountability

- Courts must ensure transparency regarding the use of AI systems.
- AI-generated outputs should be identifiable and capable of being audited.
- Appropriate mechanisms should be established to monitor the functioning and reliability of AI tools.

Significance	Way Forward
- Establishes a formal framework for the responsible use of AI within the Indian judiciary. - Balances technological innovation with the principles of natural justice and due process. Reinforces judicial independence by ensuring that adjudicatory functions remain exclusively human. - Aligns India with emerging global approaches that permit AI as a support tool while restricting its role in judicial decision-making.	- Develop ethical and operational standards for AI deployment in courts. - Enhance AI literacy and training for judges and court personnel. Institute regular audits and oversight mechanisms for AI tools. - Ensure continued emphasis on transparency, privacy protection, and human supervision.



Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Rules, 2026

The **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** has notified the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Rules, 2026** which has amended the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Rules, 2011** under the **2010 Act**.

Key Changes under the FCRA Rules, 2026

- **Purpose-Specific Registration:** NGOs must now register for **specific approved purposes** selected from a government-notified schedule instead of broad categories., with separate fees for each activity.
 - Existing FCRA-registered organisations have been given **one year** to indicate the purposes they wish to retain. Any future expansion of activities will require fresh approval.
- **Geographical Restrictions:** Registration certificates will specify the States/Union Territories where foreign-funded activities may be undertaken.
 - NGOs seeking to operate in additional States/UTs must obtain prior approval.
- **Religious Activities and Proselytisation:** The Rules continue to permit activities such as:
 - Construction and maintenance of places of worship.
 - Religious education.
 - Preservation of scriptures and religious traditions.
 - Langars, dharamshalas and other charitable religious activities.
 - However, these activities are expressly permitted "excluding proselytisation", i.e., foreign contributions cannot be used for activities aimed at religious conversion.
- **Expanded Definition of "Key Functionary":** The term now includes directors, trustees, partners, office bearers, karta of a Hindu Undivided Family (HUF), members of governing bodies, any person exercising management or control over the organisation.
- Associations with foreign nationals (other than Indian Origin) as key functionaries will ordinarily not be eligible for FCRA registration or prior permission unless specifically exempted by the Central Government.
- **Enhanced Disclosure Requirements:** NGOs are now required to disclose
 - Detailed activity reports.
 - Websites and social media accounts.
 - Publications.
 - Ultimate donors where funds are routed through donor-advised funds or intermediary funding vehicles.
- **Stricter Utilisation Norms:** An association will generally be treated as having undertaken "reasonable activity" only if it has utilised at least ₹10 lakh of foreign contribution during the preceding two financial years.
 - In prior-permission cases, subsequent instalments of foreign funds will be released only after 75% of the previous instalment has been utilised and verified through field inquiry.
- **Revised Penalty Framework:** The ministry revised compounding penalties for several FCRA offences.

Violation	Revised Penalty
Administrative expenditure beyond the statutory 20% limit	₹1 lakh or 5% of the excess expenditure, whichever is higher
Speculative investment of foreign contribution	₹1 lakh or 30% of the amount invested, whichever is higher, along with recovery of 100% of returns earned
Diversion or utilisation of funds beyond approved purposes/areas	₹1 lakh or 30% of the misused amount, whichever is higher

Rationale Behind the Amendments

According to the Government, the amendments aim to:

- Improve **transparency, traceability and accountability** in the use of foreign contributions.
- **Strengthen monitoring** through purpose- and geography-specific registrations.
- **Prevent misuse & diversion** of foreign funds.
- **Safeguard national security** and public interest.

Constitutional Perspective

- **Article 25** guarantees the freedom to profess, practise and propagate religion.
- However, in *Rev. Stanislaus v. State of Madhya Pradesh (1977)*, the Supreme Court held that the right to propagate religion does not include a fundamental right to convert another person.
- The explicit exclusion of proselytisation in the amended Rules is consistent with this judicial interpretation.

Concerns

- **Increased compliance requirements** may raise administrative costs, particularly for smaller NGOs.
- Purpose-specific

Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026

The **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026** was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 25 March 2026 to amend the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010**.

The Bill seeks to strengthen the legal framework governing foreign-funded organisations, particularly regarding the management of foreign contributions and assets after an organisation's FCRA registration is **cancelled, surrendered or ceases to be valid**.

Background

- Under the **FCRA, 2010**, organisations receiving foreign contributions must obtain registration or prior permission from the Central Government.
- If an organisation's registration is **cancelled or surrendered**, the Act provides for management of foreign contributions and assets created from such contributions.
- The Government stated that the existing provisions did not adequately address situations where registration expires, renewal is denied, or renewal is not sought, necessitating a comprehensive statutory framework.

Key Provisions of the Bill

- **Establishment of a Designated Authority:** The Bill provides for the creation of a Designated Authority, to be notified by the Central Government.
 - The Authority will provisionally take charge of foreign contributions and assets in specified circumstances.
- **Deemed Cessation of Registration:** The Bill provides that an FCRA registration certificate shall be deemed to have ceased if:
 - No application for renewal is made before expiry.
 - Renewal application is rejected.
 - Registration expires without renewal.
 - This expands the circumstances beyond mere cancellation or voluntary surrender.
- **Vesting of Foreign Contributions and Assets:** Foreign contributions and assets created wholly or partly from foreign contributions will provisionally vest in the Designated Authority when registration:
 - is cancelled,
 - is surrendered,
 - or ceases due to non-renewal or rejection of renewal. The Authority will supervise and maintain the assets, safeguard them from misuse, manage their utilisation in accordance with the Act.
- **Disposal of Assets:** If the organisation regains registration, the assets may be restored.
 - If registration is not restored, the Central Government may utilise or dispose of the assets for public purposes in accordance with the prescribed procedure.

and geography-specific approvals could **reduce operational flexibility**.

- Restrictions on organisations with foreign nationals in leadership positions may affect **internationally governed charitable institutions**.
- Civil society organisations have expressed concerns that tighter regulation could **impede humanitarian and developmental activities** if approvals become cumbersome.



CAG Report: State Finances 2024–25

The **Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)** of India released its first consolidated "**State Finances 2024–25**" **Report**, providing a comparative assessment of the fiscal position of all 28 States over the period **2015–16 to 2024–25**.

Key Findings

- **Fiscal Deficit**
 - All 28 States reported fiscal deficits during 2024–25.
 - 18 States exceeded the 3% of GSDP fiscal deficit limit recommended by 15th Finance Commission and prescribed under State FRBM (Fiscal Responsibility & Budget Management) laws.
 - Among the states, **Meghalaya** recorded the highest fiscal deficit at 8.69% of GSDP, followed by **Nagaland** at 6.14% and **Sikkim** at 5.59%
- **Rising Public Debt**
 - Combined outstanding liabilities of States increased to ₹90.51 lakh crore by 31 March 2025.
 - State debt has shown a steady increase over the past decade, raising concerns about long-term fiscal sustainability.
- **Expenditure Pattern**
 - Total expenditure of States increased from ₹22.18 lakh crore (2015–16) to ₹51.20 lakh crore (2024–25), an increase of 131% over the decade.
 - Welfare and development expenditure recorded significant growth, reflecting increased spending on social sectors and subsidies.
- **Revenue Position:** States with revenue deficits are increasingly borrowing to finance current expenditure, reducing fiscal flexibility.

Major Concerns Highlighted

- **Fiscal Sustainability:** Persistent fiscal deficits and rising debt may constrain future developmental expenditure.
- **Fiscal Rigidity:** High committed expenditure limits the ability of States to respond to emerging developmental priorities.
- **Rising Subsidy Burden:** Increasing subsidies, if not well-targeted, may crowd out productive capital expenditure.
- **Borrowing for Revenue Expenditure:** Several States are increasingly using borrowings to finance routine expenditure instead of creating productive assets, affecting long-term fiscal health.

Positive Trends

- Overall expenditure on welfare and development has increased substantially.
- Some States continue to maintain revenue surpluses despite challenging fiscal conditions.
- Greater emphasis on public welfare, education, health and infrastructure has contributed to improved social outcomes.

CAG's Recommendations

- **Strengthen Fiscal Discipline**
 - Adhere to FRBM fiscal deficit and debt targets.
 - Improve medium-term fiscal planning.
- **Rationalise Committed Expenditure**
 - Better management of salaries, pensions and subsidies.
 - Improve efficiency of public spending.
- **Enhance Revenue Mobilisation**
 - Strengthen tax administration.
 - Expand own-tax and non-tax revenues.
 - Improve GST compliance.
- **Improve Quality of Expenditure**
 - Increase capital expenditure and reduce dependence on revenue expenditure.
 - Ensure borrowings are utilised primarily for asset creation.
- **Improve Fiscal Transparency**
 - Strengthen accounting practices.
 - Improve disclosure of off-budget borrowings and contingent liabilities.

- **Committed Expenditure Remains High**

- Committed expenditure (salaries, pensions and interest payments), along with subsidies, and grants accounted for over 61% of revenue expenditure in 2024–25.
- High committed expenditure leaves limited fiscal space for capital investment and developmental initiatives.

- **Subsidy Expenditure**

- Subsidy expenditure by States has more than tripled over the last decade.
- **Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Punjab** emerged as the largest subsidy-spending States, each allocating over 13.5% of total expenditure to subsidies.

- **Revenue Structure and Tax Mobilisation**

- States' own tax revenue accounted for ~50% of total revenue receipts amounting to ₹40.52 lakh crore.
 - States' own tax revenue more than doubled from ₹8.4 lakh crore in 2015-16 to ₹20.31 lakh crore in 2024-25.
- State GST contributed more than 43% of States' own tax revenues.

- **Dependence on Central Transfers**

- States continue to rely significantly on:
 - Tax devolution from the Centre.
 - Grants-in-aid.
- Such dependence affects fiscal autonomy, especially for fiscally weaker States.

Indicator	Status
Revenue Surplus	13 States
Revenue Deficit	15 States



Adivasi Delisting Debate

A renewed debate has emerged over whether Scheduled Tribe (ST) status should continue after **conversion to Christianity or Islam**, following calls by some tribal organisations for "delisting" converted tribals from the ST list. Simultaneous demands by many Adivasi groups in Jharkhand for recognition of **"Sarna" as a separate religion** during the Census has also brought forward this issue.

What is the Delisting Demand?

- Delisting refers to the demand that tribal persons who convert to Christianity or Islam should **cease to enjoy the constitutional benefits** available to Scheduled Tribes.
- Proponents argue that conversion **changes the socio-cultural basis** on which ST status is granted.
- Opponents contend that tribal identity is **ethnic, cultural and historical, not religious**, and therefore should not be affected by conversion.

Key Constitutional Question

The controversy ultimately centres on a fundamental question:

- Should Scheduled Tribe status be

Constitutional Position

Scheduled Castes (SCs)	Scheduled Tribes (STs)
Governed by Article 341	Governed by Article 342
The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 links SC status to religion (currently Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism).	Article 342 and the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 do not prescribe any religious criterion for ST status.
Conversion to Christianity or Islam results in loss of SC status.	No constitutional provision states that conversion leads to loss of ST status.
Scheduled Castes are identified primarily on the basis of historical caste-based untouchability.	Scheduled Tribes are recognised based on Ethnicity, Distinct culture, Traditional customs, Geographical isolation, and Historical marginalisation.

This distinction forms the core of the present controversy.

Historical Background

- The demand traces its origin to Kartik Oraon, a tribal leader and Union Minister. After unsuccessfully challenging the election of a Christian Oraon candidate, he argued that converted tribals should lose ST status.
- **Patna High Court Judgment (Kartik Oraon vs. David Munzni (1963):** It rejected the plea, holding that:
 - Tribal identity is primarily ethnic and community-based.
 - Christian Oraons continued to follow tribal customs and clan systems.
 - They remained "Oraons first and Christians next."
- **Kartik Oraon appealed this decision to the Supreme Court of India, which subsequently upheld the High Court's ruling.**
- **Joint Parliamentary Committee (1969):** A Joint Parliamentary Committee examining amendments to the SC/ST Orders recommended excluding Christian and Muslim converts from the ST list. The recommendation was not accepted, and Parliament did not amend the law.

determined by religion, or by ethnicity, culture, historical disadvantage and indigenous identity?

- Since Article 342 contains no religious qualification, any move to delist converted tribals would likely require legislative or constitutional changes and would invite judicial scrutiny.

Significance

- Raises important questions about the basis of affirmative action for tribal communities.
- Has implications for reservation policy, Census classification and tribal self-identification.

Way Forward

- Ensure that any policy decision is guided by constitutional principles and empirical evidence.
- Promote extensive consultation with tribal communities before considering changes to ST status.
- Address the socio-economic challenges faced by all tribal communities, irrespective of religion.
- Consider the long-pending demand for a separate Sarna religious code based on wider stakeholder consensus.
- Strengthen implementation of tribal welfare laws such as the Forest Rights Act, 2006 and the Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, 1996 to address substantive issues of land, livelihood and self-governance.

Arguments in Favour of Delisting

- Conversion may **alter traditional tribal religious practices and cultural identity**.
- Converted tribals may receive benefits from both **minority welfare schemes and ST reservations**.
- Reservation benefits should primarily reach tribals who continue to **preserve indigenous traditions**.
- Delisting would align ST benefits more closely with their original objective of **protecting traditional tribal communities**.

Arguments Against Delisting

- Tribal identity is ethnic, cultural and ancestral, not religious.
- **Conversion does not remove challenges** like land alienation, geographical isolation, economic deprivation and social discrimination.
- **Article 342** deliberately omits any religious qualification for ST status.
- Delisting may **divide tribal communities** and undermine constitutional protections for vulnerable groups.
- It could dilute the **rights of converted tribals** under protective legislation such as the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

Sarna Religion and the Debate

- Sarna is the traditional indigenous faith followed by many tribal communities in Jharkhand and neighbouring States.
- Many Adivasi organisations demand a separate Sarna religious code in the Census instead of classifying followers as Hindus or under "Others."
- They argue that recognising Sarna would:
 - Preserve tribal identity,
 - Improve demographic accuracy,
 - Protect indigenous cultural traditions.

"Adivasi" vs "Vanvasi"

Adivasi	Vanvasi
Means "original inhabitants".	Means "forest dwellers".
Emphasises indigenous identity, historical rights and connection with land.	Emphasises geographical location rather than indigeneity.
Preferred by many tribal organisations.	Used by several organisations advocating cultural integration with the broader Hindu society

The terminology itself has become part of the wider debate on tribal identity.



Kharif Preparedness Amid El Niño

- With the possibility of El Niño and a weak or uncertain monsoon this year, the Central Government has intensified its preparedness for the Kharif season.
- The southwest monsoon is significantly delayed this year, and rainfall so far has been around **43% below normal**. This could directly affect Kharif crops, particularly in rainfed regions.

District Identification

- Ministry of Agriculture and Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) have jointly assessed districts vulnerable to low rainfall and inadequate irrigation based on scientific data.
- Around **315 districts** have been identified as **potentially affected by weak monsoon** conditions. Of these, **111 districts** have been categorized as **high priority**, where irrigation coverage is below 25%.
- Another **76 districts** fall under the **medium-priority** category with irrigation coverage between 25 and 50%, while **128 districts** have been classified as **low priority** due to relatively better irrigation facilities through dams and other sources.
- A majority of these districts are **located across 12 states**—Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Bihar, Jharkhand, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.

District Agriculture Contingency Plans

ICAR and ICAR- Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture (ICAR-CRIDA) have prepared **District Agriculture Contingency Plans** for all districts. These plans incorporate district-specific climatic conditions, cropping patterns, water resources, and risk factors.

Financial Security for Farmers

- Coverage will be expanded under the **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana** in potentially affected districts to ensure timely compensation in case of crop losses.
- States to expedite issuance of **Kisan Credit Cards** to eligible farmers so that they have adequate resources to deal with seed losses, resowing and other agricultural investments.

Co-ordination and Monitoring

- A **multi-tier coordination framework** has been developed at the Centre, state, district, block and village levels with clearly defined responsibilities.
- Real-time data-sharing mechanisms are being

Water Conservation and Irrigation Management

- Ponds, reservoirs, streams, farm ponds, check dams, stop dams, and temporary bunding structures will be repaired and strengthened immediately.
- **Water conservation and harvesting works** under **MGNREGA** and forthcoming programmes such as **VB-GRAMG** will be given priority so that employment generation and enhancement of water storage capacity can happen together.
- Sensitive districts have been advised to give **top priority to drinking water supply** and, if necessary, arrange water transfer from surplus regions to deficit areas.

Crop Strategy

- States have been advised to **promote short-duration crop varieties** and those capable of **delivering higher yields with lower water requirements**.
- Farmers have been encouraged to **adopt crop diversification** to reduce dependence on a single crop and distribute risks across multiple crops.
- **Intercropping and mixed farming practices** are also being promoted to ensure that if one crop is affected, farmers can still generate income from others.
- Special emphasis has been laid on **pulses, millets, and oilseeds**, which perform relatively better under limited moisture conditions.
- States have to switch immediately to alternative crop options if there is a prolonged gap between the normal sowing period and the onset of rainfall.

Advance Arrangement of Inputs

- Adequate seed and fertilizer arrangements for the Kharif season have already been made. Additional seed stocks have been set aside for potentially affected districts. Around **1% extra seed stock** has been reserved specifically for districts **where resowing may become necessary**.
- Monitoring mechanisms are in place to ensure timely delivery in districts vulnerable to weak monsoon conditions to ensure sowing takes place immediately when weather conditions become favourable.
- It has been stressed that **sowing should be undertaken only after cumulative rainfall of 75–100 mm** and adequate soil moisture. Premature sowing after light rainfall increases the risk of seed damage and resowing.

Scientific Advisory

- The country's 731 Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) serve as the principal link for delivering technical guidance and crop management information to farmers.
- **KVKs and Agro-Meteorological Advisory Units** have been instructed to work closely with districts and ensure that every farmer receives **timely information and scientific guidance** to make informed decisions regarding sowing, crop changes and input use.

Livestock and Fodder Management

- A severely weak monsoon could lead to fodder shortages for livestock. To address this possibility, **advance supply plans** are being prepared. Fodder stocking, alternative fodder sources, and supply chains from surplus regions to deficit areas are being planned in advance.
- The Centre and states will jointly strengthen monitoring mechanisms to **prevent black marketing and hoarding of fodder**.

established among District Collectors, Agriculture Departments, Water Resources Departments, Rural Development Departments, Animal Husbandry Departments, KVKs, and other institutions.

- At the national level, an **El Niño Monitoring Cell** and a **Crop Weather Watch Group** have been constituted to continuously analyse monsoon progress, crop sowing, crop conditions, input supplies and market indicators.

If all the arms work in coordination, the challenge of El Niño can be converted into an opportunity where water conservation, crop diversification, scientific advisories and social security schemes together provide a protective shield for farmers.



Rupee Slides Down

Over the past few months, the rupee has experienced a sharp slide. The rupee-to-dollar exchange rate touched an all-time low of 96.96. There has been an ongoing debate whether the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) should defend the currency or to let it fall and find its true level.

India's Exchange Rate System

- India's exchange rate system lies between two extremes. A **pure float** allows the currency to move freely with market forces.
- A **fixed or pegged exchange rate**, by contrast, commits the central bank to maintaining a specific value against another currency or a basket of currencies.
- India follows neither model in a strict sense. Since 1993, India has had a **market-determined exchange rate system**. In practice, this is a **managed float**.
- The rupee's exchange rate against the US dollar basically changes depending on the relative demand for the two currencies in the foreign exchange (forex) markets. Under this system, the value of the rupee is largely determined by:
 - Demand and supply of foreign exchange;
 - International capital flows;
 - Trade balance;
 - Inflation and interest rate differentials;
 - Market expectations and investor confidence.

Factors Causing Pressure on Rupee

- **Oil:** India imports nearly 90% of its crude oil needs. Total crude oil import value stood at USD ~144 billion in 2025-26. When crude prices rise, the import bill widens, pressure on the current account grows, leading to a higher demand for dollars, thereby weakening the rupee.
- **Gold imports:** India's gold import bill for 2025-26 stood at USD 71.98 billion (24% rise). Imports of machinery help expand future production. But when gold imports rise, dollars leave the country without creating a direct export-generating asset.
 - When the rupee weakens and households or investors buy more gold to protect their wealth, they may unintentionally add to the same pressure they fear.
 - More gold imports mean more demand for dollars, which puts further pressure on the rupee.
- **Trade deficit:** In FY 2025-26, India's total exports of goods and services were estimated at USD 860.09 billion, rising by 4.2% over the previous year. But imports rose faster to USD 979.4 billion, growing by ~6.5%.
 - As a result, the overall trade deficit widened from USD 94.7 billion in FY 2024-25 to USD 119.3 billion in FY 2025-26.
- **Capital outflow:** Amid global uncertainty, foreign investors have withdrawn money from Indian equity markets.
 - Outward investment in April 2026 was USD 5.64 billion, up from USD 5.08 billion in March 2026. March had also experienced a strong net outflow of foreign institutional investment.

- When foreign investors withdraw investments from Indian equity and debt markets, they **convert rupees into dollars before repatriating their funds**. This increases demand for dollars and contributes to depreciation of the rupee.
- **Dollar system**: The dollar remains the centre of global finance and is the world's **principal reserve currency**.
 - When the US Federal Reserve raises interest rates or during periods of global uncertainty, global investors become risk-averse and capital flows towards US assets, strengthening the dollar globally.

● **Market Sentiment and Speculation:**

Expectations of further depreciation may encourage importers to purchase dollars in advance and exporters to delay converting export proceeds into rupees. Such speculative behaviour can temporarily intensify depreciation pressures.

Way Ahead

- While the better approach may be a calibrated intervention, the deeper answer is structural. The rupee cannot be stabilized by the RBI alone. It needs to be supported by a stronger production base.
- India needs to reduce oil dependence, expand domestic energy buffers, encourage gold recycling, deepen financial savings, raise merchandise export capacity, reduce avoidable imports, and attract stable long-term capital.
- The rupee's decline is therefore neither a failure nor something entirely harmless. It is a warning, an adjustment, and a test.
- The challenge is not to prevent every decline, but to ensure the fall does not become a fracture, and to build robust economic foundations.

Positive Implications

- A weaker rupee makes **Indian exports cheaper** in international markets, thereby improving the competitiveness of sectors such as information technology, pharmaceuticals, textiles, engineering goods and agricultural products.
- Depreciation also increases the **rupee value of remittances** received by Indian households from overseas workers. This can boost household incomes and domestic consumption.
- Indian tourism becomes relatively cheaper for foreign visitors, encouraging greater inflows of international tourists and foreign exchange earnings.

Negative Implications

- A weaker rupee makes imports more expensive, particularly **crude oil, natural gas, fertilisers, edible oils, electronics and industrial machinery**. This increases production costs across the economy and leads to **imported inflation**.
- The cost of servicing **external debt denominated in foreign currencies** increases because borrowers require more rupees to repay the same amount of foreign debt.
- This adversely affects both the government and private corporations with significant external borrowings.
- If depreciation becomes prolonged and disorderly, it may worsen the current account deficit, reduce macroeconomic stability, and complicate the conduct of monetary policy by the RBI.

The Mundell-Fleming trilemma

- The RBI is navigating what economists call the **"impossible trinity"** or the **Mundell-Fleming trilemma**. No central bank can simultaneously maintain a fixed exchange rate, allow free capital movement, and retain independent monetary policy.
- An adequate response may be disciplined management or adjustment – not the defence of a comfortable exchange rate.
- If the RBI spends reserves aggressively to hold the rupee at a particular against the US dollar, it risks weakening the forex buffer during external shocks.
- If it raises interest rates primarily to attract foreign capital inflow, it risks suppressing domestic investment and credit growth that the economy cannot afford to lose.



PoK Protests

At least 15 people have been killed in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) as violent protests rage just a month before scheduled local elections.

Note: *Pakistan-administered Kashmir, known internationally as Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK), consists of two territories: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB)*



- Pakistani authorities have responded with a crackdown — banning the protest-leading organisation, announcing bounties for leaders' arrest, and clashing with locals.
- India has condemned the "police brutality" and called on the international community to hold Pakistan accountable.

Background: A Region Long Restless

- PoK's (**AJK**) protests are not new. Unrest began in 2023 when residents mobilised against:
 - Rising electricity bills and shortages of subsidised wheat.
 - The **Mangla Dam** — a major hydropower project built on PoK's rivers — displaced local communities, yet the region continues to pay high power tariffs.
 - Chronic underdevelopment and heavy security deployment.
 - Dominance of Islamabad-appointed bureaucrats over the elected Legislative Assembly.
- The protest movement is spearheaded by the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) — a coalition of traders, professionals, and civil society activists.

The Immediate Flashpoint: The 12 Seats Controversy

- The current crisis was triggered by a Pakistan Supreme Court verdict upholding **12 seats** in the 53-member PoK Assembly (**AJK**) reserved for Jammu and Kashmir migrants settled in different parts of Pakistan (Punjab, Sindh, etc.).
- The polling for these seats is conducted outside PoK, and the local Election Commission has no role in it.
 - In effect, out of 53 seats, local voters directly elect only 33 members.
 - Besides the 12 refugee seats, there are 5 seats reserved for women, 1 for Ulama (religious scholars), 1 for overseas Kashmiris, and 1 for technocrats.
- **Why Locals Oppose These Seats?**
 - The 12 refugee seats are seen as tools for Islamabad to plant loyalists with no genuine connection to Kashmir.
 - MQM members — representing Urdu-speaking immigrants — regularly end up in the PoK Assembly through these seats.
 - The salaries and expenses of all 20 centrally-controlled representatives (12 refugee + 8 reserved seats) are funded from PoK's own budget — despite local voters having no say in their election.
- **India's Parallel: A Key Distinction**
 - India also has reserved 24 seats in the J&K Assembly for the symbolic representation of PoK in the J&K assembly.
 - However, a crucial difference: **India keeps those seats vacant**, unlike Pakistan which actively fills them.

Conclusion: PoK's unrest is the inevitable consequence of occupation without representation — a region exploited for its resources, denied its political voice, and governed by a distant power's interests.

Gilgit-Baltistan: A Parallel Crisis

- ➔ Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) — the other part of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir under Pakistan's illegal occupation — shares many of PoK's problems.
- ➔ These include: chronic underdevelopment, dominance by the federal government, and denial of full political rights.
- ➔ **Key Differences**
 - ➔ Unlike PoK (**AJK**), GB has a large Shia Muslim population, which has led to sectarian strife.
 - ➔ It is also more isolated — even from the Pakistani mainstream — and receives far less media attention.
 - ➔ Some sections in GB have demanded full integration with Pakistan as a province, a move Islamabad has resisted because granting full provincial status would complicate its demand for a plebiscite over the broader J&K dispute.
- ➔ **India's Position**
 - ➔ India strongly protested the recent elections held in GB.
 - ➔ MEA reiterated that the entire Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh, including Gilgit-Baltistan, are integral and inalienable parts of India by virtue of the complete and irrevocable Instrument of Accession signed in 1947.
 - ➔ India has consistently opposed the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which passes through GB, on grounds of sovereignty violation.
 - ➔ After India revoked Article 370 in 2019, there were talks of Pakistan granting GB full provincial status as a reciprocal political move, but those plans were never implemented.



U.S.-Iran Agreement

- The US and Iran signed a 14-clause MoU— the US signing at the Palace of Versailles, France, and Iran signing in Tehran — ending 40 days of war and over 60 days of naval blockade.
- The deal initiates a 60-day negotiation window for a final comprehensive agreement.

Key Clauses — What the Deal Says

- **Ceasefire & Sovereignty (Clauses 1 & 2)**
 - Ceasefire on all fronts, including Lebanon — something Israel had consistently resisted.
 - The US permanently drops the regime change rationale, committing to non-interference in Iran's internal affairs — historically significant given decades of US interventionism in Iranian politics.
- **US Military Withdrawal (Clause 4)**
 - The US Navy has effectively withdrawn its naval blockade of Iranian ports; remaining Carrier Strike Groups near Hormuz to be withdrawn.
- **The Strait of Hormuz (Clause 5)**
 - Iran guarantees unconditional transit passage to all commercial shipping through Hormuz.
 - However, Iran and Oman will jointly define future administration of the Strait — Iran's long-standing demand that Hormuz cannot return to its pre-war status.
 - This is a major geopolitical gain: Iran and Oman could potentially create a fee-based transit framework similar to **Turkey's Montreux Convention** arrangements for the **Dardanelles**.
 - 20–25% of global oil and 20% of global gas passes through Hormuz — potential annual revenue could exceed \$11–13 billion.
- **Economic Relief (Clauses 6, 7, 10 & 11)**
 - **\$300 billion reconstruction** fund for Iran — the most economically significant clause and the sharpest departure from 2015 JCPOA.
 - Full sanctions relief in the final deal — covering energy, shipping, nuclear and counter-terrorism designations; post-relief Iranian oil sales estimated at ~\$60 billion annually.
 - Interim sanctions

How is This Different from the 2015 JCPOA?

- The 2015 **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)** was purely a **nuclear deal** — Iran capped enrichment, the US eased sanctions. The 2026 MoU goes **far beyond nuclear issues**. It covers:
 - War termination and ceasefire
 - Hormuz navigation rights
 - Sanctions relief and economic reconstruction
 - Military withdrawal
 - Non-interference in internal affairs
- Crucially, **ballistic missiles** and Iran's regional **proxy networks** (Hezbollah, Houthis, Hamas, Iraqi militias — collectively the **Axis of Resistance**) are **not** mentioned in any clause — a major strategic gain for Tehran.

Three Key Sticking Points Ahead

- **Lebanon**
 - As long as Israeli troops occupy Southern Lebanon, the country remains a tinderbox.
 - Netanyahu has explicitly refused to withdraw. Iran has already temporarily closed Hormuz once, citing Israeli attacks on Lebanon — showing Lebanon's direct linkage to the deal's survival.
- **Iran's Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU)**
 - Iran holds 60%-enriched uranium — one step below weapons-grade. The US previously demanded it be removed and destroyed.
 - Trump has since conceded it could be diluted "either in America or in Iran" — but the final modalities remain unresolved.
- **Iran's Enrichment Right**
 - The US has historically opposed any enrichment on Iranian soil. Iran insists on its right to enrich uranium for civilian purposes. Bridging this gap is essential for a final agreement.

Will the Deal Hold?

- **Incentives for the US:** The 40-day war was economically costly, deeply unpopular domestically, and depleted US weapons stockpiles.
- **Incentives for Iran:** Long-term economic relief, security guarantees, and reconstruction funding.
- **The risk:** Israel may escalate in Lebanon to torpedo the deal. Iran has shown it will respond by closing Hormuz. The next 60 days are critical.

waivers apply immediately as a bridge arrangement.

- o **\$100+ billion** in frozen Iranian assets to be **unfrozen**; \$12 billion already released through banks in Qatar and UAE.
- **Nuclear Commitments (Clauses 8 & 9)**
 - o Iran reaffirms commitment not to develop nuclear weapons — a position it has held since 2003.
 - o Iran maintains nuclear status quo (no further enrichment) for 60 days.
 - o Iran retains its 60% enriched uranium stockpile — the MoU does **NOT** require transfer to a third country, departing from the original US position.
 - o Both sides agreed to "downblend" (dilute) enriched material under IAEA supervision.
 - o US strikes on Natanz, Fordow, Arak, and Isfahan (June 2025) had already reduced Iran's future enrichment capacity.
- **Institutional Mechanisms (Clauses 3, 12, 13 & 14)**
 - o Both sides can mutually extend the 60-day window.
 - o A monitoring mechanism created to oversee implementation.
 - o The final deal will be endorsed by a UN Security Council Resolution — though the UNSC's inability to prevent Trump's 2018 unilateral JCPOA withdrawal exposed the limits of such endorsement.

Conclusion

- The 2026 MoU is not merely a ceasefire — it is a potential reordering of West Asia's geopolitical architecture.
- Iran emerges diplomatically empowered, economically recovering, and militarily unrestrained in its missile and proxy capabilities.
- Whether this fragile opening becomes a lasting realignment — or another chapter in the long history of broken US-Iran agreements — will depend on the Lebanon question, the HEU issue, and Israel's next move.



Venezuela's Acting President Visit to India

- Venezuela's Acting President Delcy Rodríguez visited India. During this visit, she met PM Modi.
- The visit produced **no formal agreements** but laid the foundation for cooperation in:
 - o Energy — crude oil, exploration, production, and refining
 - o Mining — gold, diamonds, and critical minerals
 - o Pharmaceuticals
 - o Transportation and automotive
 - o Animal husbandry

Controversy around This Visit

- The visit triggered controversy even before it began. The announcement came not from New Delhi or Caracas — but from Washington.
- Ahead of his visit to India, US Secretary

India's Energy Security Crisis: Why Venezuela Matters?

- ❖ India imports 88% of its crude oil and has long sought to diversify its oil and gas sourcing.
- ❖ Until recently, India's major suppliers were Russia, UAE, Iraq, Saudi Arabia. However, due to West Asia crisis and Russia – Ukraine war, India urgently needs new, diversified, non-Gulf sources.
- ❖ Venezuela — with **among the largest oil reserves in the world** — emerges as an obvious answer.

History of India-Venezuela Oil Relations

- ❖ 2008 - ONGC Videsh begins operating San Cristobal onshore oilfield in partnership with PDVSA (Venezuela's national oil company)
- ❖ 2012 - India races ahead of China to become the largest Asian importer of Venezuelan crude
- ❖ 2019–20 - US sanctions force India to cut Venezuelan crude purchases

The Current Opportunity: A Post-Maduro Opening

- ❖ Following the Trump administration's removal of Nicolas Maduro from power and the lifting of economic sanctions on Venezuela:
 - ✓ Venezuela has opened up for global business.
 - ✓ Even before Rodríguez arrived in Delhi, India's purchase of Venezuelan crude had surged.
 - ✓ By May 2026, Venezuela had already emerged as India's third largest supplier of crude oil.
- ❖ **The China Factor**
 - ✓ During Maduro's tenure, China had developed a distinctive "oil-for-loans" model with Venezuela.
 - China's imports from Venezuela touched ~470,000 barrels per day in 2025 — about 4.5% of China's seaborne crude imports.
 - ✓ With that supply now being redirected post-Maduro, countries like India can step in to purchase this freed-up supply.

of State Marco Rubio publicly disclosed Rodríguez's planned trip to India.

- Rubio framed Venezuelan crude oil and American energy supplies together as solutions to **India's future energy needs**.
- However, critics questioned whether India's energy security decisions are being shaped in Washington.

Caution: The Risks India Must Navigate

• Political Instability in Venezuela

- Rodríguez holds only the title of "Acting President" — her government's longevity is uncertain.
- A power struggle is reported between Rodríguez (from Maduro's "Chavista" team) and María Corina Machado — the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize winner and Trump ally.
- If the government in Caracas changes, will agreements reached with Rodríguez's government hold?

• The US Dependency Trap

- Allowing Washington to shape India's energy decisions — as appears to be happening with Venezuela — risks replacing one form of dependency (Russia) with another form of geopolitical vulnerability (US influence).

Conclusion

- India's renewed engagement with Venezuela reflects a genuine and urgent energy diversification imperative — amplified by Russian crude pressure, the Hormuz crisis, and the need for critical minerals.
- But the US shadow over the visit, Venezuela's political fragility, and unresolved financial dues mean India must pursue this relationship with both strategic intent and strategic caution.



India-France Relations

- PM Modi's seventh official visit to France since 2014 — combining a bilateral summit with President Emmanuel Macron in Nice and attendance at the G7 Leaders' Summit in Evian — marked a defining moment in India-France ties.
- The Nice summit was the **first formal summit** since bilateral relations were elevated to a "**Special Global Strategic Partnership**" during Macron's visit to India in February 2026 — the highest level of diplomatic engagement between the two countries.

Key Outcomes

• Trade and Economic Ties: Doubling the Target

- Both countries agreed to establish a High-Level Mechanism to double bilateral trade from **\$16 billion to \$32 billion** within five years.
- France is currently **India's 3rd largest trading** partner within the EU (after Netherlands and Germany), with bilateral trade at \$15.81 billion in 2025–26.
- A new **India-France Economic Security Dialogue** will be launched, focusing on supply-chain resilience, critical minerals, SMEs, aviation, and railways.

Beyond Oil: Critical Minerals and Outstanding Dues

■ Trade

- Total bilateral trade between India and Venezuela in FY 2025-26 was US\$ 678.94 million with Indian exports of US\$ 210.02 million and Indian imports of US\$ 468.92 million.

■ Critical Minerals

- Venezuela's gold, diamonds, and critical minerals featured prominently in talks.
- India is actively scouting for critical mineral partners to reduce its overwhelming dependence on China, which dominates global mining and refining of these metals.

■ Outstanding Financial Dues — A Major Unresolved Issue

- The issue of Venezuela paying back money owed to Indian companies came up during talks — a legacy problem that must be resolved for the relationship to truly normalise.



- Agreement to establish a **National Centre of Excellence for Skilling in Aeronautics** in Kanpur, supporting India's aerospace manufacturing ecosystem.
- **Defence: Deepening Co-Development**
 - Both leaders agreed to intensify cooperation through co-design, co-development, and co-production of advanced defence platforms — moving decisively beyond the traditional buyer-seller dynamic.
- **Space and Nuclear Collaboration**
 - Commitment to deepen ISRO-CNES collaboration in human spaceflight and Space Situational Awareness.
 - Encouragement of private-sector participation in the space economy.
 - India's SHANTI Act identified as creating fresh opportunities for collaboration in SMRs (Small Modular Reactors) and Advanced Modular Reactors.
- **Innovation Roadmap 2030 and AI Governance**
 - Both countries adopted an **Innovation Roadmap 2030** — a long-term technology cooperation framework.
 - Agreement to establish a **Joint India-France AI Working Group** focusing on AI governance, emerging technologies, and responsible and ethical AI development.
 - Partnerships to expand in deep-tech, semiconductors, agri-tech, med-tech, renewable energy, and defence technologies.
 - **19 institutional agreements** signed within the innovation ecosystems of both countries.
 - Both leaders jointly inaugurated **Bharat Innovates** in Nice — bringing together over 120 Indian companies and startups with French and global business leaders.
 - Both leaders also attended **VivaTech Summit** in Paris — Europe's largest technology and startup event — where India had its largest-ever pavilion.
- **Digital Connectivity and UPI Expansion**
 - **UPI** to be expanded at airports in **Nice and Paris**, enhancing digital payment access for Indian travellers and promoting India's digital public infrastructure globally.
- **Education, Mobility and Cultural Ties**
 - Agreement to improve **student and professional mobility** and expand mutual recognition of educational qualifications.
 - PM Modi invited **French universities to establish campuses in India** under the **NEP 2020** framework.
 - France operationalised **visa-free airport transit** for Indian nationals.
 - Enhanced cultural cooperation between museums and cultural institutions, including the **National Maritime Heritage Complex**.

Why France Is India's Most Trusted Western Partner?

France's unique value to India rests on several factors that distinguish it from other Western allies:

- ✓ France's tradition of strategic autonomy within the Western alliance aligns naturally with India's own multi-alignment foreign policy.
- ✓ France does not lecture India on domestic matters — a sharp contrast to many Western partners.
- ✓ It supported India during Pokhran-II when others imposed sanctions.
- ✓ It has never used bilateral ties as leverage for political pressure.
- ✓ It has consistently championed India's voice in global forums — recognising India's role as a leading voice of the Global South.



Visit of President of Myanmar to India

Myanmar President U Min Aung Hlaing paid his first official visit to India (May 30-June 3, 2026).

Key Highlights

- **Spiritual and People-to-People Connect**

- o The President began his visit with a trip to Bodh Gaya, where he offered prayers at: Mahabodhi Temple; Mahabodhi Meditation Centre; Sujata Temple.
- o This underscored the **enduring Buddhist and spiritual ties** between India and Myanmar — a civilisational bond that predates modern diplomatic relations.

- **Connectivity — The Strategic Priority**

- o Both sides reaffirmed the importance of completing two landmark connectivity projects:

- ♣ **Kaladan**

- Multi-Modal**

- Transit**

- Transport**

- Project** —

- linking

- Mizoram to

- Myanmar's

- Sittwe port.

- ♣ **India-**

- Myanmar-**

- Thailand**

- Trilateral**

- Highway** —

- connecting

- India to

- Southeast

- Asia

- overland.

- **Trade and Economic Ties**

- o Both sides agreed to facilitate and enhance bilateral trade including the **Rupee-Kyat settlement mechanism**.
- o Key sectors for cooperation: agro-processing, petroleum, energy, and mining.

India – Myanmar Relationship: Engagement over Isolation

■ When Myanmar's military junta seized power in the **February 2021 coup** — ousting Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government — the world's democracies largely imposed sanctions and sought to isolate the junta.

■ But **India took a different path**. It chose engagement over isolation reflecting realpolitik dressed as pragmatism.

The Three Compelling Imperatives For India

■ **Geography — The Inescapable Border**

➤ Myanmar shares a 1,643 km border with four of India's northeastern states — Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, and Mizoram.

➤ An unstable or hostile Myanmar is a direct security threat to India's most sensitive and fragile border region.

■ **Act East and Neighbourhood First — The Land Bridge Logic**

➤ Myanmar is India's only land bridge to Southeast Asia.

➤ Without a stable, cooperative Myanmar, India's ambitions to integrate its northeast with ASEAN economies remain geographically stranded.

■ **The China Factor — The Defining Compulsion**

➤ Since the coup, Beijing aggressively stepped into the vacuum left by Western withdrawal — providing infrastructure financing, arms supplies, and diplomatic cover to Naypyidaw.

➤ For India to disengage entirely would be to hand China a free pass in its own backyard.

The Infrastructure Stakes

■ **Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project**

➤ Kolkata → Sittwe (by sea) - Operational — first cargo reached Sittwe in May 2023.

➤ Sittwe → Paletwa (Kaladan River) – Operational.

➤ Paletwa → Zorinpui, Mizoram (109 km road) - Incomplete — through mountainous, flood-prone Chin State.

✦ Full operationalisation now targeted for 2027.

■ **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway**

➤ Linking Moreh (Manipur) to Mae Sot (Thailand) through ~1,360 km of Myanmar.

➤ Planned extensions to Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam.

➤ Once complete: could transform India's landlocked northeast into a gateway to Southeast Asia.

➤ Was supposed to be finished by 2019. It is now targeted for completion in 2027

■ Common reason for delays: Armed groups control large stretches of territory along both the corridors — making construction dangerous and unpredictable.

Trade & Security

■ **Trade**

➤ India is the 4th largest trading partner of Myanmar. Bilateral trade stood at **\$1.95 billion in 2025–26**.

➤ Both sides agreed to increase trade through the **Rupee-Kyat settlement mechanism** — reducing dependence on dollar transactions.

■ **Security**

➤ The long presence of insurgent groups and **cybercrime networks** in Myanmar's border regions present security challenge for India.

➤ **Cybercrime and Trafficking — A New Bilateral Concern:** Over 2,400 Indian nationals have been rescued from scam centres in Myanmar through bilateral cooperation over the past 18 months. Many more remain trapped — making this an urgent and evolving bilateral challenge.

- **Defence and Security**
 - India reaffirmed its support for Myanmar's sovereignty and territorial integrity.
 - Myanmar reiterated assurance that its territory would not be permitted to be used against India's security interests.
- **Education and People-to-People Ties**
 - PM Modi announced that Mekong Ganga ICCR scholarships for Myanmar students would be enhanced from 36 to 100 starting 2026 — a significant step in building human capital linkages.

The Larger Reckoning: What Each Side Signals?

- **What India's Engagement Signals?**
 - A measured acceptance of political reality — **not an endorsement of the military government**, but a recognition that meaningful engagement requires working with whoever holds power.
 - The historical lesson that disengagement rarely produces better outcomes than engagement.
- **What Myanmar's Choice Signals?**
 - Hlaing's selection of India for his first major bilateral visit as head of state is itself telling.
 - It signals a deliberate effort to cultivate a relationship that provides diplomatic and economic counterweight to overwhelming dependence on China.

Conclusion

India's Myanmar policy is not about comfort — it is about calculus. New Delhi's engagement with Myanmar's junta is driven by strategic pragmatism rather than ideological alignment. By maintaining ties, India actively counters China's growing footprint and prevents Beijing from establishing an unchallenged monopoly.



India-Oman CEPA

- The India-Oman **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** came into force on June 1, 2026.
- Even before the CEPA took effect, bilateral trade had grown from \$8.94 billion in FY2023–24 to \$11.18 billion in FY2025–26 — reflecting deepening economic complementarities.
- The CEPA is far more than a trade deal; it is a modern framework that opens a strategic gateway for **India into the Gulf, the Indian Ocean, and East Africa.**

India's Expanding Trade Architecture

- The Oman CEPA is part of India's deliberate strategy of building trade ties through comprehensive agreements.
- India has recently concluded/actively pursuing CEPAs with UAE, Australia, EFTA, UK, New Zealand, and EU.
- Oman is the latest — and strategically significant — given its location at the crossroads of the Gulf and the Indian Ocean.

What the CEPA Changes?

- Before this agreement, only 15.33% of India's exports entered Oman duty-free under the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) regime. The CEPA transforms this:
 - Oman now offers duty-free access on 98.08% of its tariff lines.
 - Covering 99.38% of India's exports by value.
 - A sweeping competitiveness boost for Indian exporters across sectors.

Services and Professional Mobility

- This is where the CEPA **breaks new ground**. Bilateral services trade stood at **\$863 million in 2024**, with India enjoying a surplus of nearly **\$447 million** — yet India's share in Oman's global services imports is just over **5%**, indicating substantial untapped potential.

- Key commitments made by Oman:
 - **Binding market access** for Indian professionals in accounting, engineering, IT, healthcare, education, and consulting.
 - **Raised quotas** for intra-corporate transferees, enabling greater movement of Indian specialists.
 - Provisions for **AYUSH and traditional medicine** — creating additional opportunities in the Gulf's growing wellness sector.

Oman's Strategic Location: A Gateway, Not Just a Market

- The most important dimension of the CEPA is **geographical**. Oman is not merely a destination market — it is a **logistics and strategic hub**.
- Its three key ports are emerging as major industrial and shipping connectors:
 - **Sohar** - Industrial hub near the Strait of Hormuz
 - **Duqm** - Deep-sea port on the Arabian Sea; India has access to a special economic zone here
 - **Salalah** - Major transshipment hub connecting Gulf and East Africa
- For Indian businesses, the CEPA makes Oman a potential **launchpad into the wider GCC region and East Africa** — markets far larger than Oman itself. This strategic dimension elevates the agreement well beyond bilateral trade.

Conclusion

- The Oman CEPA is history meeting opportunity — one of the world's oldest bilateral maritime relationships reimagined for the 21st century.
- With sweeping tariff liberalisation, regulatory facilitation, services commitments, and Oman's strategic location as a hub connecting the Gulf, Indian Ocean, and East Africa, the agreement offers Indian exporters an unprecedented gateway.
- Its true worth will be measured not in its text, but in how boldly Indian businesses choose to walk through the door it has opened.

Sector-by-Sector Benefits

- **Textiles and Apparel**
 - India already holds a **dominant position** — 43% of Oman's woven apparel imports and 31% of knitted apparel imports.
 - The existing **5% tariff is now eliminated**.
 - Directly strengthens India's competitiveness against **China**, the other major supplier in this market.
- **Chemicals**
 - India supplies nearly **39% of Oman's inorganic chemical imports**.
 - Tariff-free access will further amplify this already strong market position.
- **Engineering Goods**
 - This is perhaps the **biggest opportunity** — Oman imports over **\$3.7 billion** in mechanical machinery and **\$3.3 billion** in automobiles annually.
 - India's current market share stands at just **5% and 2%** respectively — indicating enormous headroom for growth.
 - Preferential access can help Indian engineering exports penetrate Oman's infrastructure, construction, and industrial sectors.
- **Pharmaceuticals**
 - India holds around **10% market share** in Oman's pharmaceutical market.
 - The key benefit here is not tariff reduction but **regulatory facilitation** — products approved by leading international regulators will receive fast-tracked approvals, reducing compliance costs and accelerating market entry.
- **Food and Agriculture**
 - Duty-free access granted for **meat, eggs, honey, butter, and processed foods**.
 - However, **sensitive sectors** — dairy, cereals, edible oils, and key agricultural commodities — have been **kept outside tariff concessions**, protecting domestic producers.

Trade Facilitation: Cutting Red Tape

- Beyond tariffs, the CEPA introduces important procedural reforms that reduce friction for Indian exporters:
 - Oman will accept certificates from India's Export Inspection Council (EIC), eliminating duplicative testing.
 - Dedicated provisions on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) will improve regulatory transparency.
 - Fast-track customs clearance for perishables will reduce costs and improve efficiency for time-sensitive exports.



G7 Summit 2026

- The 52nd G7 Summit was held in **Évian-les-Bains, France**, under France's presidency. **India participated as a special invitee**.

- **Theme of G7 Summit 2026 - "Forging New Partnerships and Rebuilding International Solidarity"**
 - The theme reflected the urgent need for greater cooperation among nations in an era of economic uncertainty, technological disruption, climate change, and geopolitical fragmentation.

India at the G7 Summit 2026

- PM Modi attended the Outreach Session and several bilateral meetings, using the platform to advocate for the Global South and promote inclusive global governance.
- **Addressing the Global Trust Deficit** - India emphasised that mutual trust is the world's most valuable strategic asset. It called for international cooperation based on transparency, reliability, and shared commitments.
- **Reforming the Development Paradigm** – India advocated moving beyond the donor-recipient model and called for partnerships based on equality, mutual respect, and shared responsibility.
- **Amplifying the Voice of the Global South** – PM Modi reiterated that developing countries seek equitable participation in global governance and positioned India as a **bridge** between advanced economies and emerging nations.
- **Showcasing India–Africa Cooperation-** India highlighted India's development partnership with African nations as a model of South-South Cooperation which is focused on capacity building, digital connectivity, healthcare, education, and infrastructure.
- **India's Stand on Maritime Security** – India expressed concern over disruptions in global trade routes and called for safe sea routes and protection of seafarers. It supported freedom of navigation in accordance with international law.

About G7 (Group of Seven)

- **Established** - 1975 (as G6)
- **Members** - Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK, USA, EU (non-enumerated)
- **Secretariat** - None — informal, consensus-based organization
- **Presidency** - Rotates annually among members
- **Economic Weight** - ~10% of world population but ~43% of global nominal GDP
- **Timelines**
 - **1975** — Founded as G6 during global oil crisis
 - **1976** — Canada joins; becomes G7
 - **1998** — Russia joins; renamed G8
 - **2014** — Russia suspended after annexation of Crimea; reverts to G7
- **How it Works?**
 - The G7 is not a treaty-based institution — it has no permanent secretariat, constitution, or headquarters.
 - It operates through informal consultations and consensus. The host nation sets the agenda and organises the summit.
 - To broaden representation, the host invites emerging economies through Outreach Sessions — India, Brazil, South Africa, South Korea, and Australia are frequent guests.

Key outcomes: Major Consensus Areas

- **Economic Security & Global Growth**
 - Reducing overdependence on single countries for **critical goods and supply chains**
 - Securing access to **critical minerals** for clean energy and advanced manufacturing
 - Building resilient production networks for **semiconductors and pharmaceuticals**
 - Supporting **developing economies** through inclusive growth and development financing
- **Artificial Intelligence Governance**
 - Developing ethical AI frameworks and international safety standards
 - Combating AI-generated misinformation and deepfakes
 - Strengthening defences against AI-enabled cyber threats
 - Balancing innovation with regulation and protecting data privacy
 - Addressing workforce disruption from automation
- **Climate Change & Energy Transition**
 - Accelerating carbon emission reductions under international climate agreements
 - Expanding renewable energy (solar, wind) and green hydrogen cooperation
 - Mobilising climate financing for developing countries' adaptation and mitigation
 - Promoting sustainable infrastructure and biodiversity conservation
- **International Security & Geopolitical Stability**
 - **Russia–Ukraine conflict** — impact on food supplies, energy markets, and global security
 - **West Asia tensions** — preventing regional escalation
 - **Maritime security** — protecting sea lanes, especially the Strait of Hormuz
 - Reinforcing the rules-based international order and respect for sovereignty
- **Development Cooperation & Global South**
 - Moving beyond the donor-recipient model toward equal partnerships
 - Addressing debt sustainability crises in vulnerable nations
 - Advocating greater representation of emerging economies in global institutions
 - Accelerating progress on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- **Global Trust & International Solidarity**
 - Rebuilding multilateralism through dialogue and consensus
 - Ensuring inclusive decision-making for developing countries
 - Strengthening international institutions through reforms
 - Promoting shared responsibility in addressing transnational challenges

MAPS: PLACES IN NEWS

International Places in News

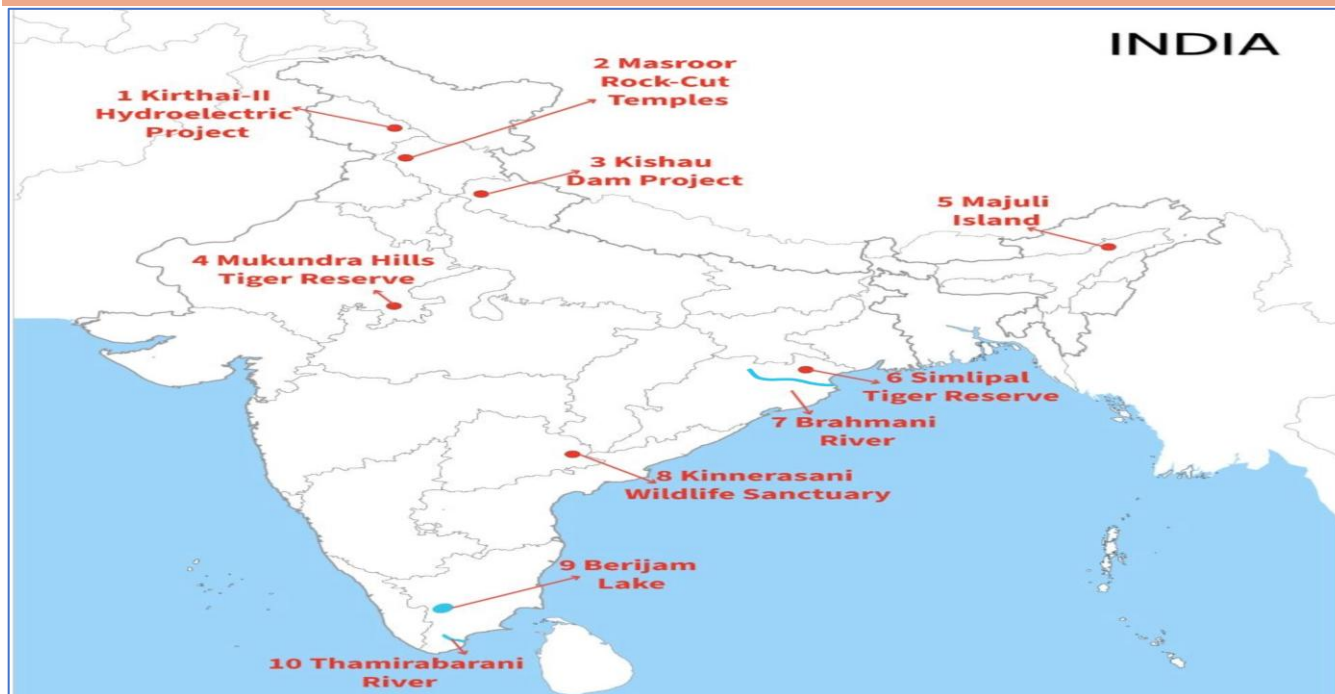


1	San Andreas Fault	A recent study has highlighted that the San Andreas fault and adjoining San Jacinto Fault system in Southern California are experiencing highest levels of tectonic stress in the past 1000 years. Location of the Earthquake Gate: Scientists describe the Cajon Pass as an 'Earthquake Gate' because it can block a rupture from spreading between faults. The San Andreas fault and San Jacinto faults interact at this point San Andreas Fault: It is a major transform fault in California & sits at the boundary between the Pacific Plate and the North American Plate San Jacinto Fault Zone (SJFZ) is a major, right-lateral strike-slip fault in Southern California
2	Volcan De Fuego	Tourists on Guatemala's Volcan de Fuego were caught off guard when the volcano erupted. • Location: Guatemala; Central American Volcanic Arc (Pacific Ring of Fire). • Type: Active basaltic stratovolcano; • Plate Boundary: Cocos Plate-Caribbean Plate. • Feature: Open-vent volcano → frequent, smaller eruptions. • Significance: One of Central America's most active volcanoes; 2018 eruption killed 194 people.
3	Venezuela	Venezuela recently witnessed the most powerful seismic events recorded in the country in more than a century. • Borders: Colombia (W), Brazil (S), Guyana (E); Capital: Caracas. • Major Rivers: Rio Negro (shared with Colombia and Brazil) and Orinoco (shared with Colombia). • Highest Peak: Pico Bolívar. • Waterfall: Andes- Angel Falls (world's highest).

		• Resources: World's largest oil reserves; coal, iron ore, bauxite & gold.
4	Bolivia	Recently, the Bolivian President announced a state of emergency in Bolivia. • Capital: Sucre (constitutional capital); La Paz (executive capital) • Location: Landlocked, west-central South America • Borders: Brazil, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay • Highest Peak: Nevado Sajama • Lake: Lake Titicaca (shared with Peru; highest lake)
5	Giant's Causeway	Geochronologists investigating the formation of Giant's Causeway recently discovered its formation over 5.5m years ago, 8m years less than previous estimation. • Location: Northern Ireland (Antrim Plateau coast). • UNESCO: World Heritage Site • Feature: ~40,000 interlocking hexagonal basalt columns. • Significance: Classic example of columnar jointing.
6	Norway	Norway is imposing a near ban on the use of generative AI tools by elementary school pupils and for older children to prevent a negative impact on learning. • Capital: Oslo; Location: Western Scandinavian Peninsula. • Borders: Sweden, Finland, Russia • Seas: Bounded by the Barents Sea in the north, the Norwegian Sea and the North Sea in the west • Highest Peak: Galdhøpiggen; Longest River: Glomma (Glåma)
7	Strait of Messina	Japan's Prime Minister emphasized bilateral cooperation in the ambitious plan to build a bridge across Italy's Strait of Messina. • Location: Southern Italy; separates mainland Italy & Sicily. • Connects: Tyrrhenian Sea ↔ Ionian Sea.
8	Wangchu Hydroelectric Project	Hindustan Construction Company (HCC) secured a contract worth Rs 127 crore for construction works related to the Wangchu Hydroelectric Project. • Location: Wangchu (Raidak) River, Chukha (Bhutan). • Type: 570 MW peaking run-of-river hydropower project. • River: Wangchu/Raidak- tributary of the Brahmaputra. • Significance: First India-Bhutan joint hydropower project under the 5,000 MW (2025) MoU; meets Bhutan's winter demand & exports surplus power to India.
9	Lake Baikal	Ancient DNA from four Lake Baikal burial sites revealed the oldest-known strains of plague bacterium. • Location: Siberia, Russia • Status: Oldest, deepest & largest freshwater lake (by volume). • Origin: Continental Rift Lake. • Inflow/Outflow: 330+ rivers (major: Selenga); outflow- Angara River. • Largest Island: Olkhon. • UNESCO: World Heritage Site; Fact: Home to the Buryat people.

10	Shiveluch Volcano	The Shiveluch Volcano in Russia's Far East erupted recently • Location: Kamchatka Peninsula, Russia. • Type: Active stratovolcano. • Activity: One of Kamchatka's most active volcanoes; continuous eruptions since 1999
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National Places in News



1	Kirthai-II Hydroelectric Project	The Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has given in-principle approval for diversion of 197 hectares of forest land for the Kirthai-II hydroelectric project on the Chenab River in Jammu and Kashmir. • Kirthai-II becomes the third hydroelectric project planned on the Chenab to receive approvals from the Environment Ministry since the suspension of the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) after the Pahalgam terror attack. The other two are Dulhasti-II, Ratle. ○ Sawalkote, Dulhasti-II, Ratle, Pakal Dul, Kwar, Kiru, and Kirthai Stage I & II are some of the projects planned on the Chenab River. Details of the project • Kirthai-II will be a run-of-the-river project, and its original proposed capacity of 930 MW has now been reduced to 820 MW. Kirthai-I hydroelectric project is upstream, and the Kiru hydroelectric project is downstream of Kirthai-II. • The project will be implemented by Chenab Valley Power Projects Ltd, a joint venture of the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation and the Jammu and Kashmir State Power Development Corporation Limited. • A 121-metre-high concrete gravity dam will be constructed in Kishtwar district. • Being a run-of-the-river project, it generates electricity primarily using the natural flow of the river with limited storage, thereby reducing the extent of reservoir submergence compared to conventional storage dams. The project site is a natural
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		habitat of Chilgoza Pine trees.
2	Masroor Rock-Cut Temples	The temple complex of Masroor Rock-Cut Temples is Himachal's best-kept secret and is often called "Ellora of the Himalayas". • Location: Kangra Valley, Himachal Pradesh (Beas River). • Period: 8th century CE; rock-cut monolithic temple complex. • Style: Nagara architecture; Gupta influence. • Deities: Shiva, Rama, Sita & Lakshmana. • Unique Feature: Faces northeast (towards Dhauladhar), unlike most east-facing Hindu temples. • Significance: 15 temples carved from a single rock; damaged by earthquakes.
3	Kishau Dam Project	A consensus was reached among the six states on the long-pending Kishau Multipurpose Dam Project (KMDP) for the rejuvenation of the Yamuna River. • The six states are Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Rajasthan. • KMDP is proposed on the Tons River, the largest tributary of the Yamuna River, along the border of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. • The project involves the construction of a 236-metre-high gravity dam with an installed hydropower capacity of 660 MW. It is expected to generate around 1,379 million units (MU) electricity annually. • It will create a live storage of about 1,324 million cubic metres (MCM), which will provide drinking and industrial water, and support irrigation in the beneficiary states. • Due to assured storage the project will also enhance power generation of the projects located downstream by around 472 MU. • The project will lead to flood moderation and will be a significant milestone towards a cleaner and rejuvenated Yamuna, ensuring an increased flow of clean water in the river. • As per the MoU, the Central Government will provide 90% of the cost of the water component as Central Assistance, while the remaining 10% will be shared by the six participating states. • Additionally, Himachal Pradesh agreed to allocate its share of water to Delhi and Rajasthan in return for those states sharing the cost of Himachal Pradesh's power component.
4	Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve	The Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve (MHTR) recently launched a documentary <i>Enchanting Mukundra</i> to promote tourism and wildlife conservation. • Location: Rajasthan (Bundi, Kota, Jhalawar & Chittorgarh); Chambal River. • Terrain: Valley between Mukundra & Gargola Hills. • Significance: Tiger corridor between Ranthambore & Kuno National Park (Madhya Pradesh).
5	Majuli Island	A new study has reconstructed nearly 4,000 years of climate and vegetation history of Majuli Island in Assam. • Location: Brahmaputra River, Assam. • Status: World's largest river island.

		• Formation: Between Brahmaputra, Kherkutia Xuti (Brahmaputra branch) & Subansiri River. • Tribes: Mishing, Deori & Sonowal Kachari. • Culture: Centre of Neo-Vaishnavism; famous for Satras, Sattriya dance, mask-making & bhaona.
6	Simlipal Tiger Reserve	Recently, 4 rare black tigers were spotted in Similipal Tiger Reserve. • Location: Mayurbhanj, Odisha. • Named After: Simul (silk cotton) tree. • Features: Joranda & Barehipani Waterfalls; highest peak Meghasani • Vegetation: Moist deciduous (dominant Sal), semi-evergreen & grasslands.
7	Brahmani River	A recent study found microplastics carrying toxic heavy metals contaminating the Brahmani River in the Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary. • Location: Odisha; drains into the Bay of Bengal. • Origin: Confluence of Sankh & South Koel rivers (near Rourkela). • Source Region: Chota Nagpur Plateau. • Tributaries: Sankh, Tikra, Karo.
8	Kinnerasani Wildlife Sanctuary	Forest Department is set to launch safari tours at Kinnerasani Wildlife Sanctuary. • Location: Bhadradi Kothagudem, Telangana; right bank of the Godavari River. • River: Kinnerasani River (tributary of the Godavari); near Kinnerasani Dam. • Forest: Part of Dandakaranya; dry deciduous (dominant teak & bamboo). • Tribes: Koya & Gond.
9	Berijam Lake	A PIL in the Madras High Court sought a scientific survey to assess Berijam Lake for notification as a Tiger Reserve. • Location: Near Kodaikanal town, Dindigul (Tamil Nadu); Upper Palani Hills. • Type: Artificial lake (formed in 1867)- former British military cantonment site.
10	Thamirabarani River	Researchers recently expressed concern over the declining otter population in Tamil Nadu's Thamirabarani River due to the increasing habitat destruction. About Thamirabarani River (also called Tamraparni / Porunai): • Location: Tamil Nadu; only perennial river flowing entirely within the state. • Origin: Agastyarkoodam peak of Pothigai Hills (Western Ghats). • Mouth: Gulf of Mannar (Bay of Bengal). • Major Tributaries: Manimuthar, Gadananathi, Pachaiyar. • Biodiversity: Habitat of all three Indian otter species; highly fish-rich.

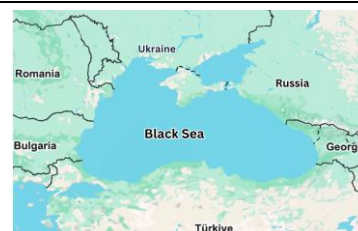
Important Seas of the World



Sea	Map Representation
1. Bering Sea: • Location: Between Alaska (USA) & Russia; connects Pacific & Arctic via Bering Strait. • Features: Seasonal sea ice; highly productive marine ecosystem. • Importance: Major commercial fisheries; climate change hotspot.	
2. North Sea: • Location: Between Great Britain and continental Europe. • Features: Shallow continental shelf. • Importance: Offshore oil & gas, offshore wind energy, busy European shipping routes.	
3. Sea of Azov: • Location: Connected to the Black Sea through the Kerch Strait. • Features: World's shallowest sea; low salinity due to Don & Kuban rivers. • Importance: Regional fisheries and strategic shipping.	
4. Caspian Sea: • Location: World's largest enclosed inland water body. • Importance: Rich oil & natural gas reserves; famous for sturgeon (caviar).	

5. Black Sea:

- **Features:** Deep anoxic (oxygen-deficient) waters.
- **Connections:** Linked to Mediterranean via **Bosporus strait -Sea of Marmara- Dardanelles strait- Aegean Sea**
- **Importance:** Strategic trade route; fed by **Danube, Dnieper & Don** rivers.



6. Sea of Japan:

- **Features:** Semi-enclosed sea; northern part freezes in winter.
- **Importance:** Rich fisheries, shipping; **Japan-Korea naming dispute**.



7. Adriatic Sea:

Location: Between Italy and the Balkan Peninsula.

- **Features:** Long, narrow sea; shallow northern basin.
- **Importance:** Historic Roman & Venetian trade; important ports and fisheries.



8. Mediterranean Sea:

- **Location:** Between Europe, Asia and Africa; connected to Atlantic via **Strait of Gibraltar**.
- **Features:** High salinity; nearly enclosed sea.
- **Importance:** Cradle of ancient civilizations; major Europe-Asia-Africa trade route.



9. Red Sea:

- **Location:** Between Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.
- **Features:** Warm, highly saline; formed by the **Red Sea Rift**.
- **Connections:** Linked to the Mediterranean through the **Suez Canal**.
- **Importance:** Global shipping route; resilient coral reefs.



10. South China Sea:

- **Location:** Western Pacific; connects to the Indian Ocean via the **Strait of Malacca**.
- **Features:** Rich coral reefs, fisheries, and hydrocarbon reserves.
- **Importance:** Around **one-third of global maritime trade** passes through it; major territorial disputes (**Spratly, Paracel & Scarborough Shoal**).



SOCIAL ISSUES

Patriarchal Preference for Male Child Continues

The Supreme Court (SC) while upholding criminal proceedings against a Maharashtra doctor under the **Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act, 1994 (PCPNDT Act)**, emphasized that **patriarchal preference for male children and covert sex-selection practices continue to persist in India despite improvements in the child sex ratio.**

Why the Court's Observation Matters?

- India's child sex ratio declined from **945 (1991) → 927 (2001) → 919 (2011)**, reflecting widespread female foeticide and sex-selective practices.
- Though the sex ratio at birth has improved to around **929 (NFHS-5)**, progress remains **uneven across states**. The Court held that welfare legislation like the PCPNDT Act remains essential until genuine gender equality is achieved, and no girl child's right to be born is questioned.

About the PCPNDT Act, 1994:

The **PCPNDT Act (1994)** prohibits the use of medical technology for sex determination. Originally focused on pre-natal techniques, the 2003 amendment expanded its scope to include **pre-conception sex selection** to combat female foeticide and improve skewed sex ratios.

Constitutional Basis of the Act:

- **Article 14**- Equality before Law.
- **Article 15(1)**- Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of sex.
- **Article 21**- Right to Life, including protection of the girl child's right to be born.

Objectives of the Act

- **Prohibit Sex Selection:** Bans the use of technology for sex selection at any stage.
- **Prevent Misuse:** Curbs technology-driven female foeticide.
- **Promote Equality:** Protects the right to life for the girl child and challenges systemic gender bias.

Key Provisions of the Act:

- **Prohibition of Sex Determination and Selection (Section 3A, Section 5(2), Section 6):** It is illegal to determine or disclose the sex of a foetus through words, signs, or any other method. Pre-conception sex selection is also strictly prohibited.
- **Regulation of Diagnostic Techniques (Section 4):** Permits prenatal diagnostic techniques only for detecting genetic, chromosomal, and congenital abnormalities. Mandatory record maintenance for every procedure.
- **Informed Consent (Section 5):** Written consent of the pregnant woman is compulsory. Communication of foetal sex is prohibited.
- **Registration of Clinics (Sections 3 & 18-20):** All ultrasound clinics, genetic laboratories and counselling centres must be registered. Registration can be suspended or cancelled for violations.
- **Institutional Mechanism (Sections 7-17A):** Establishes Central & State Supervisory Boards and Appropriate Authorities for monitoring, inspection and enforcement.
- **Ban on Advertisements (Section 22):** Prohibits advertisements related to sex determination and sex-selection services.
- **Penalties for Violations (Sections 23-27):** Provides imprisonment, fines, suspension of medical licenses and makes offences cognizable, non-bailable and non-compoundable.
- **Search, Seizure and Record Inspection (Sections 29-30):** Authorities can inspect records, conduct searches and seize equipment used for illegal sex determination.

Implementation Challenges:

- **Weak Enforcement:** Delays in investigation, prosecution and adjudication reduce the deterrent effect of the Act.

Way Forward

- **Strict Enforcement** and speedy prosecution of offenders. Regular audits of records, effective

• Institutional Inertia: State advisory committees often fail to meet regularly, hindering the oversight of clinics. • Monitoring Gaps: Inconsistent monitoring of ultrasound clinics allow "behind the curtains" sex-selection practices to persist. • Societal Mindset: Deep-seated patriarchal preferences for a male child remain despite legislative efforts.	- functioning of Appropriate Authorities, and stricter monitoring of ultrasound clinics. • Comprehensive Social Reform: Replace patriarchal attitudes with genuine gender equality and respect for the girl child. • Public Awareness and community outreach to challenge son preference and gender stereotypes.
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Cough Syrup Filling the Alcohol Void in Bihar

The strict enforcement of alcohol prohibition in Bihar (since 2016) has driven youth and rural communities toward cheaper, highly addictive pharmaceutical opioids like **Codeine-Based Cough Syrups (CBCS)** resulting in its illegal trade and burdened police, hospitals, and de-addiction centres.

About Codeine: It is a natural opioid derived from opium poppy.

Uses of Codeine: as a cough suppressant in certain cough syrups. It is prescribed for severe, persistent coughs; not a first-line treatment for the common cold.

✓ It is not recommended for children under 12 as it can rapidly convert into morphine in their bodies, causing potentially dangerous respiratory complications.

Related Legal and Jurisdictional Framework

- **Constitutional Mandate:** **Article 47** of the Indian Constitution (under Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSPs)) requires the State to endeavor to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health.
- **Statutory Overlap:** The crisis involves navigating multiple laws:
 - *Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985* (Central legislation handling narcotics).
 - *The Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940* (Regulating import, manufacture, distribution, and sale of drugs, cosmetics, and medical devices).
 - *Bihar Prohibition and Excise Act, 2016* (Bihar designated CBCS as an "intoxicant"- restricting its sale and possession without a permit, with penalties including fines, confiscation of goods, and imprisonment).
- **Judicial Stand:** The Patna High Court has upheld Bihar's right to regulate substances under its own laws, even where provisions of the NDPS Act, 1985 may overlap.

Impact of the Crisis

Governance and Policy Challenges	Socio-Economic Dimensions
• Unintended Consequences: Prohibition fueled a black market, shifting the focus from public health to organized crime. • Regulatory Arbitrage: Weak pharmacy oversight allows illegal narcotics to be sold as legitimate medical supplies. • Healthcare Dilemma: Strict bans risk denying affordable, essential palliative care to patients with severe respiratory conditions.	• Root Causes: like unemployment, rural poverty, and lack of quality education/awareness leave youth highly susceptible to substance abuse.

Way Forward

- **Tech-Driven Supply Chains:** Implement mandatory e-prescriptions and blockchain-based end-to-end tracking to eliminate drug diversion.
- **Enhanced Institutional Capacity:** Strengthen the ANTF (Anti-Narcotics Task Force) through improved intelligence and interstate coordination to disrupt supply routes.

Are Herbal Cigarettes a Healthy Alternative?

Herbal cigarettes are tobacco-free smoking products that use herbs and dried flowers as fillers (e.g., clove, basil, mint, cinnamon, water lily, green tea, and chamomile) and tendu leaves as wrappers. They are marketed as

organic, nicotine-free alternatives to conventional cigarettes and are generally longer than a *bidi* but thinner and shorter than a conventional cigar.

Why are Herbal Cigarettes Gaining Popularity?

- **The Gateway Narrative:** Brands aggressively position these products as a "mid-way step" or a cessation aid to help users transition away from tobacco addiction.
- **The "Coolness" Factor:** Marketing strategies leverage wellness-oriented language, appealing flavors, and a lack of the traditional pungent tobacco odor to attract younger generations and first-time smokers.
- **E-Commerce Accessibility:** Herbal cigarettes are widely available on e-commerce platforms and often marketed without age restrictions or mandatory health warnings, exploiting regulatory gaps and increasing youth access.
- **Celebrity Endorsements:** Unverified promotion by influencers and celebrities lends misplaced credibility to these products.

Key Findings of the Study:	Way Forward
• Higher Oxidative Potential (OP): Herbal cigarette smoke causes more inflammation and tissue damage than tobacco; leaf-wrapped (tendu) varieties are 49% more hazardous than paper-wrapped ones. • Severe Particulate Pollution: Herbal smoke contains 20% higher concentrations of ultra-fine particles, which penetrate deeper into the body's systems. • Deceptive Safety Claims: Marketed as "natural," these products often contain high levels of lead and hazardous combustion pollutants like carbon monoxide and black carbon.	• Expand Regulatory Scope: Amend laws to regulate all combustible products based on health risks, closing loopholes that currently exempt non-tobacco products from oversight. • Ban Deceptive Marketing: Crack down on misleading "wellness" and "chemical-free" claims in advertisements. • Mandatory Warnings: Require standardized, prominent health warnings on all herbal products regarding toxic emissions. • Public Awareness: Launch campaigns to dispel the myth that "nicotine-free" is synonymous with "harm-free." • Scientific Research: Conduct long-term studies to provide a robust, evidence-based foundation for future regulations.

Urban Fire Risk in India

At least 15 students were killed after a massive fire broke out at a building housing a coaching centre in the Aliganj area of Lucknow

- ✓ The Emergency Management Division of Washington DC has defined fire as "uncontrolled burning in a residence or building from natural, human or technical causes" while the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA under Ministry of Home Affairs) has identified fire as "a human-induced disaster".

Related Facts and Data	Related Institutional & Constitutional Framework
• Fire- a major global hazard: recognized in the 2018 UN Global Assessment Report. • Residential Vulnerability: According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data analyzed by <i>Beyond Carlton- a Bengaluru-based non-profit focused on fire safety</i>, 60% of all fire-related deaths take place in residential structures. • Commercial Hotspots: In non-residential sectors, hospitals and congested commercial centers/shopping complexes report the highest casualties. • Capacity Deficit: The Ministry of Home Affairs highlights a "considerable gap" in the operational capabilities of fire and emergency services across Indian cities. Fifteenth	• Constitutional Mandate: Fire services are a State subject explicitly listed as a municipal function in the XII Schedule of the Constitution under Article 243 (W). Thus, the primary execution and equipment responsibility lies with state governments and urban local bodies (ULBs). • Central Advisory Role: The Centre provides guidelines, which outlines advanced protocols for smoke management, periodic safety audits, and digital fire-prevention sensors. ➤ Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has

Finance Commission recommended ₹5,000 crore for modernizing and strengthening fire services.	replaced the National Building Code (NBC), 2016, with the National Building Construction Standards (NBCS), 2026.
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Reasons for Rising Fire Incidents and Challenges in Tackling it:

- **Regulatory Gaps:** The NBC 2016/ NBCS 2026 lacks statutory backing, leading to fragmented, non-binding implementation by states.
- **ULB Resource Deficit:** Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) face a chronic "3-F" deficit (Funds, Functions, and Functionaries) under Article 243W, lacking the staff, equipment, and resources needed to effectively enforce building safety compliance.
- **Unauthorized Commercialization:** High rents drive illegal conversion of residential buildings into risky commercial spaces (e.g., kitchens, coaching centers) that escape municipal oversight.
- **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Aging wiring, high power loads, and congested urban layouts (narrow lanes/encroachments) increase fire risk and hinder emergency response.
 - Severe heat caused by climate change: Leads to excessive use of air conditioners, which can overload electrical systems, and in some cases result in AC compressor bursts.
- **Safety Neglect:** Residents often prioritize security (locked grills) over safety & Lack of awareness and maintenance of fire systems turns structures into "smoke chambers."
- **Political Interference:** Illegal colonies are often **regularized during elections** without fire safety upgrades.
- **Unsafe Handling of Hazardous Materials:** Chemical spills or gas leaks in factories triggering explosions.

Way Forward:

- **Mandatory Enforcement:** State governments must enforce NBCS, digitize safety audits, and impose strict penalties for unauthorized structural changes.
- **Official Accountability:** Hold municipal inspectors legally liable for overlooking building code violations.
- **Modernize Fire Services:** Utilize the 15th Finance Commission's ₹5,000 crore corpus to upgrade equipment, specifically for high-density areas.
- **Improve Accessibility:** Deploy agile, mini-fire tenders designed for narrow lanes and establish local water access points.
- **Community-Led Safety:** Empower residents and societies through training and promote the installation of affordable, mandatory smoke detectors in residential units.
- **Innovative Strategies:** Green spaces as firebreaks, AI detection, self-regulating grids, fire-resistant materials, water recycling systems for firefighting reserves, and predictive analytics to forecast fire risks.

PM SurakshitMatritva Abhiyan

Nationwide celebrations were observed recently to commemorate ten years of the Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA) under the theme 10 Years of PMSMA- A Decade of Care.

About PMSMA:

It was launched in **2016** with the aim to provide **free, comprehensive antenatal care (ANC)** to pregnant women, especially in the **2nd and 3rd trimesters**, on the **9th of every month** at designated government health facilities.

Objectives of PMSMA: To-	Key Features of PMSMA:
• Ensure early detection of pregnancy related complications. • Provide specialist antenatal check-ups. • Reduce maternal and neonatal mortality through timely intervention.	• At least one quality ANC check-up by an Obstetrician/Gynaecologist or trained specialist. • Free blood & urine tests, ultrasonography, medicines, and counselling. • Screening for 25 high-risk pregnancy (HRP) conditions such as severe anaemia, hypertension, gestational diabetes, HIV, etc. • High-risk cases are linked to First Referral Units (FRUs) for specialized care.

Innovative Aspects

- **Volunteer Doctor Model:** Private-sector doctors provide services on the 9th of every month under the “I Pledge for 9” campaign.
- **Colour-coded tracking:** Green sticker for normal pregnancies; Red sticker for high-risk pregnancies.
- **Extended PMSMA (2022):** Continuous tracking of **high-risk pregnancies till delivery**. Additional ANC visits, SMS reminders, and ASHA support with incentives.

Achievements under PMSMA:

- Over **7.5 crore pregnant women** have received ANC services under PMSMA.
- India's **Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)** declined from **130 (2014-16)** to **87 (2022-24)** maternal deaths per lakh live births.

Guidelines on Psychological Evaluation of Children in Custody Disputes

In a landmark ruling, a Division Bench of the Supreme Court (SC) ruled that psychological assessments of children in custody disputes especially when the child is an alleged victim under the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012** must follow the principle of "**minimum intrusion**" (like avoiding direct interaction with court-appointed outsiders if feasible)

Constitutional Link:

- **Article 21 (Protection of Life and Personal Liberty):** encompasses a child's right to emotional security, mental health, and a safe environment free from trauma (such as unnecessary forensic scrutiny).
- **Article 39(f) (DPSP)-** Directs the State to ensure that children develop in a healthy, dignified environment and are protected from exploitation, neglect, and moral or material abandonment.

Key Observations:	SC Guidelines for Family Courts:
• Paramount Welfare: A child's emotional security, dignity, and mental health take precedence over all parental claims. • Doctrine of Parens Patriae: The judiciary acts as the ultimate guardian; parental rights are secondary to the child's welfare. • Child as Person, Not Evidence: Courts must not treat children as forensic tools for adversarial legal battles. • Therapeutic vs. Evaluative: A clear distinction must be maintained to prevent re-traumatization and secondary victimization. • Caution Against Labels: Courts should avoid premature diagnoses like "Parental Alienation Syndrome" without objective evidence.	• Demonstrable Necessity: Courts must justify why less intrusive options aren't enough and prioritize existing therapist input. • Institutional Neutrality: Evaluations should be handled by a single, court-appointed psychologist; multi-member panels are exceptions. • Minimum Exposure: Limit the frequency and duration of sessions to prevent child distress. • Non-Adversarial Focus: Evaluations must be child-centric, not tools for parental litigation. • Continuity of Care: Avoid replacing a child's established therapist. • Absolute Confidentiality: Shield all therapeutic records and recordings from parents unless court-permitted. • Judicial Supervision: Judges must retain the authority to pause or stop evaluations that harm the child.

QS World University Rankings 2027

The QS World University Rankings 2027 were released recently revealing a sector defined by stability at the top, disruption just below, but accelerating global competition.

About QS World University Rankings 2027

- **India's Performance:** India has **52 universities** in the rankings (5th highest globally). Number of ranked Indian institutions increased to **52 (2027)**.

- **Top Indian Institutions:** Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi (**118th globally**- India's highest-ever rank) followed by IIT Bombay (**134th globally**) and IIT Madras (**170th globally**).
- **Key Strengths:** Strong performance in **research impact (citations)** and **employer reputation**. IITs continue to dominate India's higher education landscape.
- **Major Challenges:** Low **internationalization** (foreign faculty & students), weak **faculty-student ratio** and no Indian institution in the **global top 100** yet.
- **Global Leader:** Massachusetts Institute of Technology ranked **No. 1 globally** for the 15th consecutive year.

Prescription Now Mandatory for Cough Syrups

The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), via the **Drugs (Fifth Amendment) Rules, 2026**, has removed word "syrups" from **Schedule K** of the **Drugs Rules, 1945**. This mandates a prescription for all syrup-based medicines, ending their status as Over-the-Counter (OTC) products in India.

- ✓ The amendment was notified under the **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940** following consultations with the **Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB)**.
- ✓ The **DTAB** (under **MoHFW**) constituted under the **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940**, is the highest statutory body advising the Central and State governments on drug regulations, standards, and technical policy within the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) framework.

What is Schedule K? Schedule K lists drugs exempted from certain provisions of the **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940** and Rules, 1945 allowing the exempted drugs including cough syrups to be sold in remote areas (villages with <1,000 population) by general stores other than licensed pharmacies.

What has Changed? By removing "Syrups" from Schedule K, the government has eliminated the legal loophole that facilitated the unregulated sale of these medicines in general stores.

Rationale Behind the Decision	Challenges and Concerns
• Public Health Safety: Prevents deaths caused by toxic solvents like diethylene glycol, like the Madhya Pradesh case. • Combating Misuse: Curbs pediatric dosing errors and recreational abuse. • Strengthening Oversight: Ensures supply chain accountability through mandatory professional validation.	• Enforcement Gap: The issue is poor enforcement rather than a lack of legal framework. • Contamination Sources: Simply restricting sales doesn't fix the root cause; regulators must mandate strict batch testing of raw materials. • Medical Risks: Suppressants can mask serious underlying conditions and interfere with natural recovery.

Way Forward

- **Solvent Regulation:** Promoting the use of suspensions and ensuring pharmaceutical-grade certification for all excipients.
- **Standardization:** Transitioning smaller manufacturing units to secure, traceable supply chains for raw materials.
- **Public Awareness:** Empowering patients to avoid self-medication and fostering a culture of seeking professional diagnosis, particularly for respiratory symptoms.

CBSE's Marking System

The Delhi High Court (HC) recently issued notices to the Centre and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) over a PIL challenging the newly introduced On-Screen Marking (OSM) system for Class 12 board exam answer sheets.

What is the CBSE OSM System?

It is a digital evaluation system (rolled out in 2026) in which physical answer sheets are **scanned, digitized, anonymized, and uploaded** on a secure online platform. Examiners evaluate answer scripts online instead of

checking physical copies. The system integrates digital monitoring, random script allocation, centralized monitoring, and automated totaling checks.

Why was OSM System Introduced?

- **Efficiency:** Faster processing and automated totaling to eliminate manual calculation errors.
- **Transparency & Standardization:** Centralized monitoring and uniform application of marking schemes across diverse geographical regions.
- **Scalability:** Reducing the physical burden of transporting and storing millions of answer scripts.
- **Accountability:** Establishing an audit trail and reducing manual intervention in the evaluation process.

Issues Faced by OSM System	Implications
• Technological Glitches: Frequent crashes, system freezes, and security vulnerabilities. • Data & Quality Concerns: Blurred scans, mismanaged answer scripts, and data breach risks. • Evaluation Discrepancies: Inconsistent grading, incomplete checks, and mismatches between the marking scheme and software. • Institutional Lapses: Rushed implementation, poor examiner training, and flawed procurement processes.	• Academic: Incorrect results, loss of student trust, and derailed career paths. • Governance: Heightened scrutiny, increased litigation, and demands for independent inquiries. • Technological: Significant concerns regarding data privacy and system reliability. • Social: Widespread student distress and declining public confidence in national testing.

Way Forward

- **Robust Infrastructure:** Upgrade to high-resolution scanning, secure cloud storage, and perform rigorous load testing before deployment.
- **Structured Governance:** Standardize SOPs and mandate transparent pilot tests before scaling nationwide.
- **Human-Centric Design:** Improve examiner training and ensure digital tools support- rather than replace- professional judgment.
- **Transparency Protocols:** Provide students with free access to their scanned scripts and release detailed, step-by-step marking schemes for verification.
- **Accountability:** Create a reliable grievance portal and conduct independent audits of all technology vendors.

CBSE Eases Three-Language Policy

CBSE has issued implementation guidelines for the Three-Language Policy in affiliated schools, effective from the 2026-27 academic session, in line with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 making **three languages** compulsory from **Class 6 onwards of which at least two must be Indian languages**.

Language Requirement	Implementation	Exemptions
• Required Language (R1 & R2): Indian languages (e.g., Hindi, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Bengali, Marathi, etc.). • R3: Can be an Indian language or a foreign language (English, French, German, Arabic, Spanish, etc.), only if the other two are BharatiyaBhashas.	• Class 6 (2026-27) will be the first batch to follow the policy fully unlike the transitional batches. • They will become the first students to write the Class 10 Board Exam in the third language (R3). • NCERT has prepared R3 textbooks in 22 Scheduled Indian languages.	• Children with Special Needs (CwSN): Relaxations under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. • CBSE schools outside India: Exempt from the Bharatiya Bhasha requirement. • Foreign students returning to India: Exempt from compulsory Bharatiya Bhasha as R3. • Inter-state migrant students: May continue with their existing language combination.

Equality of Treatment for Persons with Disabilities

India's welfare architecture has expanded significantly through the **Digital India Mission, Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), and UPI-enabled service delivery**. However, **Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)** continue to face exclusion due to fragmented and inadequate disability pension systems.

The Crisis of Inequality: Despite the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 and constitutional guarantees under Article 41, disability pensions remain inadequate due to: • Discretionary Governance: Benefits vary wildly by state, with most monthly pensions ranging from a meager ₹300-₹500. • Administrative Fragmentation: Overlapping ministry jurisdictions cause bureaucratic delays and delivery failures. • Fiscal Neglect: India spends only 0.02% of GDP on disability welfare, far below international standards (like Brazil (0.5%) or OECD countries (2.2%)).	Solution- Minimum Universal Disability Pension Floor Rate (MUDPFR): MUDPFR is a proposed national minimum disability pension that guarantees every eligible PwD a basic pension irrespective of the State they reside in, while allowing States to provide additional top-ups. It is essential for: • Uniformity & Portability: Guarantees consistent support regardless of residency, modeled after successful global grants. • Constitutional Fulfillment: Operationalizes the RPwD Act (Section 24) and Article 41 to ensure meaningful social security. • Integrated Delivery: A National Disability Pension Authority would centralize eligibility, maintain a national registry, and streamline grievance redressal under a "One Nation, One System" framework.
• Section 24 of the RPwD Act, 2016 guarantees adequate social security, including pension benefits. • Article 41- a DPSP which directs states to provide public assistance to PwDs.	

Amazon Future Engineer (AFE) Programme

National Education Society for Tribal Students (NESTS- under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs to manage EMRS) has partnered with **Learning Links Foundation (LLF)** to implement the AFE programme in **Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)**.

- ✓ Established in 1997-98 by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, EMRS provide quality education to tribal children in remote areas, preparing them for higher education and professional employment.
- ✓ Amazon Future Engineer is an initiative by Amazon to enable access to computer science learning & STEM education for underrepresented and underserved students.

Key Components of AFE:	Implementation:
• Computer Science Fundamentals (coding & computational thinking). • AI Literacy (experiential learning of AI concepts). • Career Exposure (technology career awareness).	• LLF: will provide Teacher training, mentoring, academic support, and monitoring. • NESTS: will ensure teacher participation and coordination for effective curriculum delivery.

Nicobar Elections Controversy: Tribal Self-Governance And Electoral Reforms

The **Andaman and Nicobar Administration** has published the **Draft Andaman and Nicobar Islands Tribal Councils (Preparation of Electoral Rolls and Conduct of Elections) Rules, 2026**, proposing a formal electoral framework for Nicobarese Village and Tribal Councils.

The proposal has sparked concerns among the Nicobarese community over its **impact on traditional self-governance, cultural autonomy and indigenous institutions**, especially against the backdrop of the proposed ₹91,000 crore Great Nicobar development project.

Background: Traditional Governance of the Nicobarese

- The Nicobarese are a Scheduled Tribe inhabiting the Nicobar group of islands, with a population of about 30,000.
- They are governed through a long-standing customary system centred on:
 - Island Tribal Councils, which represent the interests of the community at the island level.
 - Below the Tribal Councils sits the village leadership structure of three Captains per village — a First Captain assisted by a Second and Third Captain.
- Leadership is traditionally based on **community consensus**, trust and customary practices, rather than periodic competitive elections.
- The present **Tribal Council** structure emerged in the 1990s to facilitate implementation of government development and poverty alleviation programmes, while the institution of "captaincy" dates back centuries and was later formalised by the British.

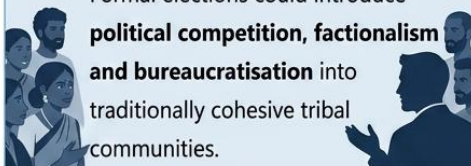
Key Features of the Draft Rules

The draft rules seek to institutionalise a formal electoral process by providing for:

- Preparation of electoral rolls and delimitation of constituencies.
- Regular elections (5 yearly) for Village Councils and Island Tribal Councils.
- Villagers would elect five to nine **Captains per village** and **directly vote**

Concerns Raised by Tribal Leaders

- The proposal may replace the consensus-based customary governance system with an **externally imposed electoral model**.
- Formal elections could introduce **political competition, factionalism and bureaucratisation** into traditionally cohesive tribal communities.
- Tribal leaders contend that there has been **inadequate consultation** with the Nicobarese before introducing the draft rules.
- There are apprehensions that greater administrative control may **dilute the autonomy of Tribal Councils**.
- Many community members suspect that the reforms are linked to facilitating the implementation of the **Great Nicobar infrastructure project**, affecting tribal land, culture and decision-making.



Administration's Rationale

The Administration argues that the reforms will:

- Introduce greater transparency and accountability in tribal governance.
- Ensure clearly defined electoral procedures.
- Improve representativeness through constituency-based elections.
- Promote women's participation in tribal institutions.
- Strengthen institutional functioning by providing a uniform legal framework for elections.



Constitutional and Legal Dimensions

- Raises important questions about balancing democratic electoral principles with customary tribal self-governance.
 - Protection of indigenous identity and traditional institutions under the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation, 1956 (ANPATR).
- Highlights the need to reconcile developmental objectives with the constitutional commitment to protecting vulnerable tribal communities and respecting indigenous decision-making processes.



for the **Chief Captain** of each Island Tribal Council.

- The First Captains of all villages on a given island would then vote for the **Vice-Chief Captain**.
- **Island Tribal Council** would comprise the Chief Captain, Vice-Chief Captain, and all First Captains of that island.

- Codified procedures for nomination, scrutiny, withdrawal, polling and counting.
- A fixed tenure for elected councils.
- Reservation of seats and leadership positions for women.
- Administrative supervision of the election process by the Union Territory administration.

**** Note:** These rules are framed under the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Tribal Councils) Regulation, 2009** — a **Presidential Regulation** intended to bring autonomous self-governance to the Nicobarese through village council and tribal council structure.

- However, that same 2009 Regulation gave the district administration (through the Deputy Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner) an **absolute veto** over any council decision deemed a threat to public order or likely to cause "annoyance".

Way Forward

- Undertake extensive consultations with Nicobarese communities before finalising the rules.
- Adopt a hybrid governance model that preserves traditional consensus-based institutions while incorporating democratic safeguards where necessary.
- Ensure that reforms strengthen, rather than weaken, customary institutions and community participation.
- Safeguard tribal autonomy and cultural identity while promoting transparency, accountability and greater participation of women in local governance.

Right To Be Forgotten

The Delhi High Court, in a landmark judgment, held that the **Right to be Forgotten (RTBF)** is an integral part of the **Right to Privacy** under **Article 21** of the Constitution. The Court directed search engines and legal databases to de-index and disable name-based searches for certain judicial records, news reports and online content where continued public accessibility causes disproportionate harm to an individual's privacy and dignity.

Key Observations of the Court

- The Right to be Forgotten flows from the constitutional guarantee of **informational privacy** under Article 21. Individuals should be able to seek restriction or removal of personal information from public digital accessibility when it no longer serves a legitimate public purpose.
- The **internet's permanent memory** can cause lasting damage to a person's reputation, employment prospects, relationships and dignity, even after acquittal, discharge, settlement or closure of disputes.
- The Court clarified that the Right to be Forgotten is not a right to erase history. Judicial records will continue to exist; only their **discoverability through name-based searches** may be restricted in appropriate cases.

Directions Issued:

- Search engines such as **Google and legal databases** such as Indian Kanoon must disable or de-index name-based search functionality in eligible cases.
- Courts may order **masking or anonymisation** of personal details in judgments where privacy interests outweigh the need for public disclosure.
- **De-indexing** must be implemented **without deleting the original judicial record**, thereby balancing privacy with transparency and open justice.

Balancing of Rights:

The Court stressed that RTBF is not absolute and must be balanced against:

- Freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a).
- Open justice and transparency of judicial proceedings.
- Public interest and the public's right to access information.

Significance:

- Strengthens digital privacy jurisprudence in India after the landmark **K.S. Puttaswamy Judgment**.
- Provides individuals greater control over their digital footprints.
- Protects acquitted persons and parties to private disputes from perpetual online stigma.
- Establishes a framework for balancing privacy rights with transparency and freedom of information in the digital age.

Kerala's Fiscal Crisis: Challenges And Reform Roadmap

The newly elected Kerala Government has released a **White Paper on State Finances**, highlighting the deteriorating fiscal position inherited by the state and proposing structural reforms to restore fiscal sustainability. The report underscores that **Kerala's development model**, once known for **high social development**, is under stress due to mounting debt, rising committed expenditure and inadequate capital investment.

Kerala's Fiscal Position: Key Indicators

Indicator	Kerala
Outstanding Liabilities (5.07 lakh crore)	~35% of GSDP (National average~ 29.2%)
Interest Burden	20.9% as a % of revenue receipts (National average- 12.2%)
Revenue Expenditure	Salaries, pensions, and interest payments consumed 77.6% of the revenue receipts in 2025-26(National average: 46.1%)
Capital Expenditure	1.34% as a % of GSDP (National average~ 3.2%)

Reform Measures Suggested in the White Paper

- **Fiscal Consolidation:**
 - Rationalise revenue expenditure.
 - Improve expenditure efficiency.
 - Strengthen fiscal discipline.
- **Increase Capital Expenditure**
 - Prioritise infrastructure investment & Inclusive development.
 - Improve quality of public assets.
 - Enhance productivity-oriented spending.
- **Improve Revenue Mobilisation**
 - Strengthen tax administration.
 - Improve compliance.
 - Reduce revenue leakages.
- **Public Sector Reforms**
 - Improve efficiency of State Public Sector Enterprises (PSUs).
 - Reduce losses of non-performing entities.
- **Promote Private Investment**
 - Improve ease of doing business.
 - Encourage investment in manufacturing and high-value services.
 - Create employment-oriented growth.
- **Employment and Skill Development**
 - Align education with industry requirements.

What Ails Kerala's Public Finances?

- **High Committed Expenditure:** A large share of government revenue is spent on salaries, pensions and interest payments. Consequently, limited fiscal space remains for developmental and capital expenditure.
- **Rising Debt Burden:** Kerala has increasingly relied on borrowings to bridge the gap between revenue and expenditure. Higher debt has led to escalating interest payments, creating a vicious cycle of borrowing and debt servicing.
- **Low Capital Expenditure:** Public investment in infrastructure and productive assets has remained inadequate. Lower capital spending constrains long-term economic growth and employment generation.
- **Weak Employment Generation:** Despite high literacy and educational attainment, Kerala continues to face high unemployment, particularly high female unemployment and dependence on migration and remittances.
- **Shrinking Fiscal Flexibility:** Increasing revenue expenditure has crowded out investments in infrastructure, education, healthcare and industrial development.

Structural Causes of the Crisis

Factor	Impact
Ageing Population	Rising pension and healthcare expenditure
High Welfare Commitments	Large recurring revenue expenditure
Limited Industrial Base	Slower growth in own tax revenues
Heavy Dependence on Services	Limited manufacturing-led employment
Low Private Investment	Slower economic diversification
High Debt Servicing	Reduced fiscal space for development

- Promote entrepreneurship and innovation.
- Generate quality employment opportunities for youth.

Challenges in Implementing Reforms

- Political sensitivity surrounding welfare expenditure v/s Balancing fiscal consolidation
- Resistance to pension and administrative reforms.
- Limited fiscal autonomy due to high committed liabilities.

NEC 73rd Plenary Meeting

The Union Home Minister chaired the **73rd Plenary Session of the North Eastern Council (NEC)** in New Delhi. The meeting reviewed the progress of development initiatives in the North-Eastern Region and discussed strategies for accelerating economic growth, connectivity and regional integration.

Key Highlights of the Meeting:

- The North-East has witnessed significant improvements in road, rail, air and digital connectivity, helping integrate the region more closely with the rest of India.
- Emphasis was laid on achieving the vision of a developed **North-East by 2047**, in line with the national goal of Viksit Bharat 2047.
- The meeting reviewed progress in sectors such as:
 - Infrastructure development
 - Tourism
 - Agriculture and allied activities
 - Skill development
 - Investment promotion
 - Education and healthcare
- The Centre highlighted the government's focus on **peace, connectivity and development**, noting that improved security conditions have opened new opportunities for economic growth in the region.
- States were encouraged to adopt a **coordinated regional approach** for implementing projects and **attracting private investment**.

North Eastern Council (NEC)

The NEC is the statutory regional planning and advisory body for the North-Eastern Region.

It was established under the **North Eastern Council Act, 1971**. It functions under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER)**.

Composition:

- **Chairperson** – Union Home Minister.
- **Vice-Chairperson** – Minister DoNER
- **Members:**
 - Governors of all eight North-Eastern States.
 - Chief Ministers of all eight North-Eastern States.
 - Three members nominated by the President.
 - The Union Minister for DoNER acts as a member of the Council.
- **Member States:** (given in fig.)

Mandate:

- **Formulate regional plans** and coordinate development efforts among North-Eastern States.
- **Advise the Central Government** on matters relating to socio-economic development of the region.
- **Fund and monitor** infrastructure and connectivity projects of regional importance.
- **Promote** balanced and sustainable development across the North-East.
- **Foster inter-state cooperation** and **regional integration**.

Significance:

- Serves as the principal institutional mechanism for coordinated development of the North-East.
- Facilitates implementation of projects that benefit multiple states.
- Acts as a bridge between the Centre and the North-Eastern States in planning and development.
- Plays a crucial role in improving connectivity, economic integration and national security in the strategically important North-Eastern Region.



The **Annual Review of State Laws 2025** by **PRS Legislative Research** examined the functioning of 27 State Legislatures and 3 Union Territory Legislatures during 2025. The report highlights a continuing trend of **limited legislative sittings, rapid passage of Bills, and weak committee scrutiny**, despite a rise in legislative output.

Legislative Sitings

- State Assemblies met for an average of **24 days in 2025**, an improvement from **21 days in 2024** and **23 days in 2023**, but still below the standards prescribed by many legislatures.
- **Odisha** recorded the highest number of Assembly sittings at 43 days.
- **Nagaland** recorded the lowest number of sittings at 7 days.
- Over the five-year period (2021–2025), **Kerala (41 days)**, **Odisha (39 days)**, and **Karnataka (37 days)** recorded the highest average annual sittings.
- **Manipur** was under President's Rule from February 2025 to February 2026 and its legislature did not meet during 2025.
- In some states such as **West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Punjab**, the sessions lasted a long period. The West Bengal sessions which started in 2023, continued into 2026. As sessions were not prorogued, this meant that the Speaker could call for a sitting without requiring summons by the Governor.
- In 2025, **Legislative Councils** met for an average of **26 days**, ranging from 11 days in Telangana to 38 days in Maharashtra.

Legislative Output

- State Legislatures passed **645 Bills in 2025**, compared to **~500 Bills in 2024**.
- On average, each Assembly passed about **22 Bills** during the year.
- The increase in **legislative output** occurred despite relatively low sitting days, indicating a trend toward faster law-making.

Key Concerns Highlighted

- Legislatures continue to meet for far fewer days than required for effective oversight.
- A growing number of Bills are being enacted with limited debate and scrutiny.
- Committee systems remain underutilised.
- Reduced deliberation weakens legislative accountability and the quality of law-making.

Bills Passed with Limited Deliberation

- Approximately **one-third of all Bills** were passed in a single sitting, reflecting limited time for debate and scrutiny.
- The report notes a continuing tendency across legislatures to fast-track legislation rather than subject Bills to detailed discussion and examination.
- **Committee Scrutiny Remains Weak**
 - Committee scrutiny continues to be limited across states.
 - In the states for which data was available, only about **5% of Bills were referred to committees** for detailed examination.
 - The low referral rate reduces opportunities for expert consultation, stakeholder engagement and clause-by-clause scrutiny of legislation.
- In 2025, **127 ordinances were promulgated**. This marks an increase from 100 Ordinances issued in 2024. Karnataka and Meghalaya issued more Ordinances than in 2024, while Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra recorded a decline.



Budget Oversight

- State legislatures continued to scrutinise and approve state budgets, one of their core constitutional responsibilities.
- However, limited sitting days often **constrained detailed discussion** of departmental expenditure and demands for grants.
- On average, states spent **eight days on budget discussions**. **Tamil Nadu** was the only state to devote more than 20 days to discuss the budget.

Accountability Function

- Legislatures are expected to hold governments accountable through **questions, discussions, motions and committee work**.
- The report indicates that shorter sessions reduce the time available for these accountability mechanism.

National Awards For E-Governance (NAeG) 2026

The Government of India announced the winners of the **29th National Awards for e-Governance (NAeG) 2026**, recognising excellence in the implementation of digital governance initiatives. A total of **17 projects** and initiatives were selected across seven award categories, comprising 10 Gold Awards, 6 Silver Awards and 1 Jury Award.

Key Highlights

- The awards aim to recognise and promote innovation, efficiency, transparency and citizen-centric service delivery through e-Governance.
- For the first time, the awards continue to emphasise Gram Panchayat-level digital governance initiatives, highlighting the role of technology in grassroots service delivery.
- The awards cover projects from Central Ministries, State Governments, local bodies, judicial institutions, public sector organisations and Gram Panchayats.

Award Categories

- Government Process Re-engineering through Technology.
- Use of AI and New-Age Technologies for Citizen-Centric Services.
- Innovation in Cyber Security.
- District-Level e-Governance Initiatives.
- Grassroots Digital Governance by Gram Panchayats and Traditional Local Bodies.
- Replication and Scaling of Successful e-Governance Projects.
- Data Analytics-driven Digital Transformation.

Incentives

- **Gold Award:** Trophy, Certificate and ₹10 lakh.
- **Silver Award:** Trophy, Certificate and ₹5 lakh.
- The incentive amount is to be utilised for project implementation and public welfare initiatives.

Significance

- Encourages **adoption of digital technologies, AI, cybersecurity and data-driven governance.**
- Promotes best practices in **citizen-centric public service delivery.**
- Strengthens **grassroots digital governance** through Panchayats and local bodies.
- Supports the **vision of Digital India, Good Governance and Viksit Bharat** through technology-enabled public administration.

About National Awards for e-Governance (NAeG)

- Instituted by the **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG).**
- Presented annually to recognise excellence in e-Governance initiatives across the country.
- Considered one of the highest recognitions for innovation & digital transformation in public administration.

National E-Vidhan Application (NEVA)

Recently, the **West Bengal** legislative assembly signed MoU for implementation of National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA).

About NeVA

- The National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) is a Mission Mode Project under the **Digital India Programme**
- It is based on the concept of "**One Nation, One Application**" for all legislatures.

Major Award-Winning Initiatives

- Agri Stack – Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare.
- e-Jagriti – Ministry of Consumer Affairs.
- Mahakumbh 2025 Digital Management System – Prayagraj Mela Authority, Uttar Pradesh.
- Blood Bag Traceability and Citizen Interaction Portal – Kerala Development and Innovation Strategic Council (K-DISC).
- AI-enabled Clinical Decision Support System in eSanjeevani – Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- District Court Case Management System (DCMS) – High Court of Kerala.
- ICMR-MINDS for integration of mental health and non-communicable disease services – Indian Council of Medical Research.
- Cyber Threat Intelligence Distribution and DNS Filtering Service – Space Applications Centre, ISRO.
- E-Nagar Palika with Cyber Security – Urban Development and Housing Department, Madhya Pradesh.
- Integrated Cyber Security Framework for Digital Banking Ecosystem – Bank of Baroda.
- E-Aarogya Dhamni – Zilla Parishad, Nandurbar (Maharashtra).
- Pune 360 – Pune Municipal Corporation.
- Kadepur Gram Panchayat – Sangli District, Maharashtra.
- Bijoy Nagar Gram Panchayat – West Tripura District, Tripura.
- TRINETRA – AI-based surveillance and management system for the Mahakaleshwar Temple area, Ujjain.
- Panchayat Advancement Index – Ministry of Panchayati Raj.
- Jury Award: Real Time Precise Positioning Services through CORS Network – Survey of India.

Benefits

- Faster processing of legislative business.
- Improved record management and document retrieval.
- Reduced administrative and printing costs.
- Better coordination among legislators, committees and legislative secretariats.
- Enhanced public access to legislative information.

DNA Test In Paternity Cases

The Supreme Court recently upheld orders directing a man to undergo a DNA test in a paternity dispute filed by a person claiming to be his biological son. The claimant sought a declaration of paternity and a share in the alleged father's property. The Court had to balance the alleged **father's right to privacy against the claimant's right to establish identity and inheritance claims.**

Background

- The alleged father had denied the claim of paternity since 1999.
- The claimant argued that a DNA test was the only effective means to establish his biological relationship and consequent inheritance rights.
- The Supreme Court upheld the DNA test order after considering competing constitutional and legal interests.

Legal Framework

- **Section 116** of the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023
- Corresponds to the erstwhile **Section 112 of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.**
- A child born during a valid marriage, or within **280 days** of its dissolution, is presumed to be the legitimate child of the husband.
- This presumption can generally be rebutted only by proving non-access between the spouses during the period of conception.
- The provision seeks to protect the legitimacy, dignity and social status of children.

Supreme Court's Position on DNA Testing

- Courts should not order DNA tests routinely in paternity disputes.
- DNA testing is considered an intrusive procedure affecting privacy, dignity and bodily autonomy.
- At the same time, courts cannot ignore an individual's right to know their biological

Key Features

- Provides a **common digital platform** for the functioning of State Legislatures.
- Enables **paperless conduct** of legislative business.
- Facilitates **digital processing** of questions, notices, Bills, committee reports and other legislative documents.
- Allows members to access legislative business through computers, tablets and mobile devices.
- Supports real-time sharing and management of legislative information.

Objectives

- **Digitise and modernise** legislative functioning.
- **Improve efficiency and productivity** of legislatures.
- **Enhance transparency and accessibility** of legislative proceedings.
- Reduce dependence on paper and promote **sustainable governance.**
- Create a **standardised digital framework** for legislatures across the country.

Implementation

- Implemented by the **Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs** with technical support from the National Informatics Centre (NIC).
- Can be customised to meet the procedural requirements of individual State Legislatures while maintaining a common technological architecture.

Three-Part Test for Ordering DNA Tests

The Supreme Court reiterated that a DNA test may be directed only when:

- Paternity is the central issue in the dispute.
- No other reliable evidence is available to determine paternity.
- Ordering the test is necessary in the interests of justice after balancing competing rights and consequences.

Constitutional and Ethical Issues Involved

- Right to Privacy under Article 21.
- Right to Identity and Personal Autonomy.
- Right to Property and Inheritance.
- Protection of the dignity and legitimacy of children.
- Balancing scientific evidence with legal presumptions and social consequences.

Evolution of Judicial Approach

- In cases such as *Goutam Kundu v. State of West Bengal*, the Supreme Court held that DNA tests should not be ordered as a matter of course.
- Subsequent judgments gradually recognised that DNA evidence may be necessary in exceptional cases where it is indispensable for resolving disputes.
- The present ruling continues this balanced approach by treating DNA testing as a measure of last resort rather than a routine evidentiary tool.

identity and assert inheritance rights.

- Therefore, DNA testing may be ordered only in exceptional circumstances where justice so requires.

Significance

- Reinforces that the right to privacy is not absolute.
- Contributes to the evolving jurisprudence on the intersection of privacy, family law, identity and inheritance rights.

8TH Central Pay Commission

8th Central Pay Commission (CPC) should be viewed not merely as an exercise in revising salaries and pensions but as an opportunity to **fundamentally reform India's public-sector compensation system**.

It should focus on transparency, equity, performance orientation and fiscal sustainability in government compensation.

Key Concerns that 8th Pay Commission should look into

- **Lack of a Scientific Compensation Framework:** Pay Commissions largely rely on representations from various services and employee groups. India lacks a uniform methodology to compare Responsibility, Expertise, Risk, Accountability, Career progression across services.
- **Civil-Military Compensation Issues:** Armed forces and civilian services have different career trajectories and retirement patterns. Yet recurring demands for parity create friction and periodic disputes.
 - Early Retirement vs. Lifelong Careers, Status and Rank Equivalence, Policies like One Rank One Pension (OROP)
- **Non-Functional Upgradation (NFU):** NFU was introduced to compensate for slower promotions in some services. Critics argue that it disconnects compensation from actual responsibility and performance.
- **Fragmented Compensation Regime:** Executive, judiciary, legislature and constitutional authorities often follow different compensation mechanisms. This creates anomalies and reduces transparency.
- **Pension-Related Challenges:** India currently operates multiple pension systems:
 - Old Pension Scheme (OPS),
 - National Pension System (NPS),
 - Unified Pension Scheme (UPS),
- **Fiscal Sustainability Concerns:** Pension expenditure is one of the fastest-growing components of government revenue expenditure. Rising life expectancy and ageing demographics will increase future liabilities.

Reform Proposals Suggested

- **Permanent National Compensation Authority:** Replace decadal Pay Commissions with a permanent expert body. This will enable continuous review instead of periodic salary shocks.
- **Objective Evaluation Framework:** Compensation should be based on measurable criteria such as:
 - Responsibility, Skill requirements, Risk exposure, Hardship, Public accountability, Performance.
- **Greater Transparency:** Publicly disclose principles and methodology used for compensation decisions. Reduce ad hoc negotiations among services.
- **Rationalisation of Pension Systems:** Harmonise pension frameworks while ensuring fiscal sustainability. Reduce long-term unfunded liabilities.

What is a Pay Commission?

A Pay Commission is constituted by the Union Government to review and recommend:

- Pay scales,
- Allowances,
- Pension structures,
- Service conditions of Central Government employees and pensioners.

Its recommendations generally influence State Governments, PSUs and autonomous bodies.

8th CPC: Basic Facts

- **Constituted:** November 2025
- **Nature:** Ad hoc
- **Coverage:** Civilian employees, defence personnel and pensioners
- **Chairperson:** Ranjana Prakash Desai

1 st Pay Commission	1946
2 nd Pay Commission	1957
3 rd Pay Commission	1970
4 th Pay Commission	1983
5 th Pay Commission	1994
6 th Pay Commission	2006
7 th Pay Commission	2014
8 th Pay Commission	2025

- **Performance-Linked Components:** Introduce incentives linked to outcomes, productivity and service delivery rather than seniority alone.

Cockroach Election Symbol & Election Commission's Rules

The viral **Cockroach Janta Party (CJP)** movement has raised questions about whether it can obtain the cockroach as an official election symbol if it decides to enter electoral politics.

Election Symbols in India

- Election symbols are visual representations allotted to political parties and independent candidates.
- The legal framework governing symbols is contained in the **Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968**.

How are Symbols Chosen?

- Political parties may indicate preferences from the list of free symbols maintained by the ECI.
- The Election Commission examines whether the proposed symbol:
 - Is distinct and easily identifiable.
 - Does not resemble an existing reserved symbol.
 - Does not hurt religious sentiments or public morality.
 - Does not create confusion among voters.

Why is a Cockroach Symbol Unlikely?

- The Election Commission stopped allotting animal symbols to new parties and candidates in the 1990s following representations from animal welfare activists.
- As a result, animals are generally absent from the current list of free symbols available for allotment.
- Since the cockroach is not part of the ECI's approved list of free symbols, a newly registered party cannot simply request it and obtain it.



Powers of the Election Commission

- The Election Commission derives its authority over election symbols from **Article 324** of the Constitution and the **Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968**.

About the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968

- Issued by the Election Commission under its constitutional powers.
- Provides rules regarding:
 - Recognition of political parties.
 - Reservation of symbols for recognised parties.
 - Allotment of symbols to Independent candidates and unrecognised parties.
 - Settlement of symbol-related disputes.
 - Forms the backbone of India's election symbol system.

Categories of Election Symbols

- **Reserved Symbols:** Exclusively allotted to recognised national and state parties. Examples:
 - Bharatiya Janata Party – Lotus
 - Indian National Congress – Hand
 - Aam Aadmi Party – Broom
- **Free Symbols:** Available to registered unrecognised parties and independent candidates. The cockroach falls under this category.
 - Free symbols can be allotted to different candidates in different constituencies, subject to ECI rules.

Supreme Court Recognises Homemakers As “Nation Builders”

The Supreme Court, in **Shish Ram and ors vs. Surjeet** case, held that the contribution of homemakers to families and society must be formally recognised and monetised while determining compensation in motor accident claims. The Court described homemakers as “nation builders” and fixed a minimum notional value of **₹30,000 per month** for the loss of domestic care services provided by a deceased homemaker.

Broader Constitutional Linkages

- Upholds the dignity of labour and substantive equality under **Articles 14 and 21**.

Key Observations of the Supreme Court

- Homemakers perform **indispensable domestic and caregiving functions** that contribute significantly to family welfare and national development.
- Unpaid domestic labour has an **economic value** and cannot be treated as invisible or insignificant merely because it is not compensated through wages.
- The Court held that “**loss of domestic care**” should be treated as a separate and independent head of compensation in motor accident cases.
- Motor Accident Claims Tribunals (MACTs), High Courts and the Supreme Court should value the loss of domestic care services of a deceased homemaker at **not less than ₹30,000 per month**.
- To maintain this value this sum be **revised by 10% cumulatively every three years**.
- The judgment emphasised that marriage does not imply hiring domestic help; the services rendered by homemakers are invaluable and deserve legal recognition.

Significance of the Judgment

- **Recognises the economic value** of unpaid care work and household labour.
- **Strengthens gender justice** by acknowledging the contribution of women engaged in unpaid domestic work.
- **Likely to increase compensation** awarded in motor accident cases involving the death of homemakers.
- Marks a shift from viewing homemaking as a non-economic activity to recognising it as **productive labour with measurable social and economic value**.

- Advances the constitutional vision of **social justice** by recognising unpaid care work.

Draft Telecommunications (Television, Radio & Associated Services) Rules, 2026

The **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB)** has released the **Draft Telecommunications (Television, Radio and Associated Services) Rules, 2026** for public and inter-ministerial consultation.

The Rules are framed under the **Telecommunications Act, 2023**.

Objective

- To consolidate multiple broadcasting-related guidelines into a single regulatory framework.
- To harmonise and simplify rules governing television, radio and associated broadcasting services.
- To improve ease of doing business in the broadcasting sector.

Key Features of the Draft Rules

- **Change with Continuity:** Existing authorisation conditions have been harmonised and rationalised. Ensures continuity of existing services while enabling regulatory reforms.
- **Ease of Doing Business Measures:**
 - Single regulatory framework replacing multiple guidelines.
 - Digital implementation of the authorisation process.
 - Simplified authorisation procedures
 - Removal of the requirement to sign the Grant of Permission Agreement (GOPA).
 - Introduction of a **transparent adjudication mechanism**.
- **Public Service Broadcasting obligations:** A major feature of the draft rules is the strengthening of public service broadcasting requirements.
 - The rules **mandate** that television broadcasters would be required to telecast at least 30 minutes of content every day between 6 AM and 11 PM on subjects of national importance and social relevance.
 - Similarly, private radio broadcasters would need to air at least one hour of such programming daily.
 - The draft identifies themes, including Education and literacy; Agriculture and rural development; Health and family welfare; Women and child welfare; Science and technology; Environmental protection; National integration and cultural heritage; and welfare of the weaker sections.

Existing Guidelines Proposed to be Integrated	About the Telecommunications Act, 2023
The draft rules consolidate provisions relating to: • Uplinking and Downlinking of Satellite Television Channels (2022). • Direct-to-Home (DTH) Broadcasting Services Guidelines (2001). • Headend-in-the-Sky (HITS) Broadcasting Services Guidelines (2009). • FM Radio Broadcasting Services (Phase III) Guidelines (2011, amended up to 2024). • Community Radio Stations Guidelines (2024). • Internet Protocol Television (IPTV) Services Guidelines (2008).	• Replaced the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885. • Provides a comprehensive legal framework for telecommunications services in India. • Covers authorisation, spectrum management, user protection, security and dispute resolution. • Aims to create a modern, technology-neutral and future-ready telecommunications regime.

Significance

- Marks a major step in operationalising the **Telecommunications Act, 2023**.
- Transitions broadcasting regulation from fragmented guidelines to a unified legal framework.
- Supports the government's objective of ease of doing business and digital governance in the media and broadcasting sector.
- Modernises the regulatory ecosystem for television, radio, DTH, IPTV, FM radio and community radio services.

Delhi Government's E-Office System Completes One Year

- The Delhi Government's e-Office system is set to complete one year on 1 July 2026, marking a significant milestone in the digitisation of government administration.
- The initiative has witnessed a substantial increase in user adoption and digital processing of official files, reflecting the government's push towards paperless, transparent and efficient governance.

Major Highlights

- The e-Office system became mandatory for all Delhi Government departments from 1 July 2025.
- It has replaced physical file movement with an online workflow for file processing, correspondence, approvals, record management.
- The platform enables real-time tracking of files, making it easier to identify the officer handling a file and monitor its progress.
- An upgraded version introduced in April 2026 significantly accelerated adoption, with nearly 23,800 additional e-files and 1.53 lakh e-receipts processed within a short period.

What is the e-Office System?



It is a digital workflow platform developed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) under the Digital India Programme.



It enables electronic processing of official files, receipts, correspondence and approvals, replacing traditional paper-based administration.



The platform aims to improve efficiency, transparency, accountability and record management in government offices.

Key Achievements in One Year

Indicator	Progress
 Total users	Increased from 5,005 to 15,748 (over threefold increase)
 Departments/Institutions onboarded	Increased from 198 to 235
 Electronic files processed	Over 1.44 lakh
 Electronic receipts processed	Over 9.22 lakh

Right To Walk

The Supreme Court has held that the right to walk on **safe, unobstructed and demarcated footpaths** is a fundamental right, flowing from **Article 19(1)(d)** (freedom of movement) and **Article 21** (right to life and personal liberty includes the right to safe mobility). The judgment arose from a motor accident claim involving the death of a five-year-old child who was forced onto the roadway due to the absence of safe pedestrian infrastructure.

Key Observations of the Supreme Court

- Pedestrian rights have priority over the movement of motor vehicles.
- The right to walk safely is not merely a matter of urban planning but a constitutional entitlement.
- Governments and local bodies (urban development authorities, municipal corporations, municipalities and even panchayats) have a duty to provide and maintain safe, accessible and obstruction-free footpaths.
- The Court urged the Union Government to consider a legal framework to operationalise and enforce this right.
- Citizens suffering injury, loss, or hardship due to absence of footpaths, encroached footpaths, and poorly maintained pedestrian infrastructure, can seek **constitutional remedies, restitution, compensation from public authorities**.
- This remedy is independent of the remedies that are available under the **Motor Vehicles (MV) Act, 1988**.

Constitutional Basis

- The right to walk is a fundamental right under Part III of the Constitution. It is integral to the right to movement guaranteed under Article 19(1)(d), read with Article 19(1)(a), Article 19(1)(b), Article 19(1)(c) and Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

Significance

- **Re-centres Urban Planning Around People:** Indian cities have largely prioritised motor vehicles through flyovers, wider roads and parking infrastructure. The judgment shifts the focus towards pedestrians, who constitute a significant share of daily commuters.
- **Strengthens Road Safety:** Poor pedestrian infrastructure contributes significantly to road fatalities. The ruling complements the Court's earlier recognition of the right to safe travel and safe commuting under Article 21.
- **Advances Inclusive Mobility:** Benefits children, elderly persons, women, persons with disabilities and economically weaker sections who rely heavily on walking. Reinforces the need for universal accessibility in urban design.

Challenges on the Ground

- **Encroachment of Footpaths:** Sidewalks are frequently occupied by vendors, parked vehicles, utility structures and commercial extensions. This forces pedestrians onto roads, increasing accident risks.
- **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Many roads either lack footpaths or have poorly maintained, discontinuous and unsafe sidewalks. Broken pavements, open manholes and inaccessible designs reduce walkability.
- **Weak Urban Governance:** Responsibility is fragmented among municipal bodies, development authorities, traffic police and public works departments. Poor coordination leads to ineffective implementation.

Judicial Evolution of Pedestrian Rights

- In earlier rulings, the Supreme Court had recognised that the right to use footpaths and footways is an integral part of Article 21.
- The Court also directed governments to ensure unobstructed and disabled-friendly footpaths and remove encroachments.

11TH Governing Council Meeting Of Niti Aayog

Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired the 11th Governing Council Meeting of NITI Aayog.

The theme of the meeting was “Inclusive Human Development for Viksit Bharat @2047”.

It was attended by Chief Ministers, Lt. Governors and Administrators representing 28 States and 5 UTs. This was the first time when Chief Ministers of all 28 States participated in the Governing Council Meeting of NITI Aayog.

Key Highlights of the Meeting

- **4 core pillars:** Foundational Human Capital & Future-Ready Skills; Productive Employment, Entrepreneurship & Decentralised Growth; Health, Nutrition and Well-being; and Equity & Dignity for All.
- States were encouraged to adopt outcome-oriented approaches for improving human development indicators.
- **Cooperative Federalism:** The Governing Council served as a platform for Centre-State collaboration and sharing of best practices. States and UTs presented their development strategies aligned with the national vision of Viksit Bharat @2047.
 - The meeting reiterated the importance of preparing long-term state development visions that align with national priorities while reflecting local needs and aspirations.
- **Focus Areas Discussed:**
 - Job creation and employability: States were urged to focus on export strategies surrounding the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative
 - Skilling and workforce readiness.
 - Improving learning outcomes.
 - Strengthening healthcare systems: focusing elderly care and women's development programs
 - Inclusive and sustainable development: Promoted policies targeted at women-led growth (Eg. Lakhpati Didis), water conservation, natural farming, and addressing grassroots inequalities
 - State-specific development roadmaps.

NITI AAYOG

Aspect	Details
Status	Executive body
Established	1 January 2015
Basis	Union Cabinet Resolution
Nature	Neither Constitutional nor Statutory body

Objective

- Serve as the Government of India's premier public policy think tank.
- Promote cooperative and competitive federalism.
- Provide strategic and technical advice to governments.

Key Features

- Bottom-up planning approach.
- State participation in policymaking.
- Focus on innovation, entrepreneurship and evidence-based governance.
- Acts as a catalyst rather than a fund-allocation body (unlike its predecessor- Planning Commission).

About the NITI Aayog Governing Council

Composition

The Governing Council is the apex body of NITI Aayog and comprises:

- Prime Minister (Chairperson).
- Chief Ministers of all States.
- Chief Ministers of Union Territories with legislatures.
- Lieutenant Governors/Administrators of Union Territories.
- Vice-Chairperson and Members of NITI Aayog.
- Special invitees nominated by the Prime Minister.

Functions

- Fosters cooperative federalism.
- Evolves a shared national development agenda.
- Provides a platform for Centre-State consultations.
- Resolves inter-sectoral and inter-governmental issues.
- Encourages exchange of best practices among States.

Temporary Restriction On Telegram During NEET-UG Re-Examination

The Central Government temporarily restricted access to **Telegram in India** ahead of the **NEET-UG 2026** re-examination, following allegations that the platform was being used to circulate leaked question papers, coordinate cheating networks and spread misinformation. The restriction was imposed at the request of the **National Testing Agency (NTA)** and remained in force until after the re-examination.

Background

- The original **NEET-UG 2026 examination** was cancelled due to allegations of paper leaks and examination malpractices.
- Investigations indicated that **Telegram channels** were allegedly being used by organised rackets to:
 - Disseminate leaked question papers.
 - Communicate with middlemen and candidates.
 - Circulate fabricated "proof" of paper leaks after the examination to mislead students and authorities.
- Following the cancellation, Telegram channels openly began offering candidates purported access to the re-examination paper, demanding fees ranging from a few thousand to several lakh rupees.
 - Some channels were brazenly named — **"PAPER LEAKED NEET", "Re-NEET 2026", "Private Mafia", and "REE NEET MAFIAA."**
 - The NTA clarified that no actual papers were available outside the secured examination chain. The channels were running fraud operations, exploiting anxious students and parents.



Legal and Constitutional Issues



Violation of rights: The restriction revived the debate on balancing national interest and examination integrity with **freedom of speech** and access to digital platforms.

- ◆ Telegram challenged the blocking order before the Delhi High Court, arguing that the restriction disproportionately affected millions of legitimate users and was not the **least restrictive measure** available.



Delhi High Court's Decision: It upheld the temporary restriction & held that:

- ◆ The Government had complied with the procedural safeguards under Section 69A of the IT Act.
- ◆ The restriction satisfied the **test of proportionality**, as it pursued a legitimate objective, had a rational nexus with that objective, was necessary in the prevailing circumstances and was limited in duration.



Test of Proportionality

Any restriction on fundamental rights must pursue a legitimate objective, have a rational connection with that objective, be necessary, and constitute the least restrictive measure available.

Concerns



A platform-wide restriction affects millions of users who are unconnected with examination malpractice.



Malicious actors may simply migrate to other digital platforms, limiting the long-term effectiveness of such measures.



Frequent resort to blanket platform restrictions could raise concerns regarding digital rights, freedom of expression and proportionality in internet governance.

Way Forward



Strengthen end-to-end security of examination processes through encrypted logistics, real-time monitoring and AI-based surveillance.



Improve coordination between examination authorities and digital intermediaries for rapid removal of illegal content.



Use targeted takedown orders and forensic investigations wherever feasible instead of broad platform restrictions.



Fully implement the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024 to deter organised examination fraud through stricter penalties and accountability.

Government's Action

- The **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** issued a blocking order under **Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000**.
- Telegram was also directed to disable its message-editing feature in India for previously posted messages until **30 June 2026**, as authorities believed this feature could be used to alter messages retrospectively and fabricate evidence relating to question paper leaks.

Section 69A, Information Technology Act, 2000

Empowers the Central Government to block online information or services in the interests of sovereignty, integrity, security of the State, public order or for preventing incitement to cognisable offences.

12 Years Of Panchayat Reforms & Innovation

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj released a report highlighting 12 years of reforms and innovations aimed at strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) through institutional reforms, digital governance, fiscal empowerment and capacity building, in line with the vision of Viksit Bharat.

Title: *Building Viksit Bharat from Ground Up: 12 Years of Panchayat Reforms and Innovation*",

Key Achievements

Strengthening Capacity and Local Governance

- Under the **Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)**, over 4.10 crore elected representatives and Panchayat functionaries from more than 2.70 lakh PRIs have been trained.
 - Between FY 2022–23 and FY 2025–26, over **33.55 lakh women elected representatives** received training to enhance leadership, governance and service delivery.
 - More than 25,100 Gram Panchayat buildings and 61,000 computers have been provided to strengthen **physical and digital infrastructure**.
- **Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs)** have been institutionalised across more than 2.55 lakh Gram Panchayats, with planning integrated through the e-GramSwaraj platform.

Digital Transformation of Panchayats

- The **SVAMITVA Scheme** has enabled **drone-based surveys** and the distribution of ~3.18 crore property cards across 1.92 lakh villages, reducing property disputes and improving access to institutional credit.
- More than **2.59 lakh Panchayats** have been integrated into the e-Panchayat ecosystem.
- Integration with the **Public Financial Management System (PFMS)** has enabled real-time monitoring of Panchayat finances.
- **Online transactions** worth over ₹3.16 lakh crore have been processed through the integrated digital platform.
- The **Meri Panchayat App** has crossed one crore downloads, enhancing citizen participation and access to local governance information.

Empowerment of Tribal

Communities, Women and Youth

- To strengthen implementation of the **Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA)**, the Ministry has:
 - Developed seven specialised training manuals in tribal languages.
 - Launched the PESA-GPDP (Gram Panchayat Development Plan) Portal.
 - Established a Centre of Excellence for PESA.
 - Introduced India's first PESA Ranking Framework.
- Under the **Sashakt Panchayat-Netri Abhiyan**, leadership capacities of elected women representatives are being strengthened.
- **744 Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayats** have been identified, and the Nirbhay Raho Campaign has been launched to promote women's safety and participation in governance.
- The **Model Youth Gram Sabha (MYGS) initiative** engaged over 29,000 students across residential schools, Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas and Eklavya Model Residential Schools, to foster civic awareness and democratic participation in line with the National Education Policy 2020.

Fiscal Empowerment of Panchayats

- During the **15th Finance Commission (2020–26)** period, ₹2.82 lakh crore (about 94.98% of the allocated grants) was released to Rural Local Bodies.
- The **16th Finance Commission** has recommended ₹4,35,236 crore for Rural Local Bodies for 2026–27 to 2030–31, representing an 84% increase over the previous award period.
- The **SAMARTH Panchayat Portal** and the **Atmanirbhar Panchayat Programme** have been launched to strengthen Own Source Revenue (OSR) mobilisation and promote financial self-reliance of Panchayats.

Technology and AI in Rural Governance

- The **Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI)**, launched in April 2025, evaluates Panchayat performance across the nine themes of Localised Sustainable Development Goals (LSDGs) and covers over 2.59 lakh Gram Panchayats.
 - The PAI received the Gold Award at the **National Awards for e-Governance (NAeG) 2026**.
- The **AI-enabled SabhaSaar platform** automatically generates Gram Sabha Minutes in 23 Indian languages. More than 1.35 lakh Panchayats have generated over 3 lakh minutes using the platform.
- India's a **Gram Panchayat-level weather forecasting initiative** developed with IMD and the Ministry of Earth Sciences, provides hyperlocal weather information to rural communities.

Haryana–Rajasthan MOU On 1994 Upper Yamuna Water Agreement

- Haryana and Rajasthan have signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) to operationalise the long-pending 1994 Upper Yamuna Water Sharing Agreement, paving the way for the **Yamuna Water Project** after nearly 32 years.
- The agreement provides for the supply of Rajasthan's allocated share of Yamuna waters through a dedicated underground pipeline, marking a significant step towards resolving a long-standing **inter-State water issue** through **cooperative federalism**.

Background: 1994 Upper Yamuna Water Agreement

- The **MoU** on the Sharing of the Utilisable Surface Waters of the Upper Yamuna Basin was signed on 12 May 1994.
- It apportioned the utilisable waters of the **Upper Yamuna** among the basin States and the **National Capital Territory of Delhi**.
- The agreement envisaged cooperative management of the river basin and provided for the establishment of the **Upper Yamuna River Board (UYRB)** to oversee implementation.

Water Allocation under the 1994 Agreement

The agreement provides that Delhi's drinking water requirements receive priority before allocation of the remaining waters among the States.

Key Highlights of the New MoA

- Haryana will facilitate the supply of Rajasthan's allocated share of Yamuna water as per the 1994 Agreement.
- Water will be conveyed through a dedicated underground pipeline originating from the Western Yamuna Canal, instead of constructing a new canal.
- The Yamuna Water Project, estimated to cost around ₹34,102 crore, is expected to provide a long-term solution for water supply to Rajasthan.
- The agreement was signed in the presence of the Union Home Minister and the Union Minister for Jal Shakti, reflecting the Centre's role in facilitating cooperative federalism.

State/UT	Share of Utilisable Water
Haryana	47.82%
Uttar Pradesh	33.65%
Rajasthan	9.84%
Delhi	6.24%
Himachal Pradesh	3.15%

Constitutional Provisions

Provision	Significance
Article 262	Empowers Parliament to provide for adjudication of disputes relating to inter-State river waters and to exclude the jurisdiction of courts in such disputes.
Entry 17, State List	Water is primarily a State subject (subject to Entry 56 of the Union List).
Entry 56, Union List	Parliament may regulate and develop inter-State rivers and river valleys in the public interest.

Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956 (Article 262)

- Provides for the establishment of **Water Disputes Tribunals** for adjudicating inter-State river disputes.
- Following the **Inter-State River Water Disputes (Amendment) Act, 2019**, the law provides for:
 - A **Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC)** to attempt amicable settlement through negotiations within one year (extendable by six months) before reference to a Tribunal.
 - A single permanent Inter-State River Water Disputes Tribunal with multiple benches (yet to be operationalised).

Upper Yamuna River Board (UYRB)

Aspect	Details
Established/ Basis	1995/ 1994 Upper Yamuna Water Agreement
Administrative Ministry	Ministry of Jal Shakti
Objective	Regulate allocation of Upper Yamuna waters and supervise implementation of the Agreement

Gender Quota In Higher Judiciary: Breaking The Glass Ceiling

The appointment of **Justice V. Mohana** as only the second woman to be directly elevated from the Bar to the Supreme Court has revived the debate on introducing a gender quota in the higher judiciary to address the persistent underrepresentation of women.

- She follows **Indu Malhotra**, who became the first woman to be directly elevated from the Bar to the Supreme Court in 2018.

Background

- Despite constitutional guarantees of equality, women remain significantly underrepresented in the higher judiciary.
- Since 1950, only 12 women have been appointed to the Supreme Court.
- Direct appointments from the Bar have predominantly favoured men, reflecting structural barriers rather than a lack of merit.

Present Status of Women in the Higher Judiciary

- Even after Justice Mohana's appointment, only **2 of the 37 Supreme Court judges** are women (~5.4%).
- Women constitute **~15% of High Court judges**, indicating limited representation at the constitutional court level.
- Representation is comparatively **higher in the subordinate judiciary**, particularly in States that provide reservation for women.

International Best Practices

- Constitutional courts in **Canada, Germany and Belgium** have achieved around 50% women judges, demonstrating the feasibility of institutional measures to improve diversity.

Structural Barriers Faced by Women



- The higher judiciary suffers from a "**glass ceiling**", where invisible institutional barriers restrict women from reaching the highest judicial offices.
- The **pipeline problem** persists, as relatively fewer women reach senior positions at the Bar, from where judges are commonly elevated.
- **Limited mentorship, gender stereotypes, work-life balance challenges** and unequal access to high-profile litigation reduce opportunities for elevation.
- The **opaque Collegium system** offers little scope to systematically address gender imbalance.



Arguments in Favour of a Gender Quota



- Helps correct **historical and institutional underrepresentation** of women.
- Improves **diversity (varied perspective), legitimacy and public confidence** in the judiciary.
- Creates **role models for future generations** of women lawyers.
- Moves beyond **formal equality** towards **substantive equality**.
- Reservation for women in the subordinate judiciary in several States has demonstrated that **affirmative action can improve representation**.

Concerns Regarding a Gender Quota

- Critics argue that judicial appointments should primarily be based on **merit**.
- Mandatory quotas may be perceived as limiting the **Collegium's discretion**.
- Numerical representation alone may not **eliminate deeper structural barriers** in the legal profession.
- Long-term reforms in **legal education, mentorship and career progression** remain equally important.



- **Belgium** mandates that at least one-third of the judges of its Constitutional Court belong to each gender.
- **South Africa's** Constitution requires that the judiciary broadly reflect the country's racial and gender composition; its Constitutional Court currently has a women-majority bench.

Reform Suggestions

- Adopt a written policy to progressively increase women's representation in constitutional courts.
- Introduce transparent and objective criteria for judicial appointments.
- Expand mentorship opportunities and leadership roles for women advocates.
- Strengthen gender-sensitive infrastructure and workplace conditions within the legal profession.

Passport Is Not Conclusive Proof Of Citizenship

The **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** clarified that an Indian passport is not a conclusive proof of Indian citizenship and is primarily a **travel document**.

The clarification came amid questions on whether a passport could be relied upon as proof of citizenship in the context of the **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** of electoral rolls being undertaken in several States.

Government's Clarification

- A passport is issued to facilitate international travel and establish the holder's identity abroad.
- While passports are ordinarily issued **only after verification of citizenship**, the passport itself **does not** confer or conclusively **establish citizenship**.
- Citizenship is determined under the **Citizenship Act, 1955** and not under the **Passports Act, 1967**.

Judicial Position

- **Izhar Ahmad Khan v. Union of India (1962)**: The Supreme Court treated possession of a Pakistani passport as strong evidence of Pakistani citizenship in the facts of that case.
- **Razia Begum Case (2008)**: The Supreme Court held that mere possession of an Indian passport is not conclusive proof of Indian citizenship.
- **Bombay High Court**: Has consistently held that a passport is primarily a travel document, and citizenship must be determined under the Citizenship Act.

Challenges

- Public perception has long treated passports as definitive proof of citizenship.
- Lack of a universal citizenship document can create uncertainty in legal and administrative proceedings.
- Different authorities may require different combinations of documents depending on the context.

Way Forward

- Issue clear and uniform guidelines on documentary evidence required in citizenship-related proceedings.

Legal Basis of Citizenship

- Governed by:
 - Articles 5–11 of the Constitution.
 - Citizenship Act, 1955.
- Citizenship can be acquired by:
 - Birth,
 - Descent,
 - Registration,
 - Naturalisation,
 - Incorporation of territory.

Legal basis of Passport

- Governed by the Passports Act, 1967.
- Issued primarily as a travel document.
- The Act itself contemplates situations where certain travel documents may be issued in exceptional cases, reinforcing that passport issuance and citizenship determination are distinct legal concepts.

Why is a Passport Not Conclusive Proof?

- India has no single universal citizenship document.
- A passport is strong evidence of citizenship but not conclusive proof if citizenship is challenged before a competent authority or court.
- Government-issued documents establish identity or facilitate services, but citizenship is ultimately determined under the Citizenship Act based on facts and evidence.

What About Other Government Documents?

Document	Purpose	Proof of Citizenship?
Passport	International travel	No (not conclusive)
Aadhaar	Identity and residence	No
Voter ID	Electoral identity	No
PAN Card	Tax identification	No
Driving Licence	Driving authorisation	No
Birth Certificate	Evidence relevant for citizenship by birth (subject to the Citizenship Act)	Not by itself conclusive in every case

- Strengthen birth registration and civil registration systems to improve documentary evidence for citizenship claims.
- Improve public awareness regarding the distinction between identity documents and citizenship.
- Ensure that citizenship verification processes remain transparent, fair and consistent with constitutional and statutory safeguards.

Legal Status Of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)

The legal status of the **Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)** has come under public debate following questions over why India's largest socio-cultural organisation continues to function without registration under any specific statute, despite its extensive nationwide presence.

What is the RSS?

- It was founded in 1925 by **Keshav Baliram Hedgewar**.
- It describes itself as a **voluntary socio-cultural organisation** engaged in character-building, social service and nation-building activities.
- It is **not a political party**, does not contest elections and is distinct from political organisations.

Legal Position of the RSS

- The RSS is not a statutory body.
- It is not a constitutional body.
- It is not registered under:
 - the Societies Registration Act, 1860,
 - the Indian Trusts Act, 1882, or
 - Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013.
- The RSS functions as a **voluntary association of individuals** and is not legally required to register under any central law merely because it exists as an association.
- The absence of registration **does not make an organisation illegal**. Its legal status depends on whether its activities comply with the Constitution and applicable laws.
- **Registration becomes necessary only if an organisation seeks a legal status** under a specific statute—for example, to own property in its own name, receive foreign contributions, or obtain statutory benefits under laws governing societies, trusts or companies.
- Because the RSS is not registered under the **Societies Registration Act (1860), the Indian Trusts Act (1882), or the Companies Act (2013)**, it lacks this distinct "juristic personality."
- Instead, Indian courts and tax authorities officially recognize the **RSS as a Body of Individuals (BOI)**.
 - A BOI is a group of individuals who come together for a common purpose or activity and are treated as a separate taxable entity under Section 2(31) of the Income Tax Act, 1961. It is only a tax classification and does not confer legal personality or registration.
- The primary source of funding for the RSS is "Guru Dakshina" (voluntary annual financial offerings) made by its swayamsevaks.
 - In the 1970s, the Income Tax department attempted to tax these funds.
 - However, Patna High Court in Commissioner of Income-Tax v. RSS (1994) ruled in favor of RSS.

Legal Recognition of the RSS

- The RSS has been recognised by courts and tax authorities as a legal entity capable of:
 - owning movable assets through recognised legal arrangements,
 - maintaining bank accounts,
 - entering into legal proceedings,
 - paying taxes where applicable.
- Various affiliated organisations of the Sangh Parivar are separately registered under relevant laws according to the nature of their activities.

Arguments Supporting the Existing Legal Status

- **Freedom of association** under Article 19(1)(c) allows citizens to form associations without mandating registration.
- Many informal associations function lawfully **without statutory registration**.
- Registration is a matter of **legal convenience** rather than a constitutional requirement.
- **Courts** have not held that the RSS is required to register merely because of its size or influence.

Arguments for Mandatory Registration

- A nationwide organisation handling substantial finances should be subject to **greater transparency and public accountability**.
- Registration may facilitate clearer disclosure of **governance structures, finances and regulatory compliance**.
- **Uniform regulation** of large voluntary organisations could strengthen public confidence and oversight.

Navachar Mantra

- The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) has launched Navachar Mantra.
- It is a national initiative focused on **strengthening grassroots entrepreneurship** and expanding opportunities for innovators across India, with a special focus on innovators from **Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, aspirational districts and rural areas**.
- The programme is being implemented by the **National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business**

Development (NIESBUD), with **Foundation for Innovation and Technology Transfer (FITT)**, **IIT Delhi** serving as the **Technical Knowledge Partner**.

Details of the initiative

- It has been designed as a **structured support ecosystem for innovators** working in priority sectors such as AgriTech, HealthTech, EdTech and Skilling, Climate and Sustainability, Rural Commerce and MSME Enablement.
- It seeks to create opportunities for innovators through **collaboration between government, academia, and industry**.
- Innovators will gain direct access to policymakers, industry leaders, investors, and domain experts, enabling them to refine their ideas, strengthen business models, and accelerate growth.
- After receiving the applications, a multi-stage evaluation process involving experts from academia, industry, investment firms and government institutions will be conducted to identify high-potential ventures.
- It is expected to attract innovators from across the country, particularly those developing solutions to **address local challenges and generate community impact**.
- Selected innovators will participate in a **year-long engagement programme** that includes mentorship roundtables, thematic webinars, innovation showcases, investor interactions, and national-level storytelling platforms.
- Participants will receive guidance on business development, market access, regulatory compliance, intellectual property management, fundraising, and scaling strategies.
- The programme will also facilitate pilot projects, partnerships, and market linkages to help innovators transform ideas into sustainable enterprises.
- A major component of Navachar Mantra is its focus on **visibility and recognition**.
- Selected innovators will receive national exposure through ministerial podcasts, innovation showcases, digital campaigns and ecosystem events, providing them with opportunities to share their work with a wider audience.

Record High Of Seafood Exports

- India's seafood exports registered an **all-time high in both volume and value** during FY 2025-26 despite challenging global market conditions.
- India exported **19.72 lakh metric tonnes (MT)** of seafood valued at Rs 73,890.46 crore (USD 8.46 billion) during FY 2025–26.
- **Frozen shrimp** remained the **leading export item**. It accounted for 40.19% of the total export quantity and 66.52% of the total export earnings.
- The United States remained the largest market for frozen shrimp imports from India, followed by China, European Union, Southeast Asia, Japan and the Middle East.
- Frozen fish emerged as the second-largest exported seafood item, followed by dried seafood products.
- The **United States** remained the leading importer of Indian seafood in **value terms**, with imports worth USD 2,328.7 million and a total volume of 2.79 lakh MT.
- **China** emerged as the largest destination for Indian seafood exports **in terms of quantity**, importing **4.9 lakh MT** worth USD 1,611.3 million.
- The **top three ports** handling seafood export cargo were Visakhapatnam (Vizag), Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT), and Kochi.

Logistics Port Performance Index

- The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) has launched the Logistics Port Performance Index (LPPI) for FY 2024-25.
- Developed under the **Sagar Aankalan framework**, LPPI is a **national benchmarking mechanism** designed to assess and improve the operational performance of Indian ports.
- The index aligns with the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan, Maritime India Vision 2030 and Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047, and seeks to strengthen India's position in global logistics and maritime trade.
- It is a major step towards improving the efficiency, transparency ease of doing business & global competitiveness of Indian ports.
- The LPPI evaluates ports across **three cargo segments dry bulk, liquid bulk and container cargo**.
 - The evaluation uses **operational indicators** such as cargo handled, vessel turnaround time, berth idle time, pre-berthing waiting time, container dwell time & ship berth day output.
- The framework assigns equal weightage to absolute performance and year-on-year improvement, encouraging continuous enhancement of port operations.

Top Performers

- Among major performers, **Paradip Port Authority** topped the **Dry Bulk Cargo category** handling more than 5 million tonnes, while **Sikka Port and Terminals** led the **Liquid Bulk Cargo** segment.
- **Mundra Port** emerged as the **highest-ranked port in the Container Cargo** category handling more than 0.5 million Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit (TEU). Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority secured the second position.

Global Logistics Performance

- India's ranking in the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index has improved from **44th to 22nd position in the International Shipments category**.
- **7 Indian ports** featured among the **world's top 100 ports** in the World Bank's Container Port Performance Index 2024.



Digital Initiatives for shipping



The MoPSW has launched **four digital initiatives** developed by the **Directorate General of Shipping (DGS)** to improve service delivery, transparency and accountability for seafarers and maritime stakeholders.

- **24*7 Grievance Redressal Module:** Seafarers work far away from home, often under difficult and uncertain conditions. An effective grievance redressal mechanism is not merely an administrative necessity but a critical welfare and protection framework.

- The system would allow grievances to be filed through multiple channels, including the **e-Navik portal**, toll-free helplines, WhatsApp and dedicated email services from anywhere in the world.

- **Ship Registration Module:** The module on the **e-Samudra platform** would simplify flagging and vessel registration procedures and bring India's maritime administration in line with major global shipping nations

- **Medical Practitioner Module:** It would streamline the registration and monitoring of doctors authorised to certify seafarers, while reducing the risk of fraudulent certifications.

- **Unified Ship Recycling Credit Note Module:** It is designed to streamline and digitize the financial and transactional processes associated with ship recycling activities. It aims to create a secure, standardized and efficient framework for the ship recycling ecosystem.

- The module is developed for the **Ship Recycling Credit scheme**, part of the Government's Rs 70,000-crore maritime development package announced in 2025.



India Becomes Top Ship Recycling Nation

- India has emerged as the world's leading ship recycling nation in 2025, ranking first globally.
- According to the latest report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), India's share of global ship recycling **increased to 35.4% in 2025 from 30.1% in 2024**.
- Ship recycling in India rose significantly to **2.99 million gross tons (GT) in 2025, up nearly 60% from 1.86 million GT in 2024**.

- With this, the target set under Maritime India Vision (MIV) 2030 to become the world's leading ship recycling nation has been achieved well ahead of schedule.

Guideline for District Domestic Product Estimates

- The National Statistics Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI), has released the finalized “Guideline for Compilation of District Domestic Product (DDP) Estimates”, with **base year 2022-23**.
- The guideline provides a comprehensive and uniform framework for compilation of District Domestic Product (DDP) estimates across States and UTs.
- Its **objective** is to ensure consistency, comparability, and methodological standardization in district level economic estimates under the revised base year framework.
- The document elaborates on the concepts, coverage, data sources, estimation procedures and methodologies for compilation of Gross District Domestic Product (GDDP), Net District Domestic Product (NDDP), and Per Capita Income at district level.
- It primarily advocates a **bottom-up approach** for compiling DDP estimates wherever district-level data is available.
- In sectors where district-wise information is not adequately available, appropriate top-down approaches have been recommended to derive district level estimates in a consistent manner.
- At present, 26 States/UTs are compiling DDP estimates. MoSPI is making efforts to onboard all States/UTs.

Impact

- The guideline is expected to facilitate **harmonization of estimation practices** across States/UTs and **strengthen the institutional framework** for preparation of district level economic statistics.
- The availability of reliable and comparable DDP estimates will support decentralized planning, evidence-based policy formulation, regional development analysis and informed decision-making using district level estimates.

Key Government Initiatives

Hong Kong Convention Compliance

- The Union Government enacted the **Recycling of Ships Act, 2019**, to develop a ship recycling ecosystem aligned with the Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships (HKC), which India ratified in 2019.
 - HKC is a global treaty adopted under the International Maritime Organization (IMO). It ensures that ships, when recycled after reaching the end of their operational life, do not pose unnecessary risks to human health, safety or the environment.
- The government has provided **financial assistance of Rs 53.5 crore** to support the modernisation of ship recycling yards, helping 115 facilities become HKC-compliant.

Ship-breaking Credit Note Scheme

- MoPSW launched the Ship-breaking Credit Note Scheme, under which ship owners receive a **credit note equivalent to 40% of the scrap value of a recycled ship**.
- The credit note can be utilised toward **payment of up to 5% of the value of a new vessel** built at an Indian shipyard, thereby promoting both ship recycling and domestic shipbuilding.

Stakeholder Engagement

- MoPSW regularly engages with the Gujarat Maritime Board, the Ship Recycling Industries Association, global shipping companies, cash buyers, classification societies and international organisations to identify challenges and implement targeted solutions.

Inclusion Under European Union Ship Recycling Regulations (EUSRR)

- The government is actively pursuing the inclusion of Indian ship recycling yards in the European Union's approved list of recycling facilities. Continuous engagement with relevant authorities is underway to facilitate approvals.

Expansion of Alang Ship Recycling Yard

- India aims to nearly double its ship recycling capacity to about 9 million light displacement tons (LDT) through the planned expansion of the Alang Ship Recycling Yard.
- A comprehensive master plan has been prepared to support future demand, improve infrastructure and enhance India's competitiveness in the global market.

Sustainable Ship Recycling Future

- India's rise in global ship recycling is the result of a coordinated strategy focused on sustainability, regulatory reforms, infrastructure development and industry collaboration.
- According to the Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO), more than 16,000 vessels are expected to be recycled globally over the next decade.
- India is well-positioned to recycle ~500 to 600 vessels annually while continuing to expand its ship recycling capacity.
- With strong future demand, increasing compliance with international standards and continued government support, India is well-positioned to strengthen its leadership while advancing the objectives of the circular economy and sustainable maritime development.

Mission Senehgori

The Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region has launched Mission Senehgori for Assam Muga Silk.

Details of the Mission

- The Mission is launched in collaboration with the **Government of Assam, the Central Silk Board, the Ministry of Textiles** and other central ministries/agencies,
- It is a comprehensive **cluster-based initiative** aimed at transforming Assam's unique Muga silk sector into a **globally competitive, high-value luxury textile ecosystem**.
- It seeks to **strengthen the entire Muga silk value chain** from host-plant cultivation and silkworm seed production to reeling, weaving, branding, export promotion, digital traceability and tourism promotion.
- It will promote Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), establish Common Facility Centres and enforce GI authentication under the unified Senehgori brand.
- With an estimated **investment of Rs 396–411 crore** over a three-year period, it aims to achieve several key outcomes by 2028:
 - Establishment of five modernized Muga reeling units and a Muga Spun Mill;
 - Creation of 30 FPOs and over 1,180 Farmer Interest Groups;
 - Regeneration of 5,000 hectares of Som and Soalu host plants;
 - Authentication of over 80% of traded Muga silk through GI-linked systems;
 - Creation of digital traceability mechanisms for more than 8,000 households; and
 - Expansion of Muga silk exports to over 2,000 kilograms annually.
- It also seeks to promote the cultural economy through development of a **Muga Silk Trail**, establishment of a **Silk Tourism Park** and organisation of **annual Muga Utsav festivals**, positioning Assam as a premier destination for silk heritage tourism.

Impact

The mission would create new opportunities for farmers, weavers, artisans, and entrepreneurs while preserving the state's rich cultural heritage.



Muga Silk

- Muga silk is known as the world's **only naturally golden silk** and is **India's first GI-tagged silk**.
- **Assam produces around 90% of the world's Muga silk**. It supports nearly 2.6 lakh rearer and weaver families in Assam.
- Muga silk is not merely a textile product but a cultural and civilizational heritage asset.
- Despite its rarity and global recognition, the sector remains under-monetized, with many producers earning only Rs 18,000–21,000 annually.
- Mission Senehgori seeks to bridge this value gap by creating a premium, traceable, and export-oriented Muga silk economy.

Central Silk Board

- CSB is a **statutory body under the Ministry of Textiles**, established in 1948 under an Act of the Parliament.
- **Headquartered in Bengaluru**, CSB is the sole organisation for comprehensive **sericulture** R&D and it coordinates development programs across the country.
- India is the only country in the world which produces all the four major varieties of silk i.e. Mulberry, Eri, Tassar, and Muga.
- India is the **second largest producer of silk** after China and the **largest consumer** of silk in the world.



Credit Guarantee Scheme for Microfinance Institutions-2.0

- The Central Government has approved extension of the Credit Guarantee Scheme for Microfinance Institutions-2.0 (CGSMFI-2.0) up to August 31, 2026 or till guarantees for an amount of Rs 20,000 crore are issued, whichever is earlier.
- The **maximum loan amount limit** to large Non-Banking Financial Company-Microfinance Institutions (NBFC-MFIs)/MFIs has been **increased from Rs 300 crores to Rs 1000 crores** under the overall ceiling of 20% of Assets under Management (AUM).

- The above changes are expected to result in better utilisation of the scheme and facilitate increased credit flow to the MFI sector.

Jan Samarth portal

- The **Jan Samarth portal** completed 4 years of digital financial inclusion and seamless credit delivery.
- **Launched in 2022**, Jan Samarth is a digital portal for credit-linked government schemes.
- It **directly connects lenders with beneficiaries**, simplifying access to institutional credit through technology-driven and user-friendly processes.
- It provides a unified digital gateway for **16 credit-linked Central Government schemes**, covering **diverse sectors** including agriculture, business, housing, renewable energy, and livelihoods.
- The portal has also on-boarded **269 Member Lending Institutions** including public and private banks, Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFCs), rural banks and co-operative banks.
- It is available in **8 different languages** for ease of access to rural and underprivileged population in the country.
- The portal facilitates real-time checks with Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), Goods and Services Tax (GST), UDYAM, Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), CIBIL, AgriStack, Kisan Rin Portal, Startup Portal etc. to ensure faster loan processing.

Impact

- The portal has emerged as a key digital platform for expanding access to institutional credit across the country.
- As of June 2026, around **54.10 lakh applications** amounting to **Rs 3,00,951 crore** have been processed through the portal.
- Further, banks have given digital approvals to 49.55 lakh beneficiaries involving an amount of Rs 2.76 lakh crore.

ATF Price Stabilisation Fund

The Union Cabinet has announced a Rs 10,000-crore Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) Price Stabilisation Fund.

Benefits

- The proposed mechanism will provide **enhanced stability and predictability in ATF pricing** by adopting a fixed-price arrangement for Indian airlines, enabling better operational and financial planning.

Details of the scheme

- Launched in March 2026, the scheme aims to **provide guarantee cover to banks and financial institutions** through National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC).
- The guarantee cover is provided against expected losses on financial assistance extended by them to NBFC-MFIs and MFIs for lending to small borrowers.
- Till now, loans totalling Rs 770 crore have been sanctioned under the scheme.
- **Eligible borrowers:** Existing or new small borrowers within the regulatory definition of micro finance as prescribed by RBI.
- **Guarantee coverage:** 80% of amount in default for small, 75% for medium and 70% for large NBFC-MFIs/ MFIs.
 - Unlike the earlier scheme which offered a flat 75% coverage, CGSMFI-2.0 variable structure promotes balanced credit distribution & supports smaller MFIs more effectively.
- **MFI classification:** MFIs are classified based on Assets Under Management (AUM). This categorization determines guarantee coverage, loan limits, and risk allocation under the scheme. The classification is:
 - Small size: AUM less than Rs 500 crore;
 - Medium size: Rs 500 crore to < Rs 2,000 crore;
 - Large size: Rs 2,000 crore or more.
- The maximum loan that can be sanctioned by MLIs (Member Lending Institutions) is capped at 20% of the MFI's AUM, subject to absolute limits. These limits are:
 - ₹100 crore for Small MFIs
 - ₹200 crore for Medium MFIs
 - ₹1000 crore for Large MFIs
- Further, at least 5% of total loans should be sanctioned to small MFIs and 10% to medium MFIs, ensuring equitable credit distribution.

- Stable airline operations help **sustain employment** across airlines, airports, ground handling agencies, MROs, travel agencies, hospitality and logistics sectors.
- It will **shield OMCs from losses** arising from volatile and elevated ATF prices.
- It will **reduce the pass-through of fuel price shocks to passengers**, thereby helping to moderate fare volatility.
- It will **support continued air connectivity** to remote, regional, Tier-II and Tier-III cities, promoting balanced regional development and inclusive growth.

Background

- Due to the ongoing West Asia crisis, international ATF prices have **surged nearly 2.5 times in the last three months**.
- ATF accounts for nearly **40% of an airline's operating cost**. Since **ATF prices are deregulated** in India, Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) can raise prices when global fuel prices rise.
- Therefore, this volatility in ATF prices has resulted in high cost pressure on airlines.
- Due to this, long-haul passenger fares have increased substantially, international demand has declined and airlines have reduced or suspended services on several routes.
- ATF prices for domestic operations were hiked by 9% in April this year and have remained unchanged in May.
- Due to this, State-run OMCs are presently incurring under-recovery of Rs 30 on every litre of ATF for domestic operations.

Price Stabilisation Fund details

- The arrangement will be implemented through an MoU between participating Indian airlines and OMCs, with the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas as signatories.
- It is a **one-time budgetary support** of up to Rs 10,000 crore to be provided as an **interest-free advance to OMCs** to support ATF price stabilisation to **scheduled Indian airlines for both domestic and international operations**.
- The corpus shall compensate OMCs for losses arising from elevated international ATF prices.
- When international ATF prices moderate, the differential amount shall be recovered from OMCs and returned to the Consolidated Fund of India.
- Under this one-time arrangement, participating airlines will procure ATF only from OMCs for up to **three years**, subject to annual review or until the advance amount is fully recovered, whichever is earlier.

Drop In Bitumen Imports

- The ongoing conflict in West Asia has hit India's push to expand road infrastructure, as bitumen imports have been impacted.
- India requires almost **90 lakh tonnes of bitumen annually**. Of this, around 54 lakh tonnes are produced domestically in the refineries of oil companies like IndianOil and Bharat Petroleum.
- The shortfall is met by imports from West Asia. Over **99% of India's bitumen imports** come from **Iraq, UAE, Iran, Oman and Bahrain**.
- India was not always as dependent on imports. The change is driven by the mega road projects undertaken within the last decade, through schemes like **Bharatmala** (for enhancing road connectivity via expressways and economic corridors) and **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)**.
- **National Highways** have grown from **91,287 km in 2014 to 1.47**

Bitumen

- Bitumen is a **mixture of organic liquids** that are highly viscous, black, sticky, **entirely soluble in Carbon Disulfide**, and composed primarily of **highly condensed Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons**.
- Derived from crude oil, it is **mainly used as a binder in road construction** where it holds together materials like sand, gravel, and crushed stone, to form asphalt.
- **Waterproof, adhesive, and flexible**, it helps roads withstand traffic load and various weather conditions. Thus, it is known as **black gold** in the pavement industry.



Bitumen production

- In a refinery, crude oil is first heated to about 350-400°C to separate Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), petrol, kerosene, diesel, jet fuel, and similar products.
- After this process, a large amount of residue collects at the bottom of the distillation column, which is called **atmospheric residue**.
- Under controlled conditions, the residue is further heated to 380-425°C and heavy Vacuum Gas Oils are removed. This creates vacuum residue, also known as bitumen.
- It is further blended and adjusted to meet different viscosity specifications like VG-10, VG-30, VG-40, which are road-paving bitumens.
- **One tonne of crude oil** can result in **3-8% (30-80 kg) of bitumen**, depending on the type of oil. **Light crude** yields more petrol and diesel but **very little bitumen**. Heavy crude results in more vacuum residue and, therefore, more bitumen.



Bio-bitumen

- To address stagnant domestic production and increasing imports, CSIR-Central Road Research Institute (CRRI) and CSIR-Indian Institute of Petroleum (IIP), Dehradun, have jointly developed a bio-bitumen technology.
- It **uses rice straw (parali) to produce Bio-oil**. This is further blended to produce bio-bitumen.
- Three pilot test sections on National Highways have been laid to assess the suitability of bio-bitumen in road construction.
- If successful it will act as a dual solution to **reduce import dependence and address winter pollution in northern India**, where stubble burning is a contributor.
- A 15% blending of bio-bitumen would save around Rs 4,500 crore in foreign exchange.



lakh km currently (a 61% increase), while the length of **expressways** increased from **93 km to 3,052 km**.

- However, domestic bitumen production has not kept pace. **Imports have more than doubled**, and consumption increased by almost 50%.
- The government has a target of building 10,000-km of highways in the ongoing financial year 2026-27. Additionally, 17,365 km of roads remain to be constructed under PMGSY Phase-III.

Padma Barrage

- Bangladesh has approved a large river engineering project called the Padma barrage, on the Padma River in Rajbari district.
- The construction of the barrage is an attempt to partially re-engineer the hydrology of its southwest region, which has become prone to drought after decades of reduced seasonal flows linked to the Farakka barrage upstream in India.
- The barrage will be 2.1-km-long and has 78 spillway gates, navigation locks, fish passages, and associated embankments.
- It is expected to store around 2.9 billion cubic metres of water and includes 113 MW of hydropower generation.
- The project will affect roughly 37% of the country's land area and irrigate around 2.88 million ha of farmland.

Padma River

- The Padma River is the name given to the Ganga River in Bangladesh after it enters the country from India.
- It is the **principal tributary of the Ganga** and flows southeast across Bangladesh before joining the **Jamuna (Brahmaputra)** and later the **Meghna River** system, eventually draining into the Bay of Bengal.
- The river is central to Bangladesh's agriculture, fisheries, inland navigation, ecology, and water security.
- The river's dry-season flow is governed by the **Ganges Water Sharing Treaty of 1996** between India and Bangladesh, which provides for the sharing of Ganga waters at the Farakka Barrage.

Farakka Barrage

- The Farakka Barrage is a major river-control structure built across the **Ganga River at Farakka in Murshidabad district of West Bengal**, close to the India-Bangladesh border.
- It was conceived to improve the navigability of the **Bhagirathi-Hooghly river system** and to reduce siltation in the **Kolkata Port** by diverting water from the Ganga into the Hooghly through a feeder canal. It became **operational in 1975**.
- In addition, the project supports water management, navigation, and regional development in eastern India.

Criticisms

- Mega-barrages often underperform, alter sediment flows in unpredictable ways, and can create new ecological problems, such as water-logging and damage to fisheries.
- It also highlights how South Asian countries are building more barriers to rivers rather than removing them.
- The regional turn towards unilateral river engineering is opposite to that of Europe and North America, where obsolete dams and culverts are being dismantled to restore rivers' free flow. In 2025 alone, 21 European countries have removed 603 barriers.

Green Hydrogen Certification Portal

- The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) has launched the Green Hydrogen Certification Portal of India (GHCI).
- Developed by MNRE, GHCI is a digital platform launched to facilitate transparent certification and regulatory compliance under the **Green Hydrogen Certification Scheme of India**.
- GHCI is an important component of India's efforts to build a globally competitive green hydrogen ecosystem under the **National Green Hydrogen Mission**.
- It aims to ensure that hydrogen marketed as "green" meets the prescribed greenhouse gas emission standards and is produced using renewable energy sources.
- The need for this certification mechanism arises from the growing global demand for **traceability and verification of low-carbon products**.

- By providing a transparent certification system, the portal is expected to improve investor confidence, facilitate international trade, and strengthen India's position as a potential exporter of green hydrogen and its derivatives

Green Hydrogen Certification Scheme of India

- The scheme was launched in 2025 by MNRE under the **National Green Hydrogen Mission**.
- It establishes a standardized framework for the measurement, monitoring, reporting, verification, and certification of green hydrogen production in India.
- Under the scheme, hydrogen can be certified as green hydrogen only if its non-biogenic greenhouse gas emissions **do not exceed 2 kg of CO₂ equivalent per kg of hydrogen**, measured as an average over the **previous 12 months**.

Smart Seed Coating Technology

- The Indian Council of Agricultural Research–Indian Institute of Oilseeds Research (ICAR-IOR), Hyderabad, has developed an innovative Smart Seed Coating Technology (SSCT).
- It is designed to enhance seed quality, crop establishment, and resilience against biotic and abiotic stresses across a wide range of agricultural crops.

Context

- As agriculture faces increasing challenges from climate change, erratic rainfall, drought, temperature extremes, soil degradation, emerging pests and diseases, and declining resource-use efficiency, ensuring superior seed performance is more critical than ever.
- Even under optimal management conditions, poor seed establishment can significantly limit yield realization.
- Thus, strengthening seed performance offers one of the most cost-effective and scalable approaches to improving agricultural productivity.

Key points

- SSCT utilizes **biodegradable biopolymeric materials** to create a **multifunctional protective layer** around seeds.
- The coating acts as a carrier system for beneficial microorganisms, nutrients, micronutrients, crop protection agents, and plant growth-promoting compounds, delivering them directly at the seed-soil interface.
- This protective microenvironment promotes rapid germination, vigorous seedling growth, enhanced root development, and improved tolerance to environmental stresses during the critical crop establishment phase.
- Field demonstrations conducted under farmer field conditions have shown substantial improvements in crop establishment, plant vigour, and yield, with **productivity gains ranging from 12–37%** over untreated seeds.
- The technology can be customized for cereals, millets, pulses, oilseeds, fibre crops, fodder crops, vegetables, spices, and horticultural crops.
- It is **particularly relevant for rainfed agriculture**, which accounts for a major share of India's cultivated area and is highly vulnerable to climatic uncertainties.
- This will lead to improved livelihoods for millions of farmers across the country and support the country's efforts towards **food, nutrition, and economic security**.

Smart Warehousing System for Foodgrain Storage

- The Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD), Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, has launched the Smart Warehousing System for foodgrain storage.
- It represents the world's **largest deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Internet of Things (IoT)** based technologies in public sector foodgrain warehousing.
- The system integrates advanced technologies such as FASTag and Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR)-based gate automation.
- It incorporates intelligent access control through geo-tagged smart locks, AI-enabled bag counting, face recognition systems, object detection, IoT-based monitoring of environmental parameters, and AI-powered surveillance for fire, smoke and rodent detection.

- It will improve operational efficiency by reducing vehicle turnaround time (TAT), enhance transparency, strengthen compliance monitoring, improve manpower productivity, and provide real-time visibility of warehouse operations.
- The platform also supports Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) integration, automated record generation and advanced analytics for warehouse operations.
- The initiative has been implemented across 215 bag-based foodgrain warehouses of the Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC), while the Food Corporation of India (FCI) is deploying the system in an additional 150 warehouses.
- It will ensure scientific storage and better preservation of foodgrains, benefitting farmers, warehouse operators and over 80 crore beneficiaries covered under the Public Distribution System (PDS).
- It complements earlier initiatives such as **SMART PDS, Anna Chakra, Depot Darpan, ASHA (Anna Sahayata Holistic AI Solution), and Anna Darpan**, which seek to modernise the foodgrain procurement, storage, and distribution ecosystem.

World Gold Council Survey

- The World Gold Council (WGC) released the Central Bank Gold Reserves (CBGR) survey 2026.
- The survey covered **76 central banks** between February - May 2026. It aims to understand the perspectives of central banks on gold as a reserve asset and its role in reserve management.

World Gold Council (WGC)

- WGC is an international, membership-based organization **established in 1987 by leading gold mining companies** to promote the responsible and sustainable use of gold and to develop the global gold market.
- **Headquartered in London**, it publishes important reports

Key findings

- The survey highlights the continuing importance of gold in the international monetary system.
- A significant **89% of respondents** expect global central bank gold holdings to **increase over the next 12 months**, indicating sustained demand for gold despite record-high prices.
- Moreover, a **record 45% of central banks expect their own gold reserves to increase** over the same period, while only 1% expect a decline.
- Central banks have accumulated an **average of 1,000 tonnes of gold over the past four years**, which is significantly higher from the 500 tonnes average over the preceding decade.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been aggressively expanding its gold reserves between FY24 and FY25. Total reserves grew from 822.1 tonnes in FY24 to 879.58 tonnes in FY25 and rose marginally to 880.52 tonnes in FY26.
- Central banks increasingly view gold as a strategic reserve asset because of its ability to perform well during periods of geopolitical and economic uncertainty, its role as a store of value and its diversification benefits.
- The majority of respondents (74%) saw moderate or significantly lower US dollar holdings within global reserves over the next five years.
- Respondents also believed that the share of other currencies, such as the euro and renminbi will remain unchanged over the same period, while gold holdings will increase.
- The survey gains additional significance because **gold has recently overtaken U.S. government bonds as the world's largest reserve asset by market value**, accounting for about **27% of official foreign reserves**, compared with 22% for U.S. Treasuries.
- As the world becomes increasingly volatile and unpredictable, gold's safety, liquidity and return characteristics – the three key investment objectives for central banks – have risen in importance



Gold storage

- The survey also points to an emerging trend of **diversification in gold storage locations**. Central banks are increasingly reducing their dependence on traditional storage centres.
- The Bank of England remains the most popular vaulting location among respondents at 57%, though central banks continue to diversify their storage across multiple locations.
- **Domestic storage came in second at 49%**, followed by the Bank for International Settlements at 16% (a small increase from last year).
- The Swiss National Bank saw a notable decline in preference, dropping to 6% from 12% in 2025.
- ~19% of central banks reported increasing domestic storage or diversifying storage locations during the previous year, reflecting concerns about geopolitical risks and the need for greater control over reserve assets.

the **Gold Demand Trends Report**, **CBGR Survey**, and **World Official Gold Reserves data**, which are widely used by policymakers, investors and central banks.

- The Council also promotes responsible gold mining and market transparency through initiatives such as the **Conflict-Free Gold Standard** and the **Gold Bar Integrity Programme**.
- It has played an important role in expanding gold investment products, including supporting the development of gold exchange-traded funds (ETFs).

Hunger Hotspots

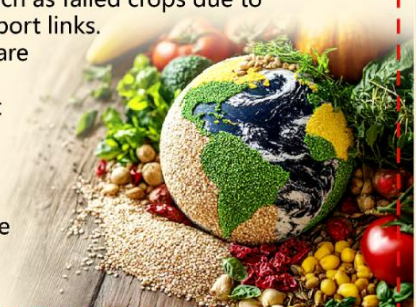
- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) have released the Hunger Hotspots report.
- The report is released twice a year through the **Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC)**.

Key Findings

- The report warned that **acute hunger is expected to worsen across 13 global hotspots** in the coming months.
- **Sudan, South Sudan, Yemen and Palestine** are the world's **most critical hunger hotspots** in terms of severity and magnitude of hunger.
- Meanwhile, **Nigeria and Somalia** have been added to the high-risk list as famine threats grow.
- **Armed conflict and violence** remain the primary drivers of acute food insecurity, affecting 12 of the 13 hotspots.
- These pressures are compounded by **economic shocks, severe funding shortfalls** and growing risks linked to an **El Nino** event, which is expected to bring uneven rainfall, droughts, and flooding across countries with already high

Food security

- **Food security** exists when people have access to enough safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development, and an active and healthy life.
- By contrast, **food insecurity** refers to when the above conditions don't exist.
- **Chronic food insecurity** is when a person is unable to consume enough food over an extended period to maintain a normal, active and healthy life.
- **Acute food insecurity** is any type that threatens people's lives or livelihoods.
- There are **four core factors** that affect someone's food security: **use, access, availability and stability**.
 - **Use** includes people's ability to prepare their food in hygienic conditions – for which they need fuel and access to clean water – and to absorb the nutrients.
 - **Access** to food may be hindered when food becomes unaffordable due to high inflation, or by people not being able to reach those markets because they live in conflict and disaster-hit areas.
 - Access may also be restricted due to people's **gender, ethnicity** or on other grounds.
 - **Availability** of food may be affected by factors such as failed crops due to extreme weather, high import costs or poor transport links. During conflict, materials like seeds and fertilizer are less available and more expensive, due to which farmers can't grow crops. Conflict can also restrict food reaching markets by road.
 - **Stability** is a crosscutting aspect, relating to how stable the other three elements of use, access and availability are. Even if food intake is adequate today, a person is food insecure if they have periodic risks of losing access to food.



Global Standard for Food Insecurity

- The global standard for measuring **acute food insecurity** is the **Integrated Food Security Phase Classification**, or IPC. It has **five levels**:
 - IPC Phase 1 - No/minimal food insecurity;
 - IPC Phase 2 - Stressed acute food insecurity;
 - IPC Phase 3 - Crisis acute food insecurity;
 - IPC Phase 4 - Emergency acute food insecurity;
 - IPC Phase 5 - Catastrophe or Famine.



vulnerability.

- **Funding** for food assistance, emergency agricultural assistance and nutrition in food crises has **declined by ~60% between 2022 and 2025**, returning to levels last seen nearly a decade ago.
- The spillover effects from the **Middle East conflict and the Ebola outbreak** in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) pose risks which could further disrupt livelihoods, markets and aid access.
- Early investment in emergency agricultural assistance and resilience is one of the most cost-effective ways to protect livelihoods, sustain local food production and reduce future humanitarian needs.
- Without stronger political commitment, predictable financing and collective action, hunger crises are likely to deepen across the world's most vulnerable regions in the months ahead.

Khurasanilmli

- The Khurasanilmli (tamarind) fruit of Mandu's iconic Baobab tree, has been awarded Geographical Indication (GI) tag.
- The **Baobab tree (Adansonia digitata)** popularly known as the **tree of life**, is **native to mainland Africa**. The tree can live up to 2,000 years and is a globally threatened species.
- The tree is **not indigenous to India** and was brought to Mandu around the **14th century by Afghan and Arab traders**.
- The town's soil and climate allowed the species to flourish, and Mandu (Mandav) in **Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh** is now home to India's largest concentration of naturally occurring Baobab trees.
- Their massive, **bottle-shaped trunks** can **store thousands of litres of water**, allowing them to survive harsh conditions, while their leafless branches give the appearance of an **upside-down tree**.
- Khurasanilmli is a **light green fruit** with a **tangy sweet-sour flavour**. The tangy pulp of Khurasanilmli is packed with Vitamin C, antioxidants, and essential minerals.
- Tribal healers have long used the pulp, tree's juice and dried bark to treat diabetes, digestive ailments, fever, and fatigue.
- The GI tag will encourage conservation, new plantations, value-added industries, branding and sustainable tourism directly benefiting tribal families involved in collection and processing.

Drunix Platform

- The **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** rolled out Drunix, an **open-source blockchain platform**, to help companies build and scale **tokenisation platforms, digital asset ecosystems, multi-organisation networks**.
- It has been designed to accelerate enterprise adoption of blockchain technology and support real-world use cases in **both the public and private sectors**.
- Drunix is a **high-performance distributed ledger platform** built as an enhanced version of Hyperledger Fabric.
 - **Hyperledger Fabric** is an open-source enterprise blockchain framework developed under the **Linux Foundation**.
- Drunix marks NPCI's second major open-source contribution in the blockchain and tokenisation space, following **Falcon**, which focused on production-grade blockchain network management and orchestration.
- Apart from Falcon, NPCI has also rolled out other technology initiatives such as the **Finance Model for India (FiMI)** and **Vigil-AI**, reflecting a sustained push to build reusable, open digital infrastructure components.
- By open-sourcing the Drunix platform, NPCI aims to encourage innovation, experimentation and wider adoption of blockchain solutions by enterprises, start-ups and government agencies.
- It is designed to enable blockchain deployment at scale while ensuring **data privacy, interoperability, governance, and organisational control**.
- The platform can be used for tokenisation of real-world assets, shared databases across organisations, and creation of secure, permissioned blockchain networks.

Tokenisation

- Tokenisation is the process of converting rights or ownership in an asset into **digital tokens** that can be stored, transferred, and traded on a **blockchain or distributed ledger**.
- These tokens represent ownership over an underlying asset such as **financial securities, real estate, commodities, artwork, digital currencies**, or other physical and digital assets.
- Tokenisation enables the creation of **fractional ownership** thereby making assets more accessible to a larger number of investors.

New Digital Fraud Compensation Rules

- The Reserve Bank of India has issued fresh rules providing a revised compensation mechanism for victims of digital payment frauds and widened its framework for limiting customer liability.
- These directions amend the RBI's 2017 circular on "Limiting Liability of Customers in Unauthorised Electronic Banking Transactions".
- The new rules will run as pilot from January 1, 2027 for a year, and may be extended in the future.

Background

- The previous framework only left banks liable to compensate scammed customers if transactions were not even authorised by customers, such as in a successful hacking incident.
- Most financial frauds currently rely on social engineering attacks, which require deceiving customers in some way. Since banks' core cyber security infrastructure is heavily regulated and subject to RBI audits, zero click hacks are very rare.
- The new key concept is **fraudulent electronic banking transactions (EBTs)**.
- As per RBI, these transactions are executed by a third-party using the credentials obtained from the customer through fraudulent means or executed by the customer by granting approval under force from the third-party.
- The new framework comes at a time when bank frauds, especially digital transaction frauds, have become a growing concern for the RBI.
- In FY 2025-26, while the reported fraud cases more than halved to 10,114, the amount involved rose 46% to Rs 48,021 crore.

New Rules

- RBI has attempted to make the new compensation guidelines strongly pro-consumer.
- Under the new mechanism, for losses up to Rs 50,000, victims are eligible for **compensation of up to 85% of their losses, or Rs 25,000** (whichever is less), once during the lifetime.
- Customers can now get reimbursed even when they fall prey to fraudulent EBTs, like digital arrests (where they are forced into paying money), or when one-time passcodes (OTPs) are fraudulently stolen from them.
- Victims are eligible for such compensation only if they **lodge a complaint** regarding the fraud **within five calendar days**.
- Roughly **three fourths of the compensation will be paid by RBI itself**, while the customer and beneficiary banks will pay half the remaining amount.
- Banks must resolve customer complaints regarding fraudulent EBTs within 45 days for domestic fraudulent EBTs, and within 60 days for cross-border fraudulent EBTs.

Digital Platforms for MSMEs

On the occasion of MSME Day 2026 (27 June) a suite of transformative digital platforms and portals have been launched to empower MSMEs across India.

Key initiatives

Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP 2.0) Portal

- PMEGP is a bank-financed **subsidy program for setting up new micro enterprises** in the non-farm sector.
- The portal introduces a range of citizen-centric, technology-driven features designed to simplify the entire lifecycle of a beneficiary with improved coordination among all stakeholders.
- A key highlight is its **integration with the Jan Samarth Portal**, enabling real-time exchange of information with participating banks for loan processing, sanction, and disbursement.
- It represents a transformative shift towards a fully digital, transparent, and accountable ecosystem for enterprise promotion.

SAMADHAAN 2.0 Portal

- It is designed to **report and track outstanding dues owed to MSMEs** by Central Ministries, Departments, Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSE) and other government agencies.
- It provides a dedicated online functionality for mandatory reporting of pending MSME dues on a monthly basis within prescribed timelines.

Procurement and Marketing Support (PMS) Portal

- The PMS portal is an integrated digital platform that **connects Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) with trade fairs and exhibitions**.
- It makes the entire process—including application submission, participation, and reimbursement of claims—online, paperless, and transparent.
- With seamless integration, enhanced transparency, and end-to-end digital processing, the portal will empower MSMEs through technology, efficiency, ease of access, and improved market outreach.

MSME Global Mart 2.0 Portal

- It is a next-generation national digital commerce and trade facilitation platform **integrated with the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) ecosystem**.
- The platform enables MSMEs from every corner of the country to connect with new business opportunities both nationally and globally.

MSME Testing Portal

- It is an initiative for **end-to-end digitisation of testing activities** carried out by MSME Testing Centres and Testing Stations across the country.
- The portal allows customers to book samples for testing, make payments, track the status of their applications, and download test reports digitally.
- It is expected to significantly improve the efficiency, accessibility, and quality of testing services available to MSMEs nationwide.

MSME Idea Hackathon 6.0

- Under the **MSME Champions Scheme**, Hackathon 6.0 aims to **promote innovation and adoption of advanced technologies among MSMEs**.
- Innovators can submit their ideas across multiple themes through registered Host Institutes (HIs), with financial support of up to **Rs 15 lakh per idea**, along with mentorship and growth support.

Multilingual Access on MSME Portals

- MSME websites/portals will provide access to MSME services in 22 Scheduled Indian languages, in collaboration with BHASHINI and National Informatics Centre (NIC).
- AI-enabled voice grievance redressal and document translation facilities will also be provided, enhancing accessibility and digital inclusion.

New Products by KVIC

- The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) will launch a range of innovative and eco-friendly products aimed at strengthening and promoting sustainable livelihoods.
- The products to be launched include **Tukun** (Infant Wear), **Rangtaal** (Table Runners and Mats), **Bela** (Infant Wrap Sheets), **Vanya** (Eri Stoles) and **Umang** (Wool Stoles).

WPI Revision

- The Government has approved the revision of the **base year** of the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) from **2011-12 to 2022-23** and will introduce a new set of Producer Price Indices (PPIs), marking a major update in India's price measurement framework.
- The revised WPI series and the new PPIs will be released by the **Office of Economic Adviser** under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
- In addition, the government will release the **Output Producer Price Index (OPPI), Trial Input Producer Price Index (IPPI)**.
 - It will also release **Service Producer Price Index (Service PPI)** for **seven service sectors**, including banking, securities transactions, insurance, pension fund management, railways, air passenger transport and telecom.
- Availability of both the Output PPI and Input PPI gives a better understanding of the price movements of output items vis-a-vis input items being used in an industry.
- It also explains how inflation experienced by producers on input items are passed through the output being produced.
- The transition from WPI to PPI aligns India's statistical framework with global best practices adopted by advanced economies and recommendations of the IMF.

Key highlights

- The revised WPI series introduces several structural and methodological improvements. The **number of items covered** under the index has **increased from 697 to 957**, providing broader representation of economic activity.
- For the first time, **renewable energy sources** such as solar and wind power have been **included under the electricity category**. Nuclear electricity has also been added to the index basket, reflecting changes in India's energy landscape.
- **Crude petroleum and natural gas** will be reclassified from the **Primary Articles group to the Fuel and Power category**.
 - This reorganization would lead to better alignment, as this group already includes other major fuels such as coal, electricity, and petroleum products.
 - This would create a more coherent framework for tracking energy prices by grouping major fuel sources together.
- **Weight assignment:** The revised series also adopts **Gross Value of Output (GVO)** as the basis for **assigning weights to commodities**, replacing the earlier net traded value approach.
 - The new methodology better reflects the economic importance of commodities from a producer's perspective.
- **Improved Computation Methodology:** The elementary indices will be compiled using short-term formulation using chain-based method, in place of long-term formulation method (as practiced in the existing series).

Frequency of Release

- The **WPI and Output PPI** will be compiled on a **monthly basis** and will be available from the month of May 2026, along with the back series from April 2023 to April 2026.
- The Trial Input PPI for the manufacturing sector will also be published monthly on an experimental basis from March 2026 onwards.
- Meanwhile, the **Service PPI will be released quarterly**, beginning with provisional estimates for the fourth quarter of 2025-26, along with back series data from the first quarter of 2023-24.

- To facilitate a smooth transition, both **WPI and PPI will be released simultaneously for five years** before the WPI is phased out.

Herbicide Tolerant Mustard Hybrids

- Indian farmers are set to begin the wide-scale cultivation of **imidazolinone-resistant (IMI-resistant) mustard hybrids**.
- These hybrids are designed to overcome a parasitic weed called **Orobanche (also known as Phelipanche)**, a major hurdle in oilseed production.
- India has for long dealt with an edible oils deficit. In 2024-25, the country imported around 16 million tonnes at about Rs 1.6 lakh crore.
- Mustard is the most vital oilseed crop to meet this demand, especially in the arid environments of North India. However, its yields have been suppressed throughout the year by Orobanche.
- Orobanche is a destructive root parasite that attaches to the mustard plant and drains it of water and nutrients.

IMI Resistant Mustard

- The new IMI-resistant hybrids are a technological solution to this problem.
- Unlike genetically modified (GM) crops, these hybrids were developed in a process called **mutation breeding** — where scientists **breed crops to preserve certain natural mutations**.
- The process is based on an **enzyme called acetolactate synthase (ALS)**, which is essential for plant growth. Normal mustard plants are killed by IMI herbicides because the herbicides inhibit ALS.
- In the new IMI-resistant hybrids, a single change in the plant's DNA made the ALS enzyme resistant to the herbicide.
- Thus farmers can spray IMI herbicides directly over the field, killing only the weeds.
- However, experts have cautioned that the technology must be managed with care to prevent the weeds from evolving their own resistance.

Energy Transition Index 2026

- The World Economic Forum's (WEF) has released the Energy Transition Index (ETI) 2026.
- Developed in collaboration with **Accenture**, the index assesses **120 countries using 44 indicators** to measure current energy system performance and preparedness for future energy needs.
- A country's ETI score is a weighted composite of two sub-indices: system performance (60%) and transition readiness (40%).
 - **System performance** is evenly distributed across **Energy equity, Energy security and**

Key findings

- **Advanced economies** continued to lead the rankings, accounting for **14 of the top 20 performers**.
- The **Nordic countries** – Sweden (1st), Finland (2nd), Denmark (3rd)– **retained the top positions**, reflecting consistently strong performance across energy diversification, clean energy adoption, policy frameworks and infrastructure.
- Sub-Saharan Africa recorded the strongest regional gains in 2026. Emerging Europe also improved, while emerging Asia was the only region to decline on average.
- Among major economies, China ranked 14th, continuing to scale clean energy investment at record levels.
- Overall ETI scores in 2026 were broadly flat (+0.03%), with gains in system performance offset by the first decline in transition readiness in over a decade.
- Despite a **record total of global energy investment of \$3.3 trillion** – including \$2.3 trillion in clean energy – energy security deteriorated and transition readiness weakened. This indicates that funding alone may no longer be sufficient to sustain progress.
- 75% of clean energy investment still flows to a few economies, while countries expected to drive 80% of future electricity demand growth face financing costs two to three times higher than developed nations.
- Regulation and political commitment has weakened, driven by rising policy instability in advanced economies.
- The index cited disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz as an example of vulnerabilities in global energy systems already under pressure from rising demand, infrastructure constraints and concentrated clean energy investments.
- It also flagged rising electricity demand as a major challenge for the energy transition. Global power demand grew 3%, driven by electrification, cooling requirements, digital infrastructure, and artificial intelligence.

Environment sustainability.

- **Transition readiness** is divided into core enablers and enabling factors.
 - **Core enablers** include regulation and political commitment as well as finance and investment.
 - **Enabling factors** cover innovation, infrastructure and education and human capital.

Findings from India

- India moved up two places to **rank 70th** in the index, with its score rising by 1.9%.
- India was one of the **strongest improvers globally**, recording **one of the largest gains in transition readiness** and strengthening its position as a key player in the next phase of the global energy transition.
- India also showcased broad-based **system gains**, supported by a sharp rise in infrastructure and improvements in equity, sustainability and financial investment.
- The report highlighted India's expansion of renewable energy capacity, grid development and green hydrogen initiatives.
- The proportion of low-carbon jobs in India increased by 24% in 2024. Renewable energy employment reached 1.3 million, up 25% from 2023, with hydropower emerging as the largest source of jobs in the sector.

APCNF Wins Food Planet Prize

The Andhra Pradesh Community Managed Natural Farming (APCNF) programme, has won the Food Planet Prize 2026, for leading one of the world's largest transitions to natural farming.

APCNF

- APCNF is an initiative launched in 2016, through **Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS) by Andhra Pradesh government**.
- It supports smallholder farmers to switch from chemically intensive agriculture to natural farming.
- It involves practices such as using organic residues and minimising tillage to improve soil health, reintroducing indigenous seeds and diversifying crops, including trees.
- The programme has restored degraded land into healthy ecosystems on a large scale and strengthened rural women farmers' collectives.
- The model is being replicated in **21 States** and in countries such as **Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Zambia**.

Food Planet Prize

- Established in 2019, the prize is given by the **Curt Bergfors Foundation**.
- It recognizes initiatives that could contribute to resilient, equitable and environmentally sustainable food systems within the next decade. It carries an award of \$1.5 million.

Coal Exchanges Rules 2026

- In a significant step towards modernizing India's coal supply chain, the government has released the Coal Exchanges Rules 2026.
- The Rules have been announced after the recently enacted **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2025** introduced the concept of a Mineral Exchange.
- It also empowered the Central Government to facilitate transparent and efficient trading of minerals, including coal and its processed forms.
- To implement the initiative, the government had designated the **Coal Controller Organisation (CCO)** in December 2025 as the authority responsible for registering and regulating Coal Exchanges.
- Eligible entities will be authorised by the CCO to establish and operate Coal Exchanges, frame market rules and bye-laws, and facilitate coal trading. Registrations will be granted for a period of 25 years.
- A **Coal Exchange** is an electronic trading platform that facilitates the purchase and sale of coal between multiple buyers and sellers through standardised procedures.

Context

- At present, most coal transactions between producers and buyers take place through long-term contracts, primarily for the power sector, followed by auctions, imports and captive mining.
- While India's commodity exchanges are well established, they function largely as financial markets rather than physical delivery platforms.
- Coal exchanges are closer in design to power exchanges, which play a role in price discovery, market signalling and the development of secondary markets.

Impact

- Coal Exchanges represent a paradigm shift in coal marketing, moving away from the traditional **one-to-many sales model to a competitive many-to-many trading platform**.
- It is expected to enable **transparent and market-based price discovery**, improve efficiency, and provide coal producers, including commercial and captive miners, with access to a broader pool of buyers.
- Public sector coal companies are also expected to benefit from enhanced market participation through the platform.

Revised Index of Industrial Production

- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) recently released the **first official revised All India Index of Industrial Production (IIP)**.
- The new IIP series provides a more representative, reliable and methodologically robust measure of industrial growth, reflecting changes in India's economic structure.

Changes in the New Series

- **Base year:** The **base year** has been revised from **2011-12 to 2022-23**, to make the index more representative of the current structure and dynamics of the industrial sector.

Mining & Quarrying	Manufacturing	Electricity & Gas Supply	Water Supply, Sewerage & Waste Management
11.053%	76.062%	10.865%	2.020%

- This is the **10th revision of base year** of All India IIP. The first IIP was prepared with **base year 1937**.
- **Expanded coverage:** For the first time, the IIP has expanded beyond the traditional sectors of mining, manufacturing and electricity to include Gas Supply as well as Water Supply, Sewerage and Waste Management activities.
 - Broader coverage would provide a more comprehensive picture of industrial activity and bring the index closer to international standards.
- **Greater sectoral granularity.** Mining data is now separately compiled for fuel minerals, metallic minerals including rare earth minerals, and non-metallic minerals including minor minerals.
- Similarly, electricity generation is now tracked separately for renewable and non-renewable sources.
- **Revamped item basket:** The new series covers **1,042 products grouped into 463 item groups**, compared with 839 products and 407 item groups in the previous series.
- **New-age products** such as CCTV cameras, aircraft and spacecraft parts, non-woven textile products, stents and vaccines have been added, while **obsolete items** including kerosene, fluorescent tubes and compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) have been removed.
- **Weights:** Weights used in the revised index have been updated using Gross Value Added estimates from the National Accounts Statistics and the Annual Survey of Industries for 2022-23.
- Electricity weights are based on revenue shares of renewable and non-renewable sources, while mining weights reflect the contribution of individual minerals to sectoral GVA.

- The new IIP series also incorporates the **National Industrial Classification (NIC) 2025** and includes provisions for replacing factories that have become non-operational during the life of the series to maintain representativeness.

Interest Rate Relaxation for FCNR (B) & NRE Deposits

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has temporarily removed interest rate restriction on **Non-resident external (NRE)** deposits with tenors of 3 years and above.
- In addition, the RBI has also withdrawn the interest rate ceiling on fresh **Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) or FCNR(B)** deposits of 3-5 year tenors.
- The removal of interest rate restriction for both NRE and FCNR (B) deposits will be in place till September 2026.

NRE account and FCNR(B) deposits

- An **NRE account** allows a customer to deposit foreign currency, which is **maintained in Indian rupees**. It offers the benefit of allowing both principal and interest to be freely transferred abroad at any time and **interest earned is exempt from tax** in India.
 - Since the account is denominated in rupees, the **depositor bears the exchange rate risk** arising from fluctuations in the value of the rupee.
- **FCNR(B) deposits** are **fixed-term bank deposits** that can be opened in India by NRIs, Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs), and Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs).
- These deposits allow overseas Indians to maintain their savings in designated foreign currencies such as the US dollar, pound sterling, euro, Japanese yen, Australian dollar, and Canadian dollar, rather than converting their funds into Indian rupees.
- Interest earned on FCNR(B) deposits is **exempt from income tax in India** as long as the depositor qualifies as a non-resident under Indian tax laws.
- Since FCNR(B) deposits are maintained in foreign currency, the **depositors are protected from exchange rate risk**. Banks, however, assume the currency risk.

Objectives of the Measure

- The primary objective is to **attract larger NRI deposits**, thereby increasing the availability of foreign exchange in the banking system.
- It also seeks to **strengthen India's foreign exchange reserves**, improve foreign currency liquidity, support the financing of the current account deficit, and reduce excessive volatility in the rupee, without frequent intervention in the foreign exchange market.
- It is also intended to improve confidence in India's external sector during periods of global uncertainty and capital flow volatility.

PM Modi's State Visit to Seychelles

- PM Modi's state visit to Seychelles marked a landmark moment in India-Seychelles ties. The two countries elevated their relationship to a strategic partnership, signed multiple agreements, and celebrated 50 years of diplomatic relations.
- The visit also gave renewed momentum to India's MAHASAGAR vision for the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Key Outcomes of the Visit

- **Elevation to Strategic Partnership**
 - India and Seychelles agreed to deepen cooperation across health, education, skill development, digital transformation, renewable energy, maritime security, and defence.
 - Progress under India's **Special Economic Package** for Seychelles was also reviewed.
- **Agreements Signed**
 - Several MoUs were concluded covering:
 - ♣ UPI implementation — expanding India's digital payment footprint
 - ♣ Healthcare, agriculture, and banking (Exim Bank cooperation)
 - ♣ Shipping, space exploration, and capacity building
 - ♣ Extradition treaty and Line of Credit (LoC)
 - These agreements aim to modernise Seychelles' economy while deepening India's developmental presence in the region.
- **Special Economic Package**
 - India announced a package worth USD 175 million, comprising:
 - ♣ USD 125 million — rupee-denominated Line of Credit
 - ♣ USD 50 million — Grant Assistance
 - The package will fund infrastructure, food security, healthcare, vocational training, and defence cooperation.
 - India emphasised that its assistance remains demand-driven and aligned with Seychelles' national priorities — a contrast to debt-heavy models followed by others in the region.
- **Maritime Security Deliverables**
 - Gifting of the Fast Attack Vessel PS Laspwar to the Seychelles Coast Guard.
 - Refit of PS Zoroaster to enhance maritime patrol capability.
 - These steps strengthen maritime domain awareness in the Western Indian Ocean.
- **Parliamentary and Diplomatic Milestones**
 - PM Modi became the **first Indian PM to address the National Assembly of**

India's Vision for the Indian Ocean

- India reiterated its goal of transforming the Indian Ocean into an "**Ocean of Opportunity**", built on:
 - Maritime security and regional stability
 - Sustainable economic prosperity
 - Partnership based on **mutual respect**, not power asymmetry
 - Shared responsibility for security, sustainability, and development
- India's approach treats the Indian Ocean as a **shared strategic space** requiring collective action against both traditional threats (piracy, trafficking) and non-traditional ones (climate change, disaster risk).

The MAHASAGAR Vision

- **MAHASAGAR** stands for Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions. It is an evolution of the earlier **SAGAR** (Security and Growth for All in the Region) doctrine, now with broader regional ambition.
- Key pillars of MAHASAGAR:
 - **Collective maritime security** — countering piracy, IUU (Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated) fishing, and drug trafficking
 - **Blue Economy** — sustainable use of ocean resources
 - **Disaster resilience** — especially relevant for Small Island Developing States (SIDS)
 - **Regional connectivity and inclusive growth**
- Seychelles holds a **special place** within this vision given its strategic location along key **Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs)** in the Western Indian Ocean.

Seychelles — highlighting shared democratic values and people-centric governance.

- o He was conferred Seychelles' highest environmental honour — "**Guardian of the Blue Horizon**" — recognising India's contributions to conservation and sustainable development.
- o Seychelles decided to join the **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)**, strengthening climate resilience cooperation.
- **Indian Army contingent participated in Seychelles' 50th National Day event**
 - o An Indian Army contingent, comprising 32 personnel from the Assam Regiment, participated in Seychelles' 50th National Day celebrations on June 29, 2026.
 - o The Golden Jubilee parade was also attended by PM Modi as the Guest of Honour.

PM Modi's Visit to Slovakia

- PM Modi's historic visit to Bratislava — the first by an Indian Prime Minister since Slovakia's independence in 1993 — resulted in India and Slovakia elevating their bilateral relationship to a **Comprehensive Partnership**.
- Multiple agreements were signed across defence, technology, labour mobility, and counter-terrorism.

Key Outcomes of PM Modi's Visit

- **Elevation to Comprehensive Partnership**
 - o The most significant outcome of the visit was the formal elevation of bilateral ties to a **Comprehensive Partnership** — signifying shared trust, shared priorities, and a shared future.
- **Defence Cooperation**
 - o A Letter of Intent was signed in the defence sector.
 - o Focus on joint development and joint production of defence equipment.
 - o Strengthening of defence industrial cooperation between the two countries.
- **Trade and Economic Priorities**
 - o Both countries committed to boosting trade and investment across priority sectors:
 - ♣ **Automobiles** — leveraging Slovakia's strong automotive manufacturing base
 - ♣ **Railways** — cooperation in modernisation and equipment
 - ♣ **Advanced manufacturing** — including precision engineering
 - ♣ **Green technology** — clean energy and sustainability
 - ♣ **Electronics** — manufacturing and supply chain integration
- **Technology and Digital Cooperation**
 - o Technology emerged as a **central pillar** of the new partnership:
 - ♣ **MoU on Digital Technology** signed — to create opportunities in digital public infrastructure.
 - ♣ Establishment of an **India Chair on Artificial Intelligence** at a Slovak university.
 - ♣ Cooperation in **space sector** — Slovak companies invited to participate in India's expanding space industry.
 - ♣ Collaboration in **civil nuclear energy**.
- **Labour Mobility and Migration**
 - o MoU on Labour Migration signed to facilitate structured movement of workers between the two countries.
 - o Addresses Slovakia's labour shortages while creating structured opportunities for Indian workers.

India-Slovakia Bilateral Relations

- India's formal ties with Slovakia began in **1993**, following the peaceful dissolution of Czechoslovakia into the Czech Republic and Slovakia.
- Prior to this, India had strong relations with Czechoslovakia — one of the earliest countries to recognise India after independence.
- Slovakia is a Central European nation and a member of both the European Union (EU) and NATO — making it a strategically significant partner for India in the region.

- Slovakia has been a constructive voice within the EU for stronger India-EU engagement, including the recently concluded India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA).
- Bilateral trade crossed the **one billion Euro mark** in 2024, reaching **€1.28 billion**.
 - **India's exports to Slovakia** - Mobile phones, footwear, garments, motor vehicle parts, tyres, medicaments, electrical apparatus.
 - **India's imports from Slovakia** - Motor vehicles, machinery, pumps, transmission shafts, measuring instruments, wire and cables, bearings.

Trump's \$100,000 H-1B Visa Fee Struck Down

- A US federal judge struck down President Trump's controversial **\$100,000 fee** on new H-1B visas, ruling that the executive branch acted unlawfully and unconstitutionally by imposing a fee without Congressional approval.
- In September 2025, Trump had signed a presidential proclamation increasing H-1B visa fee to \$100,000 annually. He took this step to:
 - Discourage employers from replacing American workers with cheaper foreign labour;
 - Address concerns about misuse of the programme in STEM fields.

Why This Matters for Indians?

- Indians receive more than **70% of all H-1B visas** annually and dominate the technology, engineering, healthcare, and consulting sectors that rely heavily on the programme.
- The ruling:
 - Restores predictability to a system that had become increasingly unstable.
 - Reaffirms that the US remains governed by legal checks and balances.

Background: What is the H-1B Visa Programme?

- The H-1B visa allows US employers to hire foreign nationals in specialised occupations requiring at minimum a bachelor's degree and specialised knowledge — predominantly in STEM, healthcare, and consulting.
- Annual cap - 65,000 for most private employers
- Additional quota - 20,000 for holders of advanced degrees
- Exemptions - Universities, nonprofit research organisations, government research bodies
- Pre-proclamation fees - \$960 to \$7,595 per petition depending on employer size and petition type.

The Court Ruling: Fee Struck Down as Unlawful

- US District Judge ruled the \$100,000 fee unlawful, on the following grounds:
 - ✓ The fee functioned as a tax — regardless of what the administration called it.
 - ✓ Under the US Constitution, only Congress — not the President — has the authority to levy taxes.
 - ✓ The court drew upon a recent Supreme Court decision on tariffs (Learning Resources case) to classify the fee as a tax.
- This characterisation negated almost all of the government's legal arguments

Indian Seafarers: Global Dominance, Growing Vulnerability

- The US-Iran conflict and the effective closure of the **Strait of Hormuz** since early March 2026 has put thousands of Indian seafarers at risk.
- Recently, the US Navy fired missiles at three merchant ships carrying Indian crew members in the Gulf region — killing **three Indian seafarers** aboard the tanker *Settebello*.
- India lodged a strong protest with the United States, with EAM Jaishankar calling such lethal action against commercial shipping "not justified."

India's Maritime Workforce: The Big Picture

- India has emerged as one of the world's **top three suppliers of seafarers**, alongside the Philippines and China.
- This represents a **more than fivefold growth** in just 14 years — a remarkable story of labour market expansion.
- India has an estimated **3.5 lakh seafarers** working globally at any given time, with over half in active service on foreign-flagged ships.

Parameter	2010	2024
Indian seafarers	62,267	3,07,901
Share of global workforce	—	~17% (1 in 5)
Global seafaring workforce	—	1.89 million

The Foreign Flag Problem: India's Structural Vulnerability

- The overwhelming majority of Indian seafarers work on **foreign-flagged vessels** — a dependence that has deepened over time.
 - 2024 - 2,78,466 out of 3,07,901 (90%)
- This structural dependence on foreign-flagged ships makes Indian seafarers disproportionately exposed to risks in hostile maritime environments — with limited protection from the Indian state.
 - If a ship were Indian-flagged, India would have a much clearer legal basis to escort or protect it — as the US did during the Iran-Iraq war by re-flagging Kuwaiti ships as American to justify naval escort.
 - Since these ships flew foreign flags, India's legal standing to intervene militarily is significantly weaker, even when the crew is entirely Indian.

The Hormuz Crisis: Indians at the Frontline

- The Strait of Hormuz closure put the vulnerability of Indian seafarers in sharp focus:
 - Mid-March 2026: ~23,000 Indian seafarers facing uncertainty in the Gulf; 753 aboard 27 Indian-flagged vessels
 - June 2026: Numbers reduced to ~18,000 under uncertainty; 562 aboard 13 Indian-flagged vessels — 329 in the Persian Gulf and 233 in the Gulf of Oman

What Can India Do? Diplomatic and Legal Options

- India's Track Record of Protection**
 - India has previously acted decisively to protect its seafarers:
 - Operation Sankalp (2024):** Indian Navy and Coast Guard protected four merchant ships from Houthi attacks
 - Anti-piracy operations:** Indian Naval ships and P-8I aircraft have used logistics Support Agreements (LSAs) to extend operational reach in the Gulf of Aden
- Why the Current Situation Is Harder?**
 - Earlier threats came from **non-state actors** — Houthis and Somali pirates — relatively easier to act against without diplomatic fallout.
 - The current standoff involves **the United States and Iran** — two powerful states in direct conflict — dramatically narrowing India's room for manoeuvre.
 - Diplomatic protest** remains the primary tool available for now.
- Gaps in International Law**
 - The **IMO** (International Maritime Organization) sets safety and technical standards but has **no enforcement power** against unilateral military attacks on ships.
 - UNCLOS** (UN Convention on the Law of the Sea) governs ocean passage rights including through the Strait of Hormuz — but the US has **never signed** UNCLOS, and Iran has signed but **never ratified** it.
 - There is no overarching global authority capable of enforcing these rules — outcomes ultimately depend on the restraint of individual governments.

Keir Starmer Resigns as UK Prime Minister

- Keir Starmer has formally resigned as PM of the United Kingdom and as leader of the Labour Party.
- With this, the UK will have had **seven Prime Ministers** in a single decade — a remarkable sign of political instability in one of the world's oldest parliamentary democracies.
 - Since 2016, the UK has cycled through leaders with striking speed: David Cameron, Theresa May, Boris Johnson, Liz Truss (45 days — the shortest tenure in UK history), Rishi Sunak, and now Starmer. None has completed a full term.

How the UK Constitutional System Works?

- How the UK Chooses Its Prime Minister?**
 - UK Parliament has two Houses — the House of Lords and the House of Commons (650 seats).
 - Citizens elect their local Member of Parliament (MP) in general elections.

- The leader of the party that secures a majority in the House of Commons is invited by the Monarch (King Charles III) to form the government and becomes PM.
- A critical distinction: **the five-year term limit applies to Parliament**, not to the individual PM — so a PM can be changed mid-term without a fresh general election.
- **The PM as "First Among Equals" (*Primus Inter Pares*)**
 - The British system treats the PM not as a supreme executive but as **first among equals** within the Cabinet and parliamentary party.
 - The PM's authority rests entirely on the **confidence of their own party's MPs**.
 - Once that confidence erodes, the PM can be replaced — a **much faster process** than in presidential systems.
- **How a PM Is Replaced: Labour Party's Internal Process**
 - **Step 1 — Triggering a Vacancy:** A leadership contest begins when the sitting leader resigns, or when 20% of Labour MPs (currently 81 members) formally back a challenger.
 - **Step 2 — NEC Convenes:** The National Executive Committee (NEC) immediately meets to set the timetable — defining deadlines for nominations and the voting process.
 - **Step 3 — Candidate Nomination:** Candidates must be sitting House of Commons MPs and must secure nominations from either 5% of Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs) or three affiliated organizations. These organisations must include at least two trade unions and represent 5% of the total affiliated membership.
 - **Step 4 — Preferential Ballot:** All party members and affiliates vote using a preferential ballot, ranking candidates in order of preference. The winner must cross 50% of votes. If no one achieves this in the first round, the least popular candidates are eliminated and their votes redistributed — until a winner emerges.
- **The Constitutional Handover**
 - The new Labour leader does not become PM automatically. The outgoing PM (Starmer) must travel to Buckingham Palace to formally tender resignation to King Charles III.
 - The newly elected Labour leader is then summoned for an audience with the King, who invites them to form the government. Upon accepting, they officially become Prime Minister.

US Indo-Pacific Command Renamed US Pacific Command

- The Pentagon announced the renaming of the US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) back to its original name — US Pacific Command (USPACOM) — reversing a 2018 decision.
- The renaming, however, does not change: area of responsibility, fundamental mission, and commitment to a free and open theatre alongside regional allies and partners.
- **Why Was It Renamed in 2018?**
 - The 2018 renaming to Indo-Pacific Command was a deliberate strategic signal — acknowledging the growing importance of the Indian Ocean in US strategic thinking.
 - It reflected Washington's expanding focus from the Pacific alone to the broader Indo-Pacific theatre connecting the Indian and Pacific Oceans.
- **Significance of the Reversal**
 - Signals a subtle but deliberate shift in the Trump administration's strategic framing — away from the "Indo-Pacific" concept that explicitly includes the Indian Ocean.
 - The Indo-Pacific construct had been central to countering China's influence and deepening partnerships with India, Australia, Japan, and ASEAN nations under the Quad framework.
 - The renaming raises questions about whether the US is de-emphasising India's role in its broader strategic calculus — even as the area of responsibility formally remains unchanged.
 - Critics may argue it is a symbolic downgrade of the Indian Ocean's strategic weight in US policy.

India Amends Immigration & Foreigners Rules, 2025

The Union Home Ministry notified changes to the **Immigration and Foreigners Rules, 2025**, altering registration requirements for foreigners staying in India, with effect from **June 1, 2026**.

Key Change: Registration Timeline for Stay Beyond 180 Days

- Foreigners on a visa for 180 days or less, who wish to stay beyond this period, must now register "any time before the expiry of the said period of 180 days".
- This replaces the earlier rule, which allowed registration "within fourteen days after the expiry of 180 days" of arrival in India.
- **Rule for Visas Exceeding 180 Days (with Stay Cap)**
 - For foreigners on visas valid for more than 180 days, but with a stipulation that "each stay shall not exceed 180 days" — whether on a single occasion or in aggregate within a calendar year — registration must also be completed before the expiry of 180 days.
 - Crucially, such registration will now be granted "only in emergent circumstances" — making the process more restrictive than before.
- **Relief for Children Born in India where Either or Both parents are foreigners**
 - **Previous Requirement**
 - ♣ Parents had to electronically intimate the registration officer within 30 days of the child's birth for availing visa services, including grant of a new visa and exit permission.
 - **New Relief Provided**
 - ♣ This requirement will no longer apply in cases where **either parent** is an Indian citizen and wishes to retain the child's Indian citizenship.
 - ♣ However, if the child later acquires foreign citizenship while still in India, either parent must intimate the registration officer within 30 days of such acquisition.
- **Other Administrative Changes**
 - The notification also revises reporting requirements and procedures for hospitals, nursing homes, and other medical institutions that provide medical, lodging, or sleeping facilities on their premises — tightening oversight on foreigner movement and stay tracking through such establishments.

China-Bangladesh Talks on Teesta Project

- Bangladesh PM Tarique Rahman received assurance from China on building the Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project, during his visit to Beijing (in June 2026).
- Bangladesh has been in talks with China over managing and developing the Teesta river region for nearly a decade.
- Under the interim government led by Md. Yunus, the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) and Chinese state-owned POWERCHINA signed an extension to an MoU reviving Bangladesh-China cooperation on the river.
- As a **lower riparian project**, the Chinese plan cannot disrupt the Teesta upstream in India. It instead aims to help Bangladesh better utilise the water it currently receives from India.

Why Does Bangladesh Need This Project?

- Teesta's water is essential for farmers in northern Bangladesh.
- Bangladesh's main complaint: Teesta's water reduces to a trickle in winter (December–February), exactly when water is needed for sowing paddy and vegetables.
- To address this, Bangladesh built the **Teesta Barrage** in the 1990s — the country's largest irrigation project — under the Teesta Barrage Irrigation Project (TBIP), designed to manage both floods and dry-season shortages.

Why Does Teesta Matter to India?

- Teesta originates from the **Cholamu (Tso Lhamu) Lake** (5,100 metres) in Sikkim's Himalayan range.

- India has built multiple power generation projects on the river in Sikkim — at least six major and several smaller ones.
- The most prominent is the **Gajoldoba Barrage** in West Bengal — a major irrigation project controlled by the West Bengal government.
- The river is also a significant tourism attraction and home to migratory birds in West Bengal.
- **The Core Tension** - Whenever India holds back water at Gajoldoba or for power generation in Sikkim, Bangladesh claims its side of the Teesta runs low.
- **History of India-Bangladesh Negotiations on Teesta**
 - India and Bangladesh have negotiated Teesta water-sharing for over a decade, with Bangladesh seeking a fair share for irrigation.
 - A 2010 interim agreement collapsed in 2011 during PM Manmohan Singh's Dhaka visit due to objections from the then WB CM Mamata Banerjee.
 - Despite repeated efforts by Sheikh Hasina, including India's 2024 offer to finance a \$1 billion Teesta dredging project, talks stalled and weren't revived.
- **China's Involvement**
 - This unresolved gap has allowed China to step in.
 - The Teesta project area near **Nilphamari and Rangpur** lies close to India's strategically sensitive **Siliguri Corridor** ("Chicken's Neck"), raising concerns over Chinese professionals from POWERCHINA — a firm linked to China's strategic sectors — operating near this vulnerable zone.
 - This follows China's earlier footprint in Bangladesh, including the Padma Bridge.
 - Bangladesh has also hosted other multinational projects, such as the Rooppur nuclear plant, involving Russian and Ukrainian engineers.

India-UK Launch Critical Minerals Global Supply Chain Observatory

- India and the United Kingdom formally launched the **Critical Minerals Global Supply Chain Observatory (GSCO)**— a joint initiative to monitor and analyse global critical mineral supply chains through a data-driven platform.
- The observatory was first announced during UK PM Keir Starmer's visit to India in October 2025.
- The platform will be **jointly operated** by:
 - Technology Innovation in Exploration & Mining Foundation (TEXMiN) – India
 - IIT (ISM) Dhanbad – India
 - University of Cambridge – UK
- The launch comes at a time when **critical minerals** — essential for electric vehicles, semiconductors, renewable energy, and defence technologies — have become a major **geopolitical battleground**, with China dominating global mining and refining.

India Resumes Tourist Visas for Bangladeshi Nationals

- India has decided to resume accepting tourist visa applications from Bangladeshi nationals starting June 28, nearly two years after suspending the service following attacks on its diplomatic establishments in Bangladesh in August 2024.
- Tourist visa applications will initially be accepted through **five centres** — Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chattogram, Sylhet, and Khulna. Medical visas and other urgent applications will continue as before. India intends to expand the service further in the future.
- **Background: Why Were Visas Suspended?**
 - Following widespread unrest in Bangladesh in August 2024:
 - ♣ Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre in Dhaka's Dhanmondi area was vandalised & set on fire
 - ♣ Five Indian Visa Application Centres across Bangladesh were attacked
 - ♣ Indian personnel associated with development projects reportedly faced threats

- In response, India suspended tourist visa services while continuing to process medical visas, emergency travel documents, and other humanitarian cases.

Foreign Universities Get Green Light to Open Indian Campuses

- The Union Education Ministry issued Letters of Approval (LoA) to three foreign universities — **University of Bristol** and **University of York** (both in Mumbai) and **University of New South Wales** (Bengaluru) — to establish campuses in India.
- This is part of NEP 2020's internationalisation agenda, which aims to make India a global study destination.
- With these three, **five LoAs** have now been issued under UGC Regulations for Foreign Higher Educational Institutions — the University of Southampton having already commenced operations in 2025–26.
- Additionally, the UGC has issued **10 Letters of Intent** to institutions from the UK, US, Australia, and Italy. While Deakin University, University of Wollongong, and Queen's University Belfast are already operational in GIFT City.

Taiwan Fires HIMARS into Taiwan Strait

- Taiwan's military conducted a live-fire exercise, firing rockets from **HIMARS** (High Mobility Artillery Rocket System) mobile launchers into the **Taiwan Strait** — the narrow body of water separating Taiwan from mainland China.
- This is the first time HIMARS rockets were fired into the Taiwan Strait, marking a significant escalation in Taiwan's public defence posturing.
- **What is HIMARS?**
 - **Origin** - United States (supplied to Taiwan); **Type** - Truck-mounted mobile rocket artillery system

EU's Law Allowing Offshore Deportation Centres

- The European Parliament has passed the **Return Regulation** — allowing EU member states to set up offshore deportation centres ("return hubs") in non-EU countries. The law:
 - Allows deportation of **irregular immigrants** to third-party countries through bilateral agreements.
 - Raises maximum detention period from 6 months to 2 years (unlimited for security risks).
 - Exempts only unaccompanied minors; families with children are included.
 - Third-party host countries must uphold human rights and non-refoulement principles.

Strait of Hormuz: Can Iran Legally Charge Navigation Fees

- Following a framework agreement between the US and Iran, the Strait of Hormuz was reopened to global shipping, and the US blockade was lifted.
- After the US and Israel began hostilities against Iran on February 28, 2026, Iran had used the Strait as both a chokepoint and a bargaining chip, even collecting a per-transit toll to offset war damages.
- Iran has now dropped the toll but continues to levy a navigation fee and an environmental protection charge.
- This raises a core legal question: does Iran's action pass the test of the "right of transit passage" under UNCLOS (1982) and customary international law?

The Legal Principle: Freedom of Navigation

- The heart of the matter lies in **UNCLOS Articles 37 to 44**, which govern "Straits used for International Navigation."

- **Right of Transit Passage**

- All ships and aircraft enjoy a "right of transit passage" — freedom of continuous and swift navigation and overflight through international straits.

- Two key phrases:

- ♣ Transit passage "shall not be impeded"
- ♣ "There shall be no suspension" of transit passage

- The underlying logic: when a large share of global trade depends on a narrow corridor, bordering states should not be able to weaponise it.

- **The Corfu Channel Precedent**

- This principle predates UNCLOS. In the **Corfu Channel case** (UK v. Albania, 1949), the International Court of Justice (ICJ) held that ships enjoy unrestricted passage through a strait used for international navigation during

International Law's Silence: The Loopholes Iran Can Use

- Experts believe the law is not as airtight as it appears, and Iran has several legal openings.

- **Territorial Waters, Not High Seas**

- The Strait lies within the combined territorial seas of Iran and Oman.
- Here, full high-seas freedom of navigation does not apply — instead, ships enjoy only the "right of innocent passage".

- **The "Innocent Passage" Caveat**

- Under Article 19 of UNCLOS, innocent passage is subject to the coastal state being satisfied that passage does not prejudice its peace, good order, or security.
- These grounds are broad enough that Iran could invoke them to deny passage during a tense standoff.

- **The Flawed Canal Analogy**

- Iran might point to the Suez and Panama canals, which charge transit fees.
- But this analogy may not hold — those are artificially engineered waterways built and maintained through sovereign territory, governed by specific treaty regimes, unlike Hormuz, a natural strait governed by UNCLOS.

- **The "Persistent Objector" Argument**

- Iran signed UNCLOS but never ratified it.
- On signing, Iran declared it does not regard the treaty's "transit-passage regime" as customary international law, viewing it instead as a quid pro quo bargain only for treaty parties.
- Under the "persistent objector" doctrine, a state is exempt from an emerging rule of customary international law if it has clearly, consistently, and persistently objected to that rule while it was still forming

- **Iran's Domestic Law**

- In 1993, Iran enacted the "Law of Marine Areas of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Persian Gulf and Oman Sea", which allows it to suspend the passage of foreign ships and requires prior authorisation for warships and vessels carrying harmful substances (for environmental protection)
 - Since this category can include commercial oil tankers, the inclusion of navigation and environmental fees actually reinforces Iran's persistent-objector position
- This claim gains some acceptance under the **doctrine of comity of nations** — where states voluntarily recognise and respect each other's laws and customs

peacetime, as long as transit does not threaten the coastal state's security.

- By this standard, Iran's navigation and environmental charges resemble an attempt to turn a natural strait into a managed, revenue-generating entry point — administered by Iran with Oman's support.

The Bigger Picture: An Economic Weapon

- The distinctive feature of this conflict has been its rapid oscillation between military confrontation and economic warfare, blurring the line between the two.
- Though stretched militarily and economically, Iran demonstrated that it can impose global costs by making ordinary commerce uncertain.
- For an **energy-dependent country like India**, the episode is a reminder that the security of vital sea lanes rests not only on **treaty text**, but on the **geopolitical will** of the states that border them.

BRICS Joint UNESCO Heritage Nominations

- At the 2nd BRICS Culture Working Group Meeting held in Varanasi, BRICS nations deliberated on filing joint nominations for various UNESCO heritage lists to accelerate the safeguarding of shared civilisational heritage.
- Several landmark proposals have emerged, including a significant India-China joint nomination.

The Key Proposals

● India–China: Xuanzang's Travel Accounts

- ✓ India and China are in advanced stages of discussion over a joint nomination for '**The Great Tang Records on the Western Regions**' — the narrative of Chinese Buddhist monk and scholar Xuanzang (Hiuen Tsang).

➡ Hiuen Tsang spent 19 years travelling through medieval India in the 7th century.

- ✓ The proposal is led by China and to be supported by India.

● India–Iran: Panchatantra

- ✓ India aims to jointly nominate Panchatantra with Iran, given that these ancient Indian fables have been a staple of Persian literature and folklore for over 1,500 years.

● India–South Africa: Satyagraha

- ✓ India is also pursuing a joint nomination for the philosophy of Satyagraha with South Africa, recognising its shared historical roots in both countries through Mahatma Gandhi's early activism.

Why Joint Nominations? — The Strategic Logic

- Each country is permitted only two dossiers per two-year UNESCO cycle. Most BRICS nations have vast and overlapping heritage that needs safeguarding, creating a long queue.
- Joint nominations offer a way to skip this queue because:
 - ✓ There is no limit on the number of joint nominations a country can file.
 - ✓ The dossier is led by one country and supported by others.
- The joint nomination framework also addresses a history of competing claims at UNESCO:
 - ✓ In 2017, both India and China separately submitted Sowa-Rigpa (the Tibetan system of medicine) for the ICH list, with China claiming it as its own — creating a diplomatic friction point.

Shared Heritage — The Civilisational Overlap

- Experts highlighted the depth of overlapping heritage among BRICS nations:
 - Ramayana traditions — common to India and Indonesia
 - Buddhist scriptures — shared between India and China
- This civilisational overlap makes joint nominations a natural and logical framework for heritage cooperation.

About UNESCO Heritage Lists

- UNESCO maintains three major heritage lists.
- The **World Heritage List** recognises sites of outstanding universal value — natural /cultural/mixed — such as the Taj Mahal or Great Barrier Reef.
- The **Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) List** safeguards living traditions like music, rituals, craftsmanship, and oral expressions — India's Yoga and Kumbh Mela figure here.
- The **Memory of the World Register** preserves significant documentary heritage, including manuscripts and archival records.

UNHRC Commission Report on Gaza

- A United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) Commission of inquiry released a report concluding that Israel deliberately targeted Palestinian children in Gaza, and that this pattern of acts established genocidal intent to destroy the Palestinian group.
- The central argument is that children were **not incidental victims** but were **directly targeted**. The commission described children as central to the survival and continuity of the Palestinian group, making their targeting a key element in establishing intent.
- The report has significant implications for ongoing international legal cases against Israel.
 - A UN commission **cannot impose penalties**, but its findings can serve as **documentary evidence** before international courts.

About the Commission

- The report comes from the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory (including East Jerusalem) and Israel.
- It was set up in May 2021 through a UNHRC resolution as an independent body to monitor conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, mandated to submit annual reports.
- It is currently chaired by **Justice S. Muralidhar** of India, who retired in 2023 as Chief Justice of the Odisha High Court.
- This is not the first such finding — in September 2025, the commission (then chaired by Navi Pillay of South Africa, with Miloon Kothari of India and Chris Sidoti of Australia) had reached similar conclusions on genocidal intent.

Genocide Under International Law

- The **1948 UN Genocide Convention (Article II)** defines genocide as acts committed with **intent to destroy**, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.
- **The Five Listed Acts**
 - Killing members of the group
 - Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group
 - Deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about physical destruction
 - Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group
 - Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group
- The same definition appears in **Article 6 of the Rome Statute** of the **International Criminal Court (ICC)** and other international jurisdictions.
- **The crucial legal hurdle:** Proving genocide requires establishing **intent (the mental element)**, held to a very high evidentiary standard. Ethnic cleansing, indiscriminate killing, or war crimes **alone are not sufficient** to prove genocide.

Shangri-La Dialogue

The 23rd IISS Shangri-La Dialogue took place in Singapore. India was represented by India's Defence Secretary.

About Shangri-La Dialogue

- Also known as the **Asia Security Summit**, it is **Asia's premier defence and security forum** — the most influential multilateral security exchange platform in the Asia-Pacific region.
- **Established** – 2002; **Held at** - Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore
- **Frequency** – Annual
- **Organised by** - International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), London
- **Co-organised by** - Singapore's Ministry of Defence
- The dialogue brings together: Defence Ministers and Military Chiefs; Heads of Government and State (keynote speakers); Policymakers and Strategic Experts; Senior officials and security practitioners - from across the globe, with a primary focus on the **Asia-Pacific region**.

- The dialogue covers both **traditional** and **non-traditional** security issues, reflecting the full spectrum of Asia-Pacific security challenges.

BRICS Indore Declaration

The 16th BRICS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting was held in Indore, Madhya Pradesh under India's BRICS Presidency. It concluded with the unanimous adoption of the **Indore Declaration** — a shared framework for agricultural cooperation among BRICS nations.

Key Highlights of the Indore Declaration

- **4 Priority Areas**
 - **Food Security** - Farmer-centric governance; income and resilience; Nutrition
 - **Trade** - Stable supply chains and agriculture trade coordination
 - **Climate** - Regenerative, climate-resilient and sustainable farming practices
 - **Technology** - Strengthening innovation, technology and partnerships in food systems and agriculture.

Conclusion

- The Indore Declaration is more than a diplomatic communiqué — it is a collective acknowledgement that the future of agriculture cannot be left to market forces alone.
- By placing farmers at the centre, integrating climate resilience into policy, and harnessing digital innovation, BRICS nations have signalled a shared resolve to build food systems that are equitable, sustainable, and crisis-proof.
- As BRICS continues to evolve from a geopolitical grouping into a governance architecture, the Indore Declaration stands as evidence that the Global South is not merely reacting to global challenges — it is beginning to define the terms of the response.

Four New Institutional Platforms

- ✓ **Global Forum on Farmers' Rights in Seed Systems** - Protects farmers' rights over seeds and traditional knowledge. Counters corporate control of seed systems. India to coordinate.
- ✓ **BRICS Network on Digital Agriculture** - Integrates AI, IoT, geospatial tools, and digital public infrastructure into agriculture. IIT Delhi is the initial coordinating institution.
- ✓ **BRICS Centres of Excellence on Agroecology & Regenerative Agriculture** - Network of research centres promoting natural/ organic farming, soil health restoration, and reduced chemical dependence. ICAR-IIFSR, Modipuram to coordinate.
- ✓ **BRICS AgriN (Agro Inputs, Genetic Resources and Information Network)** - Facilitates exchange of high-yield crop varieties, genetic material, and agricultural technologies among countries to boost productivity and climate adaptability.

Other Key Decisions

- ✓ **BRICS Grain Exchange** — Proposed exchange to strengthen foodgrain trade and stabilise commodity markets within BRICS
- ✓ **Knowledge to Action Hub** — Existing Agricultural Research Platform upgraded to fast-track research-to-field translation
- ✓ **BRICS Urban Research & Knowledge Network** — Virtual platform for urban policy exchange and sustainable urban governance (approved at BRICS Urbanisation Forum, Delhi)

Significance

Global Importance

- ✓ BRICS collectively represents **~50% of world population**, **~42% of global agricultural land**, and **~42% of global foodgrain production** — making this declaration geopolitically significant.
- ✓ Key impacts: stronger global food security, climate-smart farming, South-South cooperation, and better agricultural trade integration.

For India

- ✓ Reinforces India's **leadership role** within BRICS
- ✓ Aligns with domestic priorities — natural farming, seed conservation, digital agriculture
- ✓ Elevates **IIT Delhi** and **ICAR-IIFSR** to global coordinating roles
- ✓ Expands India's **soft power** through institutional and knowledge leadership

BRICS Urbanisation Forum & Urban Declaration

- The 13th BRICS Urbanisation Forum was held in New Delhi under India's BRICS Chairship 2026, hosted by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- Theme of the Forum - Cities for People: BRICS Cooperation for Inclusive and Resilient Urban Futures
- The member nations adopted a Ministerial Declaration on Inclusive, Resilient and People-Centred Urban Development.

Key Highlights of the Declaration

- Reaffirms BRICS commitment to people-centred urban development
- Emphasises creation of inclusive, sustainable, resilient, and liveable cities
- Prioritises equitable access to urban services, especially for marginalised groups
- Reflects shared priorities among member nations on the future of urban governance

Notable Output — Good Practices Compilation

- Member nations presented a joint publication titled 'Cities for People: Urban Stories from BRICS Nations' — a compilation of good urban practices and city-level experiences from across the BRICS bloc.

EU–Western Balkans Summit 2026

- The 8th EU–Western Balkans Summit was held in Tivat, Montenegro, hosted by Montenegro.
- The EU–Western Balkans Summit is a high-level diplomatic meeting aimed at integrating **six candidate nations**(**Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia**) into the European Union.
- These summits focus on accelerating enlargement, economic convergence, and regional security.

Canada's IORA Dialogue Partner Bid

- At the 28th Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials held in New Delhi, Canada's application to become a **Dialogue Partner** of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) is under active examination.
- Canada is being considered because its vast coastal experience and expertise in maritime safety, security, connectivity, and ocean governance can help strengthen the capacities of IORA member states.

About IORA

➤ Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) is an intergovernmental organization established in **1997** to promote regional cooperation and sustainable development among countries bordering the Indian Ocean.

➤ Key Facts

➔ **Headquarters:** Ebene, Mauritius.

➔ **Members:** 23 member states and 12 dialogue partners.

➔ **Objective:** To strengthen economic cooperation, maritime security, trade, investment, and sustainable use of marine resources in the Indian Ocean region.

➤ Priority Areas

➔ Maritime Safety and Security

➔ Trade and Investment Facilitation

➔ Fisheries Management

➔ Disaster Risk Management

➔ Academic, Science and Technology Cooperation

➔ Tourism and Cultural Exchanges

➔ Blue Economy

➔ Women's Economic Empowerment

➤ Observer status

➔ IORA holds observer status in key global institutions including the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), African Union (AU), and UNCTAD.



India's First FATF Vice President

- Senior IAS officer Vivek Aggarwal, Union Culture Secretary, has been appointed Vice President of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) — making him the **first Indian** to hold this position.
- The appointment was made at the conclusion of FATF's Plenary Meeting in Paris. He will serve from July 2026 to June 2027.
- This is a historic milestone in India's engagement with global financial governance. It reflects India's growing credibility in the international fight against illicit finance. It positions India as an **active shaper** — not merely a rule-follower — of global financial integrity standards.

About FATF

• It is an intergovernmental body established in 1989 by the Group of Seven to combat money laundering, terrorist financing, and financing of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

• **Headquarters:** Paris

• **Members:** 38 jurisdictions (including India) and 2 regional organizations.

• **Objective:** To develop global standards and assess countries' compliance in preventing illicit financial flows.

• Functions

◦ Issues internationally accepted **FATF Recommendations** (global standards on anti-money laundering (AML) and combating financing of terrorism (CFT)).

◦ Conducts **Mutual Evaluations** of member countries.

◦ Monitors jurisdictions with strategic deficiencies in AML & CFT frameworks.

• FATF Lists

◦ **Grey List (Jurisdictions Under Increased Monitoring)** - The FATF Grey List includes countries that have strategic deficiencies in their AML/CFT regimes but have committed to addressing them within agreed timelines.

◦ **Black List (High-Risk Jurisdictions Subject to a Call for Action)** - The FATF Black List includes countries with serious deficiencies in combating money laundering and terrorist financing and that have not adequately addressed FATF concerns.

Supreme Court's Victim Protection Plan for Human Trafficking Survivors

- The Supreme Court of India recently framed a comprehensive **Victim Protection Plan** for survivors of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation (CSE).
- The plan will operate until Parliament enacts a dedicated law on protection and rehabilitation of CSE victims.

What the Victim Protection Plan Covers?

- The court framed a detailed plan covering every stage from rescue to reintegration.
- **During Rescue**
 - Victims must not be arrested, abused, photographed, or filmed in ways that reveal identity
 - Special attention mandated for children, transgender persons, persons with disabilities, and those with mental illness
- **Post-Rescue**
 - Victims cannot be kept in lock-ups or detained overnight at police stations
 - Must be provided legal aid, medical care, and counselling immediately
 - Must be produced before appropriate authority without delay
 - Magistrates must hear the victim before ordering long-term custody or rehabilitation
- **In Protective Homes**
 - Homes must not resemble prisons
 - Each survivor to be assigned a case worker and given an individual care plan covering:
 - ♣ Healthcare and counselling
 - ♣ Education and skill development
 - ♣ Livelihood support
 - ♣ Access to government schemes

Key Highlights of the Judgement

On Dignity — What the Court Said?

- ✓ The bench grounded its entire reasoning in human dignity, making two key observations:
 - Dignity is not a fixed condition — it is shaped by circumstances.
 - Material deprivation (poverty, dependence) does not merely diminish dignity; it actively creates conditions in which dignity can be stripped away. This is why trafficking victims are structurally vulnerable.

On Rehabilitation — A Constitutional Right

- ✓ The court made a landmark constitutional holding: victims of trafficking for CSE have a **right to rehabilitation** flowing from:
 - **Article 21** — Right to life with dignity
 - **Article 23** — Explicit prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour
- ✓ Drawing on *Bandhua Mukti Morcha* (1984) and *Neerja Choudhary* (1984), the court held that **rescue alone is insufficient** — rehabilitation is equally essential.
- ✓ The goal is not merely to punish perpetrators but to **empower victims** by guaranteeing their rights.

The Problem with Section 17 of ITPA

- ✓ **Section 17** of the **Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA), 1956** governs what happens after a woman is removed from a brothel during a raid.
- ✓ Its fundamental flaw: it treats three very different categories identically —
 - Women **trafficked** into prostitution
 - Women trafficked but who **later continued voluntarily**
 - Women who entered sex work **entirely voluntarily**
- ✓ The court held that this one-size-fits-all approach risks violating rights and dignity.
- ✓ **Key directions given by the court**
 - Magistrates must first conduct an inquiry to identify voluntary adult sex workers — for whom "rescue" does not apply
 - A victim's consent must be the primary consideration in all decisions about detention in protective homes or family reintegration
- ✓ However, experts point out that the line between voluntary and involuntary is rarely clean.
- ✓ Women who entered under coercion may, after years, describe it as part of life. Consent operates under **structural conditions of poverty** that make clean determinations difficult.

- o Bank accounts must be created for long-term residents
- o Mechanisms to report abuse within homes must be established
- **Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs)**
 - o Must be headed by officers of Deputy Superintendent of Police rank or above
 - o AHTUs to be notified as police stations with powers to register and investigate trafficking cases
 - o Must maintain databases on traffickers and victims and coordinate with social workers and child welfare officials

What the Court Did Not Do— And What It Asked Parliament to Do?

- The bench declined to create Organised Crime Investigation Agency (OCIA) as originally promised by the government.
- Instead, it directed Parliament to:
 - o Amend Sections 7, 8, and 20 of ITPA, which currently expose victims to prosecution
 - o Rethink mandatory fixed-period detention in protective homes
 - o Recognise the rights of voluntary adult sex workers — noting that "the rights of sex workers can exist without there being a right to sex work"
 - o Enact a comprehensive standalone anti-trafficking law

Significance

- Marks a judicial intervention filling a legislative vacuum.
- Shifts the framework from criminalisation to victim-centred justice
- Establishes rehabilitation as a fundamental right, not a discretionary welfare measure
- Exposes the chronic failure of legislative will on anti-trafficking legislation spanning two decades
- Highlights the need to disaggregate victims from voluntary sex workers in law and policy

{For more on Human Trafficking in India refer, The Recitals-May 2026}

India's Land Ports Expansion Plan

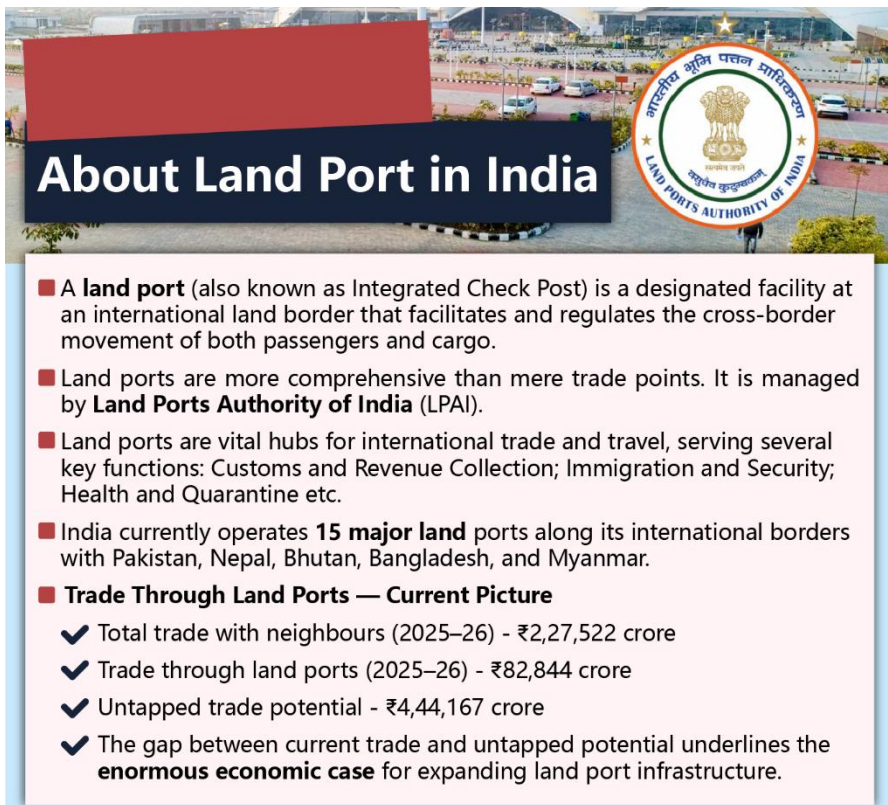
The Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI) proposes to build 74 additional land ports along its international borders in the coming years. The rollout features 23 proposed land ports under Phase I and 40 proposed land ports under Phase II, alongside 11 facilities already under construction

Phase I

Proposed across various strategic locations, with a strong current emphasis on West Bengal and the Siliguri Corridor to secure and streamline trade with Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan

Phase II Proposed Land Ports — Border-wise Breakdown

- **China Border (3 proposed)**
 - o India currently has **no operational land port** along the 3,488-km China border.
 - o **Three Proposed Land Port:**
Namgia - Himachal Pradesh;
Gunji -



About Land Port in India

- A **land port** (also known as Integrated Check Post) is a designated facility at an international land border that facilitates and regulates the cross-border movement of both passengers and cargo.
- Land ports are more comprehensive than mere trade points. It is managed by **Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI)**.
- Land ports are vital hubs for international trade and travel, serving several key functions: Customs and Revenue Collection; Immigration and Security; Health and Quarantine etc.
- India currently operates **15 major land ports** along its international borders with Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar.
- **Trade Through Land Ports — Current Picture**
 - ✓ Total trade with neighbours (2025–26) - ₹2,27,522 crore
 - ✓ Trade through land ports (2025–26) - ₹82,844 crore
 - ✓ Untapped trade potential - ₹4,44,167 crore
 - ✓ The gap between current trade and untapped potential underlines the **enormous economic case** for expanding land port infrastructure.

Uttarakhand; Nathu La – Sikkim.

- **Pakistan Border (6 proposed)**

- Currently, only one operational land port exists at Attari, Punjab.
- Trade through LoC Facilitation Centres at Salamabad (Uri) and Chakan-da-Bagh (Poonch) has been suspended since 2019 following the Pulwama terror attack.
- 6 Proposed ports – Teetwal – J&K; Adusa- J&K; Chakan Da Bagh – J&K; Attari Railway Station- Punjab; Hussainiwala – Punjab; Munabao Railway Station – Rajasthan.

- **Other Borders**

- Nepal – 13; Bangladesh – 12; Bhutan – 4; Myanmar – 2

Significance of Proposed Land Port

- **Economic** — Unlocking nearly ₹4.44 lakh crore in untapped trade potential with neighbours.
- **Strategic** — Ports along China and Pakistan borders signal diplomatic intent alongside security preparedness.
- **Connectivity** — Supports India's neighbourhood-first policy and Act East Policy through better physical linkages.
- **Soft Power** — Facilitates religious tourism, pilgrimages, and people-to-people ties across civilisational borders.

The infographic is divided into two main sections. The top section, titled 'Land Port Management System', features a background image of a busy border crossing. It lists several key points: the Ministry of Home Affairs launched Vinimay, a Land Port Management System (LPMS); LPMS is a digital platform aimed at modernising and streamlining operations across India's land ports; LPMS enables seamless coordination among multiple stakeholders; it enables secure, real-time exchange of logistics and regulatory information; it introduces end-to-end digital workflows for cargo and passenger processing; it is fully integrated with key national platforms like ICEGATE, ULIP, and the motor vehicle ecosystem; and it is expected to significantly reduce paperwork and improve operational efficiency. The bottom section, titled 'Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI)', states that it is a statutory body under the Department of Border Management, Ministry of Home Affairs, and was established in 2012 to develop and manage land ports.

Land Port Management System

- The Ministry of Home Affairs launched **Vinimay**, a Land Port Management System (LPMS).
- An initiative of the **Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI)**, LPMS is a **digital platform** aimed at modernising and streamlining operations across India's land ports into a unified system.
- LPMS enables seamless coordination among multiple stakeholders, including customs, immigration authorities, border guarding forces and other agencies involved in land port operations.
- It enables secure, **real-time exchange of logistics and regulatory information**, bringing land ports at par with digital systems already in place at airports and seaports.
- It introduces **end-to-end digital workflows** for cargo and passenger processing, including slot booking, online payments, shipment tracking, and single-window clearances.
- Fully integrated with key national platforms such as ICEGATE (Indian Customs Electronic Data Interchange Gateway), Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP), and the motor vehicle ecosystem, LPMS will **improve interoperability and reduce delays**.
- It is also expected to significantly reduce paperwork, improve operational efficiency at border checkpoints, and enhance ease of doing business.
- It is a landmark step in India's journey towards a modern, **technology-enabled smart border management system**, reflecting the nation's strategic focus on strengthening trade facilitation, passenger connectivity, and national security.

Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI)

- It is a **statutory body** under the **Department of Border Management, Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- Established in 2012, it is responsible for **developing and managing land ports** to facilitate trade, connectivity, and regional cooperation.

DNA Records Under the CrPI Act

- Police across several Indian states have begun collecting DNA records of suspects under the **Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act, 2022** (CrPI Act).
- Over one lakh DNA profiles have been generated and stored in a central database operated by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

About CrPI Act, 2022

- **Background**
 - The CrPI Act replaced the colonial-era Identification of Prisoners Act, 1920, which was limited to collecting only fingerprints and footprints.
 - The new law was enacted to:

- ♣ Modernise identification techniques in line with global standards
- ♣ Strengthen the criminal justice system through scientific evidence
- ♣ Improve conviction rates through accurate identification
- ♣ Solve interstate crimes through a unified national database

Persons whose data may be collected	
▪ Convicted or arrested for offences punishable with rigorous imprisonment of one year or more ▪ Persons ordered to give security for good behaviour or maintaining peace ▪ Magistrate may order in other cases collection from any arrested person to aid criminal investigation	▪ Convicted or arrested for any offence. However, biological samples may be taken forcibly only from persons arrested for offences against a woman or a child, or if the offence carries a minimum of seven years imprisonment ▪ Persons detained under any preventive detention law ▪ On the order of Magistrate, from any person (not just an arrested person) to aid investigation

- **Types of Measurements Collected**
 - Fingerprints, palm prints, footprints, and photographs
 - Iris and retina scans
 - Physical and biological samples — blood and saliva for DNA profiling
 - Behavioural attributes — signatures and handwriting
- **Data Retention**
 - Records retained for up to 75 years from date of collection
 - Stored in a central database maintained by NCRB
 - Records deleted upon acquittal or discharge in all proceedings
- **Authorised Agencies**
 - State police forces across India
 - Central agencies — CBI, NIA, and NCB
 - Prison authorities
- **Implementation — Current Status**
 - Over 2,600 measurement collection units established across the country
 - System available in police districts and prisons nationwide
 - Integrated with forensic laboratories for processing biological samples

National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS)

- Launched by NCRB in 2022 to support the CrPI system:
 - Fully automates the fingerprint matching process
 - Currently holds over 1.27 crore fingerprint records
 - Provides instant matching capabilities across the country
 - Has already helped solve old inter-state criminal cases

AN-32 Crash in Assam

- Five IAF personnel, including two officers, were killed when an Antonov AN-32 military transport aircraft crashed during landing at Jorhat Air Force Station, Assam.
- This is the **third major crash of an AN-32 in the last decade**, reigniting concerns about the ageing fleet's safety and the pace of its modernisation and replacement.

About AN-32

- The AN-32 (Antonov AN-32) is a Soviet-origin **twin-engine turboprop military transport** aircraft. Its NATO reporting name is Cline.
- **Inducted into IAF - 1984; Maximum Speed - 530 km/h; Maximum Payload - 27 tonnes; Cargo Capacity - 6.7 tonnes.**

- **Key Operational Features**

- Can operate from far-flung airfields with minimum ground infrastructure — critical for operations in remote and difficult terrain
- Covers small to medium ranges
- Used for troop transport, cargo delivery, paratrooping operations, and limited bombing roles

- **Combat Record**

- ✦ **Kargil War (1999); Operation Parakram (2001–02)**

Project Kusha

- Defence Minister described **Project Kusha** as a potential "game changer" for India's security architecture while inaugurating the Advanced Weapon System Complex at DRDO's Defence Research & Development Laboratory (DRDL), Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Missile Complex, Hyderabad.

- He asserted that the system had already proved its importance during Operation Sindoor.

- **Significance**

- **Strategic Autonomy** — Reduces dependence on foreign air defence platforms like S-400

- **Battle-Tested**

Credibility — Performance during Operation Sindoor validates the system before formal induction

- **Atmanirbhar Bharat in Defence** — Symbolises India's shift from import-dependent to innovation-driven defence manufacturing



About Project Kusha

- ✦ Project Kusha is a **long-range** indigenous **Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) system** being developed by DRDO to provide a comprehensive, layered air defence shield against a wide range of aerial threats.
- ✦ It is widely regarded as India's homegrown answer to Russia's S-400 Triumf system.
- ✦ Three Interceptor Variants - **M1** ~150 km; **M2** ~250 km; **M3** ~350–400 km.
- ✦ **Threat Coverage**
 - The system is designed to counter:
 - ➔ Fighter aircraft, including stealth platforms
 - ➔ Drones and cruise missiles
 - ➔ Precision-guided munitions
 - ➔ Certain ballistic missile threats
- ✦ **Procurement & Deployment Timeline**
 - 2023 — Defence Acquisition Council granted Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for procurement of five squadrons for the Indian Air Force
 - 2028–2030 — Expected operational deployment
- ✦ **Integration with Broader Defence Architecture**
 - **IACCS Integration** - Project Kusha will be integrated with the IAF's Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS), enabling real-time coordination between military and civilian radar networks.
 - **Mission Sudarshan Chakra**
 - ➔ Announced by PM Modi on Independence Day 2025, this is India's overarching initiative to build a multi-layered air and missile defence shield by 2035.
 - ➔ Project Kusha is a cornerstone of this mission.
 - ➔ The full architecture will combine:
 - ✦ Long-range systems like Project Kusha
 - ✦ Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air Missiles (QRSAM)
 - ✦ Very Short-Range Air Defence Systems (VSHORADS)
 - ✦ Ballistic Missile Defence assets
 - ✦ Future directed energy weapons

Indian Navy's Triple Commissioning

- The Indian Navy simultaneously commissioned three indigenously built warships — **INS Dunagiri**, **INS Sanshodhak**, and **INS Agray** — in Kolkata.

- This historic "tri-commissioning" is significant because each ship performs a distinct strategic role, collectively strengthening **India's blue-water capability, maritime domain awareness, and coastal security**.
- Over 75% of the components are indigenous, reflecting the growing success of Aatmanirbhar Bharat in defence manufacturing. All three ships were built by GRSE, Kolkata.

Three Ships at a Glance

- **INS Dunagiri — The Blue-Water Warrior**
 - Dunagiri is a stealth guided-missile frigate under Project 17A. It is the largest of the three (149 m, 6,670 tonnes).
 - ♣ 'Stealth' here means reduced radar and sensor visibility — not complete invisibility.
 - Key weapons and systems: BrahMos surface-to-surface missiles, Medium-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (MRSAM) system, MF-STAR radar, sonar, electronic warfare systems, and anti-submarine weapons.
 - Its role is blue-water operations — fighting far out at sea against both conventional and non-conventional threats.
 - Sister ships in Project 17A include INS Nigiri, Himgiri, Taragiri, Udaygiri, Mahendragiri and Vindhyagiri.
- **INS Sanshodhak — The Eye Beneath the Sea**
 - Sanshodhak is a Survey Vessel — Large (SVL). Its job is to **measure and map the sea**: water depth, seabed features, navigational routes, port approach channels, and oceanographic data.
 - It is equipped with autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs), remotely operated vehicles (ROVs), and multi-beam echo sounders.
 - It is the 4th and last ship of the Sandhayak-class SVLs (contract signed October 2018).
 - The other three are INS Sandhayak (Feb 2024), INS Nirdeshak (Dec 2024), and INS Ikshak (Nov 2025).
- **INS Agray — The Coastal Submarine-Hunter**
 - Agray is the smallest (77 m, 900 tonnes) but most specialised of the three. It is an Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW SWC) of the **Arnala-class**.
 - Its weapons: lightweight torpedoes, indigenous anti-submarine rocket launchers, and sonar systems.
 - Its role is to detect and destroy submarines in littoral waters — shallow coastal zones near ports, naval bases, and sea approaches.
 - Coastal waters are especially tricky for sub-detection because fishing boats, merchant vessels, and seabed clutter create a noisy, cluttered acoustic environment. That is precisely where Agray operates.
 - **Arnala class ships**: Anjadip, Amini, Androth, Agray, Abhay, and Akshay.

26th All India Fingerprint Conference 2026

- The Union Home Minister inaugurated the 26th All India Fingerprint Conference 2026.
- During the conference, the minister launched four new NCRB applications—**NCRB-Abhigyan, CrPI, e-Prosecution 2.0, and e-Forensics 2.0**—to strengthen India's criminal justice system through technology, forensic science, and data-driven policing.
 - **NCRB-Abhigyan** - A mobile application enabling field police personnel to access the National Fingerprint Database using certified fingerprint scanners for real-time suspect identification.
 - **CrPI (Crime Person Identification)** - A multimodal biometric platform integrating: Facial recognition, Iris matching, DNA matching. It enhances identification accuracy and helps identify repeat offenders and suspects captured on CCTV.
 - **e-Forensics 2.0** - A digital platform connecting forensic laboratories and investigating agencies, enabling: Digital case tracking; Sample registration; Lab Workflow management; Online report access; Chain-of-custody management.
 - **e-Prosecution 2.0** - A platform that digitally integrates police, prosecution, and judicial processes to ensure timely prosecution and convictions.

- **Criminal Justice Reforms: The Three-Year Justice Goal**

- The government aims to ensure that the entire judicial process—from registration of an FIR to conviction—is completed within three years.
- The reforms seek to modernize criminal laws and integrate science and technology into every stage of investigation and prosecution.

Drug Control in India: Vision Document 2026-2029 and NCB Annual Report 2025

- Union Home addressed the 10th Apex-Level Meeting of Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD) in New Delhi. During the meeting, he released two key documents:
 - **Vision Document on Drug Control (2026-2029);** and
 - **NCB Annual Report 2025.**
- Together, they set India's drug control strategy and map the evolving threat.

The Vision Document on Drug Control (2026-2029)

- **Strategic Foundation** - The document targets three goals. Demand reduction. Supply reduction. Rehabilitation. Its core principle is simple: "detect, disrupt and destroy."
- **Core Shift: From Carriers to Networks** - Earlier focus was on catching individual carriers. Now the focus shifts to **dismantling entire networks**. Enforcement will target suppliers, financiers, handlers and facilitators too. A mission-mode campaign aims to dismantle 100 major interstate and transnational drug cartels.
- **Whole-of-Government Approach** - Over 40 Ministries will work together. State governments, district administrations, educational institutions and civil society will also be part of this single national framework.
- **Key Commitments**
 - **Legal reform:** The NDPS Act and Rules will be amended. This will close existing loopholes. It will also bring a more reformative approach for drug users and addicts.
 - **Speedy justice:** Exclusive NDPS courts are planned for faster convictions in major cases.
 - **Following the money:** Financial investigation will become mandatory in major cases. The PITNDPS Act (Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1988) will be used more often to seize illicit assets.
 - **Global reach:** States will pursue traffickers hiding abroad using Red Corner Notices, with CBI's help.
 - **Technology:** Plans include advanced surveillance, anti-drone systems, AI-based profiling, and container scanning at all ports of entry.
 - **Synthetic drugs:** Special focus on methamphetamine and mephedrone. Precursor chemical controls will be tightened. Industries must flag suspicious transactions voluntarily.

NCB Annual Report 2025

- **The Scale of the Threat**
 - The report records an **all-time high** of over 1.48 lakh cases and seizures of more than **1,200 tonnes** of narcotics and psychotropic substances.
 - The seizures range from **plant-based drugs to synthetic substances**, diverted pharmaceuticals and precursor chemicals — a sign of how complex the threat has become.
- **A Shifting Global Supply: Myanmar Overtakes Afghanistan**
 - The single biggest change is in where India's opium now comes from. Myanmar has overtaken Afghanistan as the leading source of illicit opium.
 - The reason is twofold: the **Taliban's 2022 ban** cut Afghan poppy cultivation sharply, while Myanmar's cultivation expanded amid conflict and economic collapse.
- **The Eastern Front: The Manipur and Mizoram Corridors**
 - The northeastern States of Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland face the sharpest exposure.

- The Free Movement Regime (FMR) and porous, unfenced stretches along the India-Myanmar border have turned these States from peripheral transit zones into active staging grounds for distribution into the Indian heartland.
- Two corridors are highlighted:
 - ♣ **Manipur corridor** — through which National Highway 102 passes — is the most direct entry point and the primary land route for both heroin and methamphetamine tablets.
 - ♣ **Champhai corridor** in Mizoram, near Myanmar's Chin State, routes drugs towards Silchar (Assam's Barak Valley) via Aizawl.
- Crucially, the report links this trade not just to addiction but to arms smuggling and the financing of insurgent and terror groups — making it a direct internal security concern.
- **The Western Front: Drones over Punjab**
 - The Afghan pipeline has not disappeared despite the Taliban crackdown reducing production by 93% from its peak.
 - The most striking trend here is drone-based smuggling from across the Pakistan border, which has risen five-fold in five years and hits Punjab hardest.
 - The growth in drone incidents shows the rising operational maturity of these networks.
 - Beyond drones, the South Asian arm of the Afghan trade also enters through the land frontier in Punjab and Rajasthan and via the **maritime route along the Gujarat and Maharashtra coasts**, using fishing vessels and small craft that slip below standard surveillance.
- **Digital Trafficking: Telegram and Encrypted Apps**
 - The report flags encrypted messaging apps — Telegram, WhatsApp and Signal — as major trafficking channels, with Telegram emerging as a key platform for **drug advertising**.
 - Why this is harder to police than the darknet: these apps need no special access and work on any smartphone, lowering the entry barrier.
 - Enforcement is difficult because of jurisdictional hurdles in getting platforms to cooperate, auto-deletion of messages, use of multiple accounts and layered communication, and cryptocurrency payments that protect anonymity.
- **Emerging Threats to Watch**
 - The report singles out two threats needing urgent attention:
 - ♣ **Nitazenes**— a class of synthetic opioids said to be up to 500 times more potent than heroin.
 - ♣ The deepening link between drug trafficking and organised violence across transit economies.
 - India is also exposed to a wider global shift marked by ultra-potent synthetic opioids and record cocaine output.

Conclusion

India's drug threat has changed shape. The response, too, must shift — from individual seizures to network dismantling. The Vision Document attempts exactly this shift, backed by legal reform, technology, and a whole-of-government approach.

Netra AEW&C System Receives Final Operational Clearance

- India's indigenous **Netra Airborne Early Warning and Control** (AEW&C) system, developed by the Centre for Airborne Systems (CABS), Bengaluru, was accorded Final Operational Clearance (FOC).
- The system, integrated on the Brazilian Embraer EMB-145I aircraft platform, features an Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar, Identification Friend or Foe (IFF), mission computer, secure communication networks, electronic support measures (ESM) and communication support measures.
- India became the **fifth country** to develop this capability, used as a force multiplier in the 2019 Balakot strikes and Operation Sindoor (2025).
- The Cabinet Committee on Security has approved development of **six more** AEW&C Mk-1A systems by CABS, expanding India's airborne surveillance fleet and strengthening network-centric air operations capability.

Assam-Nagaland Oil Deal: Tapping a 30-Year-Old Energy Opportunity

The Union government, Assam, and Nagaland have signed a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to restart oil and gas exploration along their disputed border area — an activity stalled for three decades.

Background: Why Was This Area Off-Limits for 30 Years?

- A stretch of land along the Assam-Nagaland border, known as the Disputed Area Belt (DAB), has remained a no-go zone for exploration for three decades due to boundary disputes and law and order issues between the two states.
- This belt is believed to hold promising hydrocarbon reserves — but they remained untapped simply because both states could not agree on the border issue first.

About the New MoU

- The MoU **does not resolve the border dispute** itself. Instead, it creates a practical working arrangement that allows exploration to proceed despite the unresolved boundary issue.
- **Key Features**
 - Covers more than 1,000 sq km of the disputed border area.
 - Establishes a **coordinated framework** for mineral oil operations — ensuring smooth functioning, safety, security of workers and equipment, and proper coordination between the Centre, Assam, and Nagaland.
 - Both states have agreed not to let the border dispute obstruct oil exploration, treating these resources as national wealth.
 - The agreement establishes a 50:50 resource-sharing formula to resume extraction
 - Beyond the six already-identified oil and gas fields, Nagaland has agreed to allow exploration across the entire state.

How Big Is the Potential?

- **Assam** - ~22% of India's crude oil reserves; ~15% of natural gas reserves
- **Nagaland** - Major untapped potential in the **Naga-Schuppen Belt**, part of the larger **Assam-Arakan Basin**
- Current oil production from the Northeast stands at just 1,000–1,500 barrels per day. This agreement could help increase production more than tenfold over time.
- This marks Nagaland's return to oil production after 31 years.

SIPRI Yearbook 2026: India's Expanding Nuclear Arsenal and Global Security Trends

- The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Yearbook 2026 reported that India's nuclear stockpile has grown to around 190 warheads by early 2026, up from 180 a year earlier.
 - Pakistan's nuclear stockpile has remained stable at around 170 warheads as of January 2026.
 - China's arsenal is estimated to have grown from 600 to up to 620 warheads during the year.
- The report also flagged a significant shift — India appears to be moving toward deploying warheads on active launchers, a departure from its traditional posture.

A Notable Shift: Deployed Warheads

- For the first time, SIPRI estimates that India has deployed **12 nuclear warheads** at present.
- It has long been assumed that India stores warheads separately from launchers during peacetime — a doctrine of de-mating consistent with its No First Use (NFU) policy.
- However, recent moves toward placing missiles in canisters and conducting sea-based deterrence patrols suggest India may be shifting toward mating warheads with launchers in peacetime.
- SIPRI assesses that India may have started deploying a small number of warheads on a single SSBN (**nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine**) conducting occasional deterrence patrols.

India's Broader Defence Profile (SIPRI Findings)

- **Military Expenditure**
 - India retained its position as the **world's fifth-largest military spender** in 2025.
 - Military expenditure estimated at \$92.1 billion, an increase of 8.9% over the previous year.
 - India ranks behind only the United States, China, Russia, and Germany.
- **Arms Imports**
 - India remained the world's second-largest importer of major arms during 2021–25, accounting for 8.2% of global arms imports.
 - The top five global arms importers — Ukraine, India, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Pakistan — together accounted for 35% of global arms imports during the period.

Key Risk Flagged by SIPRI

- The report identifies two particularly destabilising trends:
 - Nuclear-conventional entanglement — growing overlap between dual-capable nuclear and conventional military systems, especially missiles.
 - Proliferation of Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs).
- Submarine-based nuclear delivery systems are also proliferating, particularly among the four nuclear-armed states in the Indo-Pacific (US, China, India, North Korea).

Project Glasswing Access to India

- US AI company Anthropic extended access to its **restricted cybersecurity programme**, Project Glasswing, to select Indian organisations, including key government agencies protecting critical infrastructure.
 - The programme was expanded from the US and UK to over 15 countries, with India a significant addition.
- Project Glasswing provides controlled, vetted access to Claude **Mythos Preview** — a powerful, restricted AI model capable of *identifying critical software vulnerabilities at scale, potentially reshaping the cyber attacker-defender balance*.
- However, the access to Anthropic's flagship models, Fable 5 and Mythos 5, was suspended for all foreign nationals worldwide following a strict US Commerce Department export control directive citing national security concerns. As a result, Project Glasswing was directly and immediately halted by the suspension.
 - The United States government has now lifted its restrictions.

Proposed Strategic Roadmap for India:

- **Institutional Reforms:** Establish an **India AI Safety Institute (IAISI)** to conduct rigorous red-teaming of frontier models against domestic infrastructure, integrated with accountability mandates under the **Digital Personal Data Protection Act**.
- **Global Alliances:** Lead a **G-20 initiative** to standardize international notification and review protocols for the release of high-risk open-weight AI models.
- **Infrastructure Modernization:** Allocate a **₹15,000-20,000 crore cybersecurity fund** specifically to overhaul legacy back-end systems in public sector units.
- **Sovereign Defensive AI:** Prioritize development of indigenous AI systems capable of real-time network telemetry monitoring, anomaly detection, and automated patch deployment to counter machine-speed threats.

Fourth S-400 Squadron

- India has received the fourth squadron of the Russia-made S-400 Triumf air defence system, further strengthening the country's long-range air defence network. The system is expected to be deployed in an operational area shortly.

- The delivery is part of a \$5.43 billion agreement signed between India and Russia in 2018 for five S-400 regimental systems.
- Three squadrons had already been inducted into service; the fourth has now arrived, after delays linked to the Russia-Ukraine conflict.
- The fifth and final squadron is expected to be delivered in 2027, with deliveries now back on schedule.
- **About the S-400 Triumph**
 - The S-400 is among the world's most advanced long-range surface-to-air missile systems.
 - Capable of engaging aircraft, drones, cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles at extended ranges.
 - Forms a key pillar of India's layered air defence architecture along both the western and northern fronts.
 - S-400 played a very significant operational role during Operation Sindoor.
- **Parallel Push: Indigenous Air Defence**
 - Beyond the Russian-origin systems, India is simultaneously developing an indigenous integrated air defence ecosystem under the broader 'Sudarshan Chakra' initiative — reflecting a dual-track approach combining proven foreign systems with long-term self-reliance goals.

RudraM-II Missile

- DRDO and the Indian Air Force (IAF) successfully conducted flight-tests of the indigenous RudraM-II **air-to-surface missile**.
- RudraM-II has been developed indigenously by Research Centre Imarat (RCI), Hyderabad — the nodal DRDO laboratory for the programme.

DRDO Tests Multi-layered Ballistic Missile Defence Capability

- DRDO successfully conducted three consecutive flight tests, demonstrating its **Multi-layered Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD)** capability and a medium-range anti-ship missile.
- The interceptors successfully engaged targets, including capability to counter Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs). This places India among an elite group of nations possessing BMD capability against ICBMs. The systems incorporate the latest technologies to address emerging missile threats.
- **NASM-MR Test** - The maiden flight test of the Naval Anti-Ship Missile-Medium Range (NASM-MR) was also successfully carried out, strengthening India's naval strike capabilities.

First Batch of NDA-Trained Women Cadets Commissioned as Officers

- The first batch of 17 women cadets trained at the National Defence Academy (NDA) were commissioned as officers across the three services— a year after they walked past the symbolic Antim Pag (final step) at the NDA, Pune.
- This marks a defining milestone in the history of women's participation in the Indian military.
- **Background**
 - This is the **first time women officers** are joining the forces directly with a permanent commission, rather than starting with a Short Service Commission.
 - Until now, women officers under Short Service Commission could seek permanent commission only after completing 14 years of service.
 - The breakthrough came through an **interim order of the Supreme Court** in August 2021, passed while hearing a plea seeking directions to allow eligible women to take the NDA and Naval Academy entrance exams conducted by UPSC.
 - The first batch of women cadets joined the NDA in **July–August 2022** as part of its **148th Course**, and have now completed their rigorous pre-commission training at their respective service academies.

New Chief of Army Staff Appointed

- Lieutenant General Dhiraj Seth, presently Vice Chief of Army Staff, has been appointed the next Chief of the Army Staff, succeeding General Upendra Dwivedi.
- Commissioned into the Armoured Corps in 1986, Lt Gen Seth has commanded at every level, including the Sudarshan Chakra Corps, and is among the rare officers to have led two operational Army Commands — South Western and Southern Command.

Lt. Gen. Rajiv Ghai Appointed Military Adviser to NSCS

- Lieutenant General Rajiv Ghai, currently Deputy Chief of the Indian Army has been appointed the new Military Adviser (MA) to the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS), which functions under National Security Adviser Ajit Doval.
- This marks the first time a serving military officer has held this post — previously occupied by officers after retirement.
- His appointment is seen as a move to strengthen military inputs and operational expertise within India's top national security decision-making structure.

Indian Army Raises 'Baaz Battalions'

- The Indian Army is raising dedicated 'Baaz Battalions' to boost its Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) capability for surveillance, intelligence gathering, and rapid response. The battalion is part of a broader effort to strengthen its unmanned warfare capabilities and expand the role of drones in future military operations.
- The decision draws on operational lessons from recent **LAC standoffs with China** and the successful use of drones during **Operation Sindoor**.
- By centralising drone capabilities, the Baaz Battalions aim to provide frontline units with advanced aerial surveillance and **real-time intelligence**, enabling faster, more informed combat decision-making.

Potato Patch Coral

Researchers have identified a giant *Pavona clavus* (**Potato Patch coral**) colony near **Kadmat Island in Lakshadweep** that may be among the world's largest and oldest living coral colonies.

Findings of the Research

- The coral colony is estimated to be around 700-1800 years old and can potentially be the oldest living coral structures in the Indian Ocean Region.
- The coral colony is spread roughly across 1 acre. Despite several heatwaves, cyclones and coral bleaching events the coral colony has remained resilient, with over 58% of the colony still alive

About Potato Patch Corals

- They are large dome shaped or mound like colonies
- Very slow growing species- growing over centuries
- They grow at shallow depths between 5m and 20m under the surface of water
- They form as a result of centuries of calcification (CaCO_3) by coral polyps

Turquoise Network Initiative

The **FAO and COP31 of Bonn Climate Conference**, under Turkey's presidency have proposed a Turquoise Network Initiative, which is also called the **Food-Water-Climate** Nexus Initiative.

About the Initiative

- The key objectives are-
 - Promote climate-resilient agriculture and improve water-use efficiency
 - Strengthen adaptation planning & enhance food security under changing climatic conditions
 - Involve stakeholders like the governments, FAO, international organizations, research institutions and civil society
 - Seeks to address the critical issue of fragmentation in the countries' approach of looking at food, water and climate
- The proposal builds on the **Sharm el-Sheikh Joint Work on Agriculture and Food Security (SJWA)**
- It seeks to help countries incorporate food systems, agriculture and water management into their Nationally Determined Contributions and climate implementation strategies under the Paris Agreement.

Arbuscular Mycorrhizal Fungi

An international research team has mapped the underground networks of arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF), often called the Earth's hidden wood wide web.

Underground Fungal Network

- The AM fungi form symbiotic associations with over 70% of terrestrial plant species
- They create vast networks of microscopic filaments called hyphae beneath the soil
- Plants provide carbon compounds to fungi, while fungi provide water, phosphorous, nitrogen and other nutrients
- The network is estimated to be about 110 quadrillion km in length with a teaspoon of healthy soil containing up to 10m of fungal network
- Significant proportion of global fungal networks occur in grasslands, savannah ecosystems, the Tibetan plateau, Banni grasslands, etc.

Surha Taal- India's 100th Ramsar Wetland Site

India recently added Surha Taal in Ballia district, Uttar Pradesh, to the list of Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention, taking the total sites to 100.

About Surha Taal (Jai Prakash Narayan Bird Sanctuary)

- The wetland is a natural freshwater oxbow lake and situated near the confluence region of the Ganga and Ghaghara river systems
- It was formed by the meandering and course changes of the Ghaghara river
- This addition brings Uttar Pradesh's total tally of Ramsar-recognized wetlands to 13.

Namo Oxygen Parks

The Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change inaugurated first 18 Namu Oxygen Parks across Delhi on World Environment Day 2026.

About Namu Oxygen Parks

- They are urban green spaces (totaling 100) developed to increase the green cover in Delhi, improve air quality and enhance urban biodiversity
- Involves a target of 15 lakh trees to be planted during the year
- They support the nationwide 'Ek Ped Maa ke Naam' campaign.

Other Initiatives Launched

- **Delhi Bird Atlas and Management Plan for Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary** released
- **Working Plan for NCT Delhi (2026-2037)** released
- Dust Free Delhi Campaign

Glacial Lake Expansion in Arunachal Pradesh

Four out of the five studied high-risk glacial lakes in Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang district have expanded between 2016 and 2026, highlighting the increasing risk of Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) hazard and the role of climate change.

Observations

- The study was conducted across five glacial lakes in the Mago Chu basin of Tawang District, where three of the lakes were already categorized as high risk or very high risk by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)
- The expansion in the four lakes is associated with-
 - Glacier retreat and increased meltwater accumulation
 - Rising temperatures associated with climate change
- Most expansion was observed in Sanhapo Lake (expansion of nearly 10 hectares), followed by Dharkha Tso Lake.
- These lakes need to be monitored closely to avoid the incidents such as the South Lhonak Lake GLOF in Sikkim in 2023 which had led to significant loss of life and infrastructure.

Bovista Colorata Mushroom

A rare Yellow Puffball Mushroom has been documented by ICAR- Krishi Vigyan Kendra in Arunachal Pradesh's Longding district. The specimen has been provisionally identified as *Bovista colorata*.

About Mushroom

- Characterized with bright yellow coloration and a round puffball shape
- It lacks conventional mushroom structures such as cap, gills and a distinct stalk
- The spores develop inside the closed fruited body and are released when mature
- They grow in meadows, grasslands and open fields

Ecological Importance

- They are important decomposers, break down dead organic matter
- Contribute to carbon cycling

Biomimicry

Biomimicry has become a topic of discussion in the business environment as a practice of learning from nature's designs, processes and ecosystems that can help businesses, institutions and even nations move from mere replication to innovation.

What is Biomimicry?

- An innovation approach that studies nature's solutions and applies them to human challenges in engineering, architecture, technology and even governance
- The concept was popularized by Janine Benyus in the late 1990s
- Examples include
 - Kingfisher and Japanese Bullet Train- replicating how kingfisher enters water with minimal splash
 - Shark skin's microscopic patterns prevent bacterial growth. This inspired antibacterial surfaces used in hospitals
 - Squid skin inspired smart windows

New Fish Survival Test Rules for Caustic Soda Industry Wastewater

India's Environment (Protection) Second Amendment Rules, 2025 now require caustic soda (Sodium Hydroxide) plants using membrane cell technology to pass a laboratory-based bioassay (fish survival) test.

New Fish Survival Test

- Bioassay based monitoring- where treated effluent must now be tested on fish to determine whether it remains toxic to aquatic life
- Fish are exposed to treated effluent for a specified period and discharge is acceptable only if the required survival threshold is met
- These bioassays evaluate the actual ecological impact of the wastewater rather than just its chemical composition

New Rules

- New limits on the effluents-
 - pH range of 6.5–8.5
 - Chloride limit of 250 mg/litre
 - Suspended solids at 100 mg/litre
 - Total dissolved solids at 2,100 mg/litre
 - Water consumption capped at 5 cubic metres per tonne of caustic soda produced
 - Wastewater generation must not exceed 1 cubic metre per tonne
- The regulations encourage adoption of membrane-cell technology and reduce dependence on older mercury-based process

Caustic Soda Industry

- Caustic Soda (Sodium Hydroxide – NaOH) is used in several key industries such as-
 - Paper and pulp industry; Pharmaceuticals; Chemicals
 - Textiles; Water Treatment

Coral Translocation on the Western Coast of Nicobar

As a result of the construction of the proposed International Container Transshipment Terminal (ICTT) in Galathea Bay (southeastern coast of Great Nicobar Island), the corals are being relocated by the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) to nearby sites to mitigate ecological damage from the mega structure project

What is Coral Translocation?

- It is the removal of live coral colonies from one location and reattaching them at another suitable site for protecting them from destruction due to ports, coastal infrastructure, dredging, etc.

New sites of translocation

- About 16000 species coral colonies along with Giant Clams are proposed to be translocated
- The corals will be translocated to four new sites on the west coast of Nicobar
- Each colony will be GPS tagged for monitoring of survival.

Tripura's Global Pineapple Festival

Tripura will be hosting the Global Pineapple Festival, 2026 in New Delhi to make its famous GI tagged Queen Pineapple a global brand.

About the Festival and Pineapple

- Queen Pineapple is the state fruit of Tripura and is known for its high sweetness and rich nutritional value
- The event is linked to the recently launched **Mission Queen Pineapple**, a three-year farm to market programme aimed at transforming the pineapple value chain, with an allocation of Rs. 236 crore
- The Mission aims to expand exports from Tripura and increase farmers' income
- The export is mainly done to countries such as UAE and Bangladesh
- Other variety includes the Kew Pineapple

Earthquake in Venezuela and Seismic Doublet

Two consequent earthquakes rocked the South American nation of Venezuela, in what is being considered the strongest earthquake in the country in a century

Venezuela's Earthquake

- Two earthquakes with magnitude **7.2 and 7.5** were experienced in Venezuela.
- They were observed within a difference of **39 seconds**
- The shallow focus earthquakes occurred only a few kilometers apart, making them one of the strongest and rarest seismic events in the country
- The back to back strong shaking prevented damaged structures from stabilizing before the second rupture
- The tectonic setting of Venezuela is such that it lies along the boundary between the Caribbean Plate and the South American Plate, where the boundary is dominated by **strike-slip faults**, where the plates slide horizontally past one another

A Doublet Earthquake

- It refers to two large earthquakes of comparable magnitude that occur close together in both time and location, but are separate seismic events, and not a mainshock followed by an aftershock
- The two earthquakes are casually linked, with the first event altering stress in the Earth's crust and triggering the second on a nearby fault or fault segment
- Doublets are rare, accounting for only a small fraction of major global seismicity
- Some other examples of Doublet Earthquakes-
 - 2023 Turkey-Syria earthquakes (occurring about nine hours apart)

Mechanism behind Doublet Earthquakes

1. Stress Accumulation- tectonic plate movements gradually build stress along geological faults
2. First Earthquake- a fault ruptures, releasing accumulated energy
3. Stress Transfer- instead of relieving stress everywhere, the rupture redistributes stress to an adjacent fault or another segment of the same fault
4. Second Earthquake- if the neighboring fault is already close to failure, the transferred stress triggers another major earthquake very quickly

Bharat Climate Observation Network

The **Indian Institute for Tropical Meteorology (IITM)**, Pune and Aryabhata Research Institute of Observational Sciences have signed an MoU to establish Bharat Climate Observation Network (BCON) monitoring station in the Himalayan region.

About the Initiative

- Coming up at **Devasthal** near Nainital in Uttarakhand and is a part of the Mission Mausam under the Ministry of Earth Science
- It is a national climate monitoring initiative with objectives-
 - Develop a long term, high precision climate monitoring framework
 - Generate reliable data sets across the country and detect long term climate records
- The BCON Station will monitor
 - **Meteorological parameters** like temperature, rainfall, humidity, wind
 - **Climate-Active Trace Gases** like CO₂, Methane, other Greenhouse gases (GHGs)
 - **Short Lived Climate Forcers (SLCFs)** like black carbon, tropospheric ozone, aerosols
 - Atmospheric chemistry and soil moisture

Why was Devasthal Chosen?

- High altitude site in the Kumaon Himalayas with relatively pristine atmosphere
- Ideal for observing GHGs, pollutants and climate processes over the Himalayas
- Himalayas are particularly important as it is sensitive to climate change and influences Indian monsoon systems, river flows and glacier dynamics.

Long Break in the Arrival of Monsoon

After a prediction of an early monsoon arrival in India, the Monsoon system took a long break due to almost five co existing and unfavourable climatological conditions.

Five Factors Weakening the Monsoon

1. **El Nino**
 - **El Niño** conditions have developed over the equatorial Pacific Ocean
 - weakens the Walker Circulation, reducing moisture transport towards India
 - It is one of the strongest drivers of below-normal Indian monsoon rainfall
2. **Weak Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO)**
 - The **Madden–Julian Oscillation (MJO)** is an eastward-moving pulse of clouds, rainfall, and convection in the tropics
 - During the pause, the MJO was weak or located away from the Indian Ocean
 - This reduced cloud formation and rainfall over the Indian subcontinent
3. **Dry Westerly Winds**
 - Dry westerly winds from west Asia and adjoining regions intruded into northwest India
 - These winds suppressed the moisture-laden southwesterly monsoon flow
 - This resulted in reduced rainfall, higher temperatures and heatwave conditions over several states
4. **Weak Somali Jet**
 - The **Somali Jet** is a strong low-level cross-equatorial jet stream over the Arabian Sea
 - It transports moisture from the southern Indian Ocean to India
 - A weaker-than-normal Somali Jet reduced moisture supply to the Arabian Sea branch of the monsoon, slowing its advance
5. **Neutral Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)**
 - The **Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)** remained neutral
 - A **positive IOD** often offsets the adverse effects of El Niño by enhancing rainfall over India

Recovery of Monsoon

The monsoon winds resumed due to the strengthening of Somali Jet and favorable low pressure system development over Bay of Bengal. However, due to a looming fear of a Super El Nino, the monsoon rain has been predicted to be in deficit for India.

Non Methane Hydro Carbons

A team of researchers from the Aryabhata Research Institute of observational Sciences conducted observations of Non Methane Hydro Carbons at Munsyari in Uttarakhand, indicating the presence of these pollutants even in the remote Himalayan regions.

What are Non Methane Hydro Carbons (NMHCs)?

- NMHCs are atmospheric hydrocarbons that exclude methane and include compounds such as ethane, ethene, benzene, isoprene, propane, propene and toluene
- They constitute a highly reactive subset of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) composed only of carbon and hydrogen
- Owing to their highly chemical reactivity, they significantly influence atmospheric chemistry

Major Sources

- Natural Sources-
 - Vegetation, particularly through emissions of compounds like isoprene
 - Marine Ecosystems, though their contribution is comparatively limited
- Anthropogenic Sources-
 - Vehicular emissions and fossil fuel combustion
 - Industrial and petrochemical activities
 - Biomass burning
 - Solvent use and fuel evaporation

Atmospheric Role in Increasing NMHCs

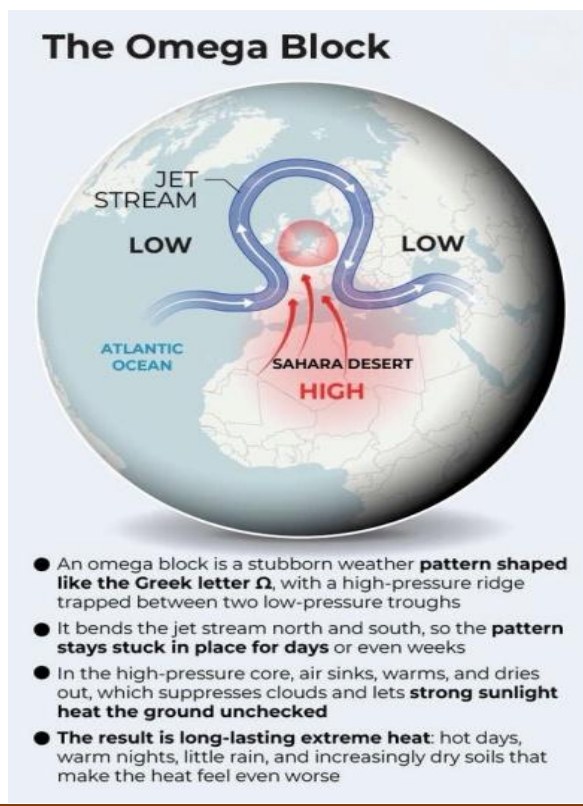
- They react with nitrogen oxides (NO_x) under sunlight to produce ground-level (tropospheric) ozone
- Contribute to the formation of secondary organic aerosols (SOAs), an important component of fine particulate matter
- They consume hydroxyl (OH) radicals, thereby influencing the atmosphere's self-cleansing capacity and altering the lifetime of other pollutants
- They accelerate the formation of photochemical smog, leading to deterioration of air quality.

Omega Block and the European Heatwave

Over 1300 have been reported dead in Europe due to the persistent heatwave, which is a result of human induced climate change and an atmospheric phenomenon called 'Omega Block'.

Europe's Heatwave

- A persistent Omega Block drove one of Europe's most severe early-summer heatwaves
- Temperatures reached up to 18°C above seasonal averages in some regions
- Several countries, including **France, Spain, Germany,**



Italy, UK, Belgium, the Netherlands, Poland, and Switzerland, experienced record-breaking temperatures.

What is an Omega Block?

- It is a persistent atmospheric circulation pattern in which a strong high pressure system becomes trapped between two low pressure systems
- On weather maps, this arrangement resembles the Greek letter Ω (**Omega**), giving the phenomenon its name
- The pattern blocks the normal west-to-east movement of weather systems, allowing the same weather conditions to persist for several days or even weeks

Impact on Extreme Heat

- The stationary high-pressure system causes air to sink (subsidence), which compresses and warms the atmosphere
- Clear skies allow continuous solar heating during the day
- The lack of cloud cover and rainfall prevents cooling
- With little movement of air masses, hot air remains trapped over the affected region, intensifying and prolonging heatwave conditions

Species in News

Greater Hog Badger 	Kaziranga National Park has released the first scientific report on Greater Hog Badger which is a very large terrestrial mustelid native to Southeast Asia, estimating about 55 individuals of the species in the National Park • It is an omnivorous species and has a gestation period of 150-285 days • Habitat- Tropical and subtropical forests, grasslands • Distribution- North East India along with some parts of West Bengal • They are a nocturnal and solitary species • Highly fossorial (burrow digging) in nature helping in soil aeration and nutrient redistribution • Conservation Status- ○ IUCN- Vulnerable ○ WPA 1972- Schedule I
Mishmi Takin 	The rare Mishmi takin was spotted in Sikkim (Tingda Reserve Forest) after nearly three decades • A large goat-antelope species found in Eastern Himalayas- Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and globally found in India, Tibet and Myanmar • One of the four subspecies of Takin • Conservation Status- ○ IUCN- Vulnerable ○ CITES- Appendix II ○ WPA, 1972- Schedule I
White Rumped Vulture 	Recently, a radio tagged white rumped vulture was released in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (Nilgiri Hills) died of electrocution. It is an Old world Vulture and native to South Asia and South East Asia. Habitat in open plains and fields, scrublands and grasslands across Non Himalayan Indian states • Conservation Status ○ IUCN- Critically Endangered ○ CITES- Appendix II ○ WPA, 1972- Schedule I

RTX Spark Chip

Nvidia- a major semiconductor company has partnered with Microsoft to launch a new chip, called the Nvidia RTX Spark to power computers made by the likes of Dell, Asus, and HP.

What is Nvidia RTX Spark? It is an AI-focused superchip for Windows laptops and mini desktops.

✓ RTX is the most advanced platform for path tracing and neural rendering technologies.

Key Features of Nvidia RTX Spark:	Significance:
- Combines 20-core Arm CPU + Blackwell RTX GPU. - Delivers 1 Petaflop AI performance. - Supports up to 128 GB unified memory. - Can run 120-billion parameter AI models locally.	- Enables personal AI agents, AI creation tools, and RTX gaming on-device. - Expands NVIDIA from AI data centers into the PC market, challenging Intel and AMD. - Represents a shift toward AI-first personal computers.

Challenges: It relies on **Windows-on-Arm**, where software compatibility remains a key hurdle.

Digital Sovereignty in the Age of Tech-Geopolitics

India's success in building world-class Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) such as Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Aadhaar has positioned it as a global digital leader. However, the Nayara Energy-Microsoft incident exposes a "Sovereignty Gap": as India remains structurally dependent on foreign hyperscalers (AWS, Azure, Google Cloud) for infrastructure.

✓ Nayara Energy, one of India's oil-refining companies with Russian shareholder Rosneft, faced a potential disruption of cloud services from Microsoft due to US sanctions compliance.

How is India's dependence on foreign digital infrastructure a Concern?

- Weaponization of Interdependence:** Dependence on foreign cloud services means that critical national infrastructure is subject to the extraterritorial reach of foreign laws (e.g., US sanctions), potentially enabling third-party "shut off" capabilities.
- The AI Hegemony:** Large Language Models (LLMs) are currently controlled by US and Chinese firms, leading to potential biases and limiting Indian oversight over data, algorithms, and governance standards.
- The "Tenancy" Trap:** Relying on foreign hardware (chips) and software (cloud) undermines "Digital Atmanirbharta" effectively rendering India a digital tenant rather than an owner.

India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) is globally acclaimed because it is open and interoperable, public-interest oriented rather than profit-driven, innovation-friendly and scalable.

Way Forward

- Operational Sovereignty:** Strengthen control over critical digital infrastructure beyond mere data localization.
- Indigenous Cloud Ecosystem:** Expand initiatives such as MeghRaj and domestic data centres to provide sovereign cloud alternatives.
- Develop Indian AI Models:** Promote AI tailored to Indian languages and sectors like agriculture, health, education, and governance.
- Semiconductor Self-Reliance:** Accelerate domestic chip manufacturing under the Semicon India programme.
- Global Digital Partnerships:** Use DPI diplomacy to build a cooperative digital ecosystem among developing countries.

India Losing Ability to Build Its Own Instruments

The **Mega Science Vision-2035 (MSV)** report, led by the Indian Institute of Science, highlights critical gaps in India's climate data integrity and advocates for a scientifically monitored, evidence-based approach to the green energy transition.

Major Concerns Highlighted	Key Recommendations & Roadmap: It proposes eight mega projects planned in a phased manner up to 2035:
• Data Credibility: Reliance on imported, uncalibrated equipment has led to faulty data, damaging the global reputation of Indian scientific research. • Model Inaccuracy: Adaptation of foreign Earth System Models fails to capture South Asian geographic and tropical nuances. • Procurement Failures: The "lowest-bidder" rule on the Government e-marketplace (GeM) portal forces institutions to acquire substandard equipment, causing significant research delays. • Renewable Energy Blindspots: The long-term ecological impact of large-scale solar and wind projects remains poorly researched and understood. • Institutional Silos: Critical gaps exist in carbon capture research, public health-environment data integration, and the translation of climate science into actionable policy.	• Rebuilding Domestic Hardware: Shift from foreign dependence by heavily investing in indigenous sensor manufacturing and advanced calibration technologies. • Indigenous Earth System Models: Build climate forecasting frameworks from "first principles" rather than adapting Western models, utilizing AI and Machine Learning (ML) to suit local atmospheric dynamics. • Observational Expansion: Drastically scale up the network of surface weather stations, ocean buoys, and greenhouse gas (GHG) monitoring systems, supported by dedicated climate-tracking satellites. • Climate Economics & "Polluter Pays": Establish scientific methodologies to calculate the Social Cost of Carbon and implement a carbon tax mechanism that protects vulnerable populations. • Policy & Health Integration: Establish national observatories to link environmental data with public health surveillance, while training scientists to bridge the communication gap with decision-makers.

100 Years of Solar Data Reveal Clues to the Sun's 11-Year Cycle

The Kodaikanal solar observatory, known for the oldest continuous series of solar data collected in India, has uncovered how giant convection patterns on the Sun respond to solar activity.

Background:	Key Findings:
• Energy in the Sun is transported through convection, creating supergranulations- giant convection cells that form a network on the solar surface. These cells are about 30,000 km wide and last around 24 hours. • Their dark magnetic boundaries are measured as lane width, while network intensity reflects the strength of solar magnetic activity. • By utilizing a century of observational data, this study examines the correlation between these structural surface features and the Sun's 11-year activity cycle.	• Lane width and network intensity are strongly linked to the Sun's 11-year solar cycle and sunspot activity. • Lane widths peak during solar maximum, while intensities peak 1.25-1.5 years later.

Significance: Shows that supergranular (giant convection cells on the Sun's surface) properties are influenced by **magnetic fields and solar activity**. It can improve **solar cycle prediction** and understanding of **solar irradiance variations**.

Blue Micro-moon

A unique lunar event, featuring a rare blue micro-moon occurred recently.

What is it?

A **Blue Micromoon** occurs when a **Blue Moon** and a **Micromoon** happen simultaneously.

- ✓ **Blue Moon** is the **second full moon in a calendar month** (or the third full moon in a season with four full moons). Despite its name, the Moon **does not appear blue**.
- ✓ **Micro-moon** is a full moon occurring near the Moon's **apogee** (farthest point from Earth). It appears slightly **smaller and dimmer** than a typical full moon.

Isobutanol

India is likely to bring a mandate on blending isobutanol with diesel as part of a slew of measures to improve energy security in the country and decarbonize the road and highways sector.

Isobutanol (C₄H₁₀O), also called isobutyl alcohol is a four-carbon alcohol produced through petrochemical processes or microbial fermentation of sugars. It is used as a **biofuel**, **industrial solvent**, and **chemical intermediate** in the manufacture of paints, coatings, pharmaceuticals, fragrances, and pesticides.

How is it different from Ethanol?

Feature	Ethanol	Isobutanol
Energy Density	Lower	Higher (closer to diesel)
Water Absorption	Hygroscopic (absorbs moisture)	Much lower
Corrosiveness	More corrosive	Less corrosive
Engine Compatibility	May require modifications at high blends	Better compatibility with diesel engines
Fuel Efficiency	Greater mileage loss	Minimal mileage loss

Why Isobutanol for Diesel?

- Higher energy content → **better fuel economy** than ethanol.
- Less water absorption and corrosion → **easier storage & transport**.
- Can be blended (~15%) with diesel with **fewer engine modifications**.

Impact on Vehicles:

- **Performance:** Little to no noticeable change in power, torque, or drivability.

Road Ahead: India is evaluating **15% isobutanol-blended diesel (IB15)** as the next step in its biofuel strategy after **E20 petrol**, but large-scale testing and approvals are still required.

Bolide

Recently, a loud explosion was heard throughout Eastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island as a result of a bolide/meteor entering the atmosphere.

What is a bolide?

A **bolide** is an **exceptionally bright meteor that explodes or fragments in Earth's atmosphere**. It is usually a fragment of an **asteroid** or, less commonly, a **comet**.

Formation: Space rock enters Earth's atmosphere at very high speed. Air compression and heating make it glow brightly. If it explodes or breaks apart violently, it is called a **bolide**.

Related Terms:

- **Meteor:** A space object burning in the atmosphere.
 - **Fireball:** An unusually bright meteor.
 - **Bolide:** A fireball that explodes or fragments with significant energy.
- Key Effect:** Produces **bright flashes**, **shockwaves**, and **sonic booms**.

Synthetic Intelligence

Synthetic Intelligence (SI) has gained prominence with Cortical Labs' "DishBrain" experiment, where cultured neurons learned to play a video game, demonstrating the feasibility of biological computing.

What is Synthetic Intelligence (SI)?

It refers to computing systems that utilize biological components such as cultured neurons to perform cognitive tasks. These "biological computers" use living cells that physically adapt, learn, and respond to environmental stimuli to process information.

Origin of Concept: Term "*Synthetic Intelligence*" was coined by philosopher John Haugeland in the 1980s, distinguishing genuine intelligence from mere simulation.

- **2022:** *DishBrain* experiment by Cortical Labs showed cultured neurons learning to play Pong.
- **2023-24:** Neuromorphic systems such as IBM NorthPole and Intel Hala Point advanced brain-inspired computing.
- **2025:** Launch of **CL1**, the world's first commercial biological computer.

AI vs. SI:

Feature	Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Synthetic Intelligence (SI)
Foundation	Silicon-based chips & software.	Biological neurons or neuromorphic hardware.
Method	Statistical pattern matching/data prediction.	Genuine reasoning, adaptation, and understanding.

Why Move Beyond AI?

- **Energy Efficiency:** Conventional AI (e.g., GPT-4) is ecologically unsustainable, requiring massive electricity for computation and water for data center cooling. The human brain, by contrast, operates on only **20 watts**.
- **Architecture:** Conventional chips waste energy by constantly shuttling data between memory and processing units. **Neuromorphic computing** mimics the brain, where memory and processing occur simultaneously in a single location.
- **The "Understanding" Gap:** Current AI models "simulate" language through statistical probability without "understanding" context. SI aims to create systems that possess genuine cognition, enabling them to navigate reality without the "brittleness" of current algorithms.

Significance	Challenges
• Medical Research: Allows real-time observation of neural responses to drugs and toxins, advancing the study of conditions like epilepsy and dementia. • Energy Efficiency • True Intelligence: Moves beyond mere imitation, aiming to create genuine, biological-based intelligence.	• Regulatory Lag: Existing frameworks, such as the EU AI Act, fail to address biological integration, risking premature obsolescence. • Engineering Hurdles: Scaling biological hardware for mass commercial use remains a significant obstacle. • Ethical Uncharted Territory: Expanding the definition of "mind" to include synthetic biological entities raises complex moral questions regarding their status and rights.

Epichlorohydrin

India has banned the use of epichlorohydrin in tea bags and the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS- under the department of consumers affairs), has for the first time set quality standards for tea bags in country.

What is Epichlorohydrin (ECH)?

It is a chemical used in **tea bag paper** to improve **wet strength**, preventing the bag from tearing in hot water. It is classified as:

- **"Probably carcinogenic to humans"** by the International Agency for Research on Cancer.
- **"Reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen"** by the National Toxicology Program.

BIS Tea Bag Standards Key Highlights	Significance
✗ Ban on epichlorohydrin in tea bag paper. ✗ Ban on chlorine bleaching of tea bag paper. ✓ Mandatory migration tests to ensure no harmful substances leach into tea. ✓ Standards for paper, thread, tags, inks, adhesives, and packaging materials. ✓ Enhanced traceability and labelling requirements.	• Strengthens food-contact packaging regulations. • Enhances credibility and export competitiveness of Indian tea products. • Reflects the shift from regulating only food contents to regulating food packaging materials as well.

Shigellosis

A highly contagious bacterial diarrhoeal disease called shigellosis was reported across Kerala recently.

About Shigellosis:

- **Spread:** Through the **faecal-oral route**, contaminated food/water, close contact, or poor hygiene.
- **Symptoms:** Diarrhoea (often bloody), stomach cramps, fever, vomiting, and dehydration.
- **High-risk groups:** Children under 5, elderly, immunocompromised individuals, and people in crowded settings.
- **Treatment:** Usually self-limiting; hydration and ORS are key. Severe cases may require antibiotics.
- **Concern:** Rising **Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)** is making Shigella infections harder to treat. No approved vaccine yet.

SOLAR-I

United States has activated SOLAR-1 (Space weather Observations at L1 to Advance Readiness-1), marking a major milestone for the nation's resilience to space weather events.

About SOLAR-I:

- **What?** First U.S. satellite dedicated exclusively to **24/7 operational space weather monitoring**, launched by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in 2025.
- **Location:** Positioned at the **Sun-Earth L1 Lagrange Point**, about **1 million miles from Earth**, enabling continuous observation of the Sun.
- **Functions:** Monitors **solar winds** and **coronal mass ejections (CMEs)** to provide early warnings of solar storms.
- **Significance:** Enhances protection of **GPS, communication networks, satellites, power grids, aviation, national security systems, and human space missions** by delivering faster and more accurate space weather forecasts.

Varya

Avataar, an AI-native transformation company, recently launched **Varya**, a distilled video model with support from the IndiaAI Mission.

What is Varya?

An indigenous AI-powered **video story generation model** which converts text prompts or images into culturally relevant videos.

Key Features

- Uses **distilled video generation**- a machine-learning technique where a compact "student" model learns from a larger "teacher" model, reducing computation while maintaining output quality. It cuts video generation from 50+ steps to a few iterations, making AI video creation faster and more affordable.
- Generates videos reflecting India's diverse cultures, languages, festivals, and lifestyles.
- Allows users to create and extend video stories from simple prompts.
- Claimed cost of **₹0.48 per second**, making it up to **10× more efficient** than several leading models.

GRAPES 3 Telescope

Researchers from India and Japan used the GRAPES-3 telescope to track how the earth's upper atmosphere temperature and the sun's magnetic field affect muons- subatomic particles from space.

About GRAPES-3

GRAPES-3 (Gamma Ray Astronomy at PeV EnergieS- Phase 3) is India's premier cosmic-ray observatory located in Ooty at an altitude of about **2,200 m**.

Objective: To study- • Origin, acceleration and propagation of cosmic rays. • Gamma rays in the teraelectronvolt (TeV) to petaelectronvolt (PeV) energy range. • Solar activity and thunderstorms using cosmic-ray muons.	Significance: • One of the world's densest Extensive Air Shower (EAS) arrays. • Houses one of the largest tracking muon detectors globally. • Provides crucial insights into high-energy astrophysics, space weather, and atmospheric phenomena.
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Legacy: Built on decades of cosmic-ray research initiated in **1955** by B. V. Sreekantan at the Cosmic Ray Laboratory, Ooty, and evolved through the GRAPES-1 and GRAPES-2 experiments before becoming GRAPES-3.

WT-MARUT

The Wind Turbine Supply Chain Management (WT-MARUT) was recently launched by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) and the Indian Wind Turbine Manufacturers Association (IWTMA) on Global Wind Day 2026.

What is WT-MARUT?

It is India's first dedicated digital platform for managing the wind energy supply chain.

Objectives: Improve transparency in the wind energy ecosystem, connect manufacturers with domestic suppliers, enhance data security and promote **Atmanirbhar Bharat** in renewable energy.

Key Highlights about Wind Energy

- India added a record **6.1 GW** of wind power capacity in FY 2025-26 (46% growth YoY).
- Total installed wind capacity crossed **56.1 GW**, making India the **4th largest wind energy market** globally.
- Wind turbine and component exports exceeded **₹12,000 crore** in FY 2025-26.
- India has a manufacturing capacity of **24 GW annually**, with a target of **15 GW annual installations by 2030**.

Government Bans 16 Combination Drugs

The Indian government has banned 16 fixed-dose combination (FDC) drugs, including certain antibiotic and dermatological formulations, due to lack of scientific evidence supporting their claimed added benefits.

FDCs are medicines containing two or more active ingredients in one formulation. While some improve treatment outcomes, irrational FDCs lack scientific evidence of added benefit over individual drugs.

✓ **Irrational FDCs** are a combination of two or more drugs without a scientifically proven therapeutic rationale, where the ingredients do not provide additional clinical benefit over individual medicines or have incompatible pharmacological properties.

Need to Ban Irrational FDCs:

- **Prevent Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)**
- **Reduce Health Risks:** Exposes patients to avoidable side effects, allergies, and drug interactions.

Project Nimbus

Over 100 Stanford students protested during Google CEO Sundar Pichai's speech, opposing **Project Nimbus** with the Israeli government over concerns about its alleged use in the Israel-Palestine conflict.

What is Project Nimbus? It is a **\$1.2 billion cloud computing contract** between the Israeli government and **Google and Amazon (AWS)**, signed in 2021.

Objective: To provide cloud infrastructure and AI services to Israeli government ministries and agencies.

Why is it controversial? Critics allege it enables surveillance of Palestinians and supports Israeli military operations; Google and Amazon deny military use, stating it is for civilian government services.

Recurrence of Nipah in Kerala

Kerala recently witnessed fresh cases of Nipah Virus.

About Nipah Virus (NiV):

- A **zoonotic, negative-sense single stranded RNA virus** (*Henipavirus*, **Paramyxoviridae** family).
- **Reservoir:** Fruit bats; pigs act as intermediate hosts.
- **Transmission:** Animal-to-human, contaminated fruits, and **human-to-human**.
- **Symptoms:** Fever, respiratory illness, **acute encephalitis**, coma; **high fatality rate**.
- **Origin:** First identified in **Malaysia (1999)**; first Indian outbreak in **Siliguri, West Bengal (2001)**.
- **Diagnosis:** RT-PCR (gold standard), ELISA.
- **Treatment:** **No approved vaccine or specific antiviral**; supportive care is the main treatment.

Why is Nipah recurring in Kerala?

- **Natural Reservoir:** Presence of the Indian flying fox; the virus is endemic in local bat colonies.
- **Seasonal Spillovers:** Peak risk occurs during April-September due to fruiting seasons, bat breeding cycles, and increased viral shedding.
- **High Human Exposure:** Bat roosts near human settlements, combined with plantations and forest fringes, increase bat-human contact.
- **Ecological Vulnerability:** The Western Ghats' biodiversity, dense human population, deforestation, habitat fragmentation, urbanization, and climate change exacerbate spillover risks.
- **Broader Zoonotic Hotspot:** The region is also prone to Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD), leptospirosis, scrub typhus, Japanese encephalitis, West Nile fever, and avian influenza.

India's Space Odyssey

India is rapidly evolving into a global space powerhouse, targeting a **US\$40-45 billion space economy** by the next decade.

Frontiers of Explorations:

- **Lunar & Planetary:** Following the historic **Chandrayaan-3** success, focus has shifted to the **Chandrayaan-4** sample return mission and the **LUPEX (Chandrayaan-5)** collaboration with JAXA to explore the lunar south pole.
- **Solar & Deep Space:** **Aditya-L1** is actively unlocking the Sun's mysteries, while upcoming milestones include the **Venus Orbiter Mission (2028)** and continued data gathering from **XPoSat**.
- **Human Spaceflight:** The **Gaganyaan** mission stands as a testament to indigenous capability, paving the way for the **Bharatiya Antariksh Station**, with its inaugural module scheduled for 2028.

Economic & Structural Reforms:

- **Innovation Ecosystem:** The number of space start-ups has exploded from **1 in 2014 to over 400 today**.
- **Strategic Policies:** Reforms like the **Indian Space Policy 2023**, liberalized **FDI**, and the roles of **IN-SPACe** and **New Space India Limited (NSIL)** have created a thriving environment for private sector participation.
- **Future Tech:** Development of the **Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV)** and the indigenous **VIKRAM3201** microprocessor will significantly reduce costs and enhance capabilities.

Global Reach & Utility:

- **International Ties:** India has fostered 300+ agreements with 61 nations and successfully launched **399 foreign satellites**.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Robust ties with **NASA, JAXA, ESA, CNES**, and others reinforce India's role as a trusted partner in global space governance.
- **Empowering Citizens:** Space-led tools like **NavIC** (navigation), **Bhuvan**, and **VEDAS** provide critical infrastructure for agriculture, disaster management, and rural development.

Murchison Widefield Array (MWA)

Using the Murchison Widefield Array (**MWA**), astronomers have discovered a new millisecond pulsar as part of the ongoing **SMART** survey.

About MWA:

- It is a **low-frequency radio telescope (70-300 MHz)** at **Murchison Radio-astronomy Observatory, Western Australia**; precursor to **Square Kilometre Array (SKA-Low)**.
- It is led by **Curtin University** with **20 institutions across 5 countries**.
- **Features:** wide field of view, high resolution, and rapid sky mapping.
- **Studies:** Epoch of Reionization, galaxies, the **Sun & space weather**, **pulsars & fast radio bursts (FRBs)**, and the interstellar medium/cosmic magnetism.

Southern-sky MWA Rapid Two-metre (SMART) survey is an ongoing **MWA-based low-frequency (140-170 MHz) pulsar survey** in the Southern Hemisphere. It is expected to discover **hundreds of new pulsars** and provide a reference for future **Square Kilometre Array (SKA-Low)** pulsar surveys.

✓ **Pulsars are rapidly rotating neutron stars** that emit **regular beams of radio waves**.

SKA is World's largest and most sensitive radio telescope project, located in Australia (SKA-Low) and South Africa (SKA-Mid); HQ: UK.

- **Objective:** To study the **origin of the Universe, galaxy evolution, and the search for life**.
 - India joined in 2024

GAGAN

Recently, under the watch of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) for the first time, a private jet was landed by using GPS Aided GEO Augmented Navigation (GAGAN).

What is GAGAN? It is India's **Satellite-Based Augmentation System (SBAS)**, jointly developed by **Airports Authority of India (AAI)** and **ISRO**.

Objective: To enhance **GPS accuracy, integrity, and reliability** for **civil aviation** and **air traffic management**.

Working: Ground reference stations detect GPS errors → Master Control Centre generates corrections → Land Uplink stations send them to **GSAT satellites**, which broadcast corrected navigation signals to aircraft.

Feature: Interoperable with other global **SBAS** networks for seamless regional navigation.

Excavations at Rakhigarhi

- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has sent nearly 5,000-year-old skeletons unearthed from Haryana's Rakhigarhi, for scientific examination.
- The studies would help determine whether the individuals died of natural causes or disease and, if disease was involved, identify the nature of the ailments.
- The research is also expected to reveal details about their **ancestry, height, physical features, and social status**.
- One of the key objectives of the study is **facial reconstruction**, which could provide a visual representation of the inhabitants of the Harappan civilisation.
- Besides human remains, archaeologists uncovered painted **earthen pots, multipurpose earthen stands** and other artefacts that offer valuable insights into daily life during the Harappan period.
- Some of the earthen stands appear to have functioned much like modern table stands used to hold household items.
- The excavation also produced an unprecedented number of burial offerings. In some graves, archaeologists found up to 40 pottery offerings accompanying the deceased, surpassing the previous highest count of 22 found at the site.
- Such offerings indicate a person's social standing and importance within the community

Gift Diplomacy

During the Prime Minister's recent visit to France, Slovakia and the G7 summit, he presented the foreign dignitaries a diverse range of gifts showcasing India's cultural diversity.

Details of the gifts

- The Prime Minister gifted a Kalamkari Mahabharata painting to French President Emmanuel Macron.
 - **Kalamkari** is an ancient Indian textile art form that originated in **Andhra Pradesh and Telangana**.
- Macron's spouse was gifted a **Pochampally silk stole**. It is a handwoven textile from **Telangana**, made using the traditional **ikat resist-dyeing technique**.
 - It is known for its intricate geometric and floral patterns, fine craftsmanship, and elegant design.
- The Slovak President Peter Pellegrini was gifted a **Brass Dokra Antelope set**.
 - It is a handcrafted artwork that showcases India's ancient Dokra metal-casting tradition, practiced by tribal artisans in **Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand, and West Bengal**.
 - The antelope figures symbolise gentleness, agility, and harmony with nature, drawing a cultural connection to the **Tatra Chamois of Slovakia**, with both animals representing resilience and a deep bond with their natural environments.
 - The Slovak President was also gifted handcrafted **Thewa motif cufflinks**. Known for its **intricate gold engravings on coloured glass**, Thewa is among India's most distinctive traditional crafts.
 - The art form of **Rajasthan's Pratapgarh** dates back nearly 400 years and traces its origins to the **Mughal era**.
- The Slovakia Speaker was gifted a copy of **Charak Samhita, Sushruta Samhita and Thekua**.
 - The **Charaka Samhita** is a Sanskrit text on **Ayurveda**, attributed to **Acharya Charaka**.
 - It primarily deals with **internal medicine (Kayachikitsa)** and covers the principles of diagnosis, pathology, pharmacology, preventive healthcare, making it a cornerstone of traditional Indian medicine.
 - The **Sushruta Samhita**, attributed to **Acharya Sushruta**, is one of the principal Ayurvedic texts and is regarded as the **foundational treatise on surgery (Shalya Tantra)**.

- **Thekua** is a traditional deep-fried sweet made from whole wheat flour, jaggery (or sugar), and ghee, and is associated with **Bihar, Jharkhand and eastern Uttar Pradesh**. It is the most important prasad (offering) prepared during the **Chhath Puja** festival.
- During the G7 Summit, the Prime Minister gifted Rajasthan's Nagauri Ashwagandha, Meghalaya's Lakadong Turmeric, Ramban Honey and Banarsi silk stoles.
 - **Nagauri Ashwagandha** is a premium variety of Ashwagandha cultivated mainly in the **Nagaur region of Rajasthan**, renowned for its high root quality and superior medicinal properties.
 - **Lakadong Turmeric** is a premium variety of turmeric grown mainly in the **Lakadong area of Jaintia Hills district, Meghalaya**. It is renowned for its **exceptionally high curcumin content (typically 6–8%)** and received the Geographical Indication tag in 2024.
 - **Ramban Sulai Honey** ((GI) tag in 2023) is a premium honey produced in the **Ramban district of Jammu & Kashmir** from the nectar of the **Sulai plant**.
 - **Banarasi silk** is a handwoven silk textile produced in **Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh** using traditional weaving techniques and is renowned for its intricate brocade, floral and Mughal-inspired motifs.

Jharkhand Products Get GI Tag

- Jharkhand's rich cultural heritage has received a major boost with 11 traditional products from the state being granted Geographical Indication tags.
- The newly recognised products include Bhoya Saree and Fabric, Kuchai Silk Saree, Kesaria Kalakand, Dokra Craft, Tumka Chadar, Baroni Paintings, Munda Jewellery, Jharkhand Bamboo Craft, Tussar Silk and Sarees, Jadopatia Painting, and Pancho Saree and Fabric.
- **Bhoya Saree and Fabric:** It is a traditional handwoven textile produced by tribal communities. It is known for its distinctive indigenous weaving techniques and simple geometric motifs, reflecting the cultural identity of the region.
- **Kuchai Silk Saree:** It is produced in the **Kuchai region of Seraikela-Kharsawan district** using high-quality **Tussar silk**. It is distinguished by its natural golden lustre, and traditional tribal weaving patterns.
- **Kesaria Kalakand:** It is a traditional milk-based sweet associated with **Jhumritilaiya** in **Koderma district**. It is prepared from fresh milk, using indigenous methods and is valued for its rich taste and **saffron flavour**.
- **Dokra Craft:** It is an ancient **non-ferrous metal casting tradition** practised by tribal artisans using the **lost-wax technique**.
- **Tumka Chadar:** It is a traditional woven textile known for its durability, intricate designs, and cultural significance among tribal communities.
- **Baroni Paintings:** It is a traditional folk painting style depicting tribal life, nature, folklore and religious themes through vibrant colours and indigenous artistic techniques.
- **Munda Jewellery:** It comprises traditional ornaments handcrafted by the **Munda tribal community** using metals such as brass and silver. It is characterised by geometric patterns and nature-inspired motifs and carries significant cultural value.
- **Jharkhand Bamboo Craft:** It involves the manufacture of baskets, mats, utility items, decorative products, and household articles using locally available bamboo.
- **Tussar Silk and Sarees:** Jharkhand is one of India's leading producers of **Tussar (Tasar) silk**, which is obtained from wild silkworms reared in forest ecosystems.
- It is recognised for its natural texture, golden lustre, and contribution to the livelihoods of tribal sericulture and weaving communities.
- **Jadopatia Painting:** It is an ancient **tribal scroll painting** tradition practised by the **Jadopatia community**, particularly in the Santhal region. The name "Jadopatia" is derived from Jadu (magic) and Pat (scroll).
- **Pancho Saree and Fabric:** It is a traditional handloom textile woven by tribal artisans using indigenous weaving techniques and locally available fibres.

Vijayanagara Inscriptions In Seshachalam Forest

- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has found three rare inscriptions, in Sadasivakona, inside the Seshachalam forest in Tirupati district, Andhra Pradesh.
- The inscriptions linked to **Vijayanagara King Sadasivaraya**, contain text in **Telugu, Tamil and Kannada**, representing characters of the **16th century C.E.** The corresponding dates were deciphered as 1554 C.E.
- The main inscription records the construction of a Siva temple and a monastery (Mutt) at Papavinasa in Sadasivakona by King Sadasivaraya, during his pilgrimage to the site.
- It also records the entrusting of taxes collected from the GudimallamParasurameswara temple lands (Kaanika) to SadasivaBasavanna Odeya, a disciple of LingannaVodaya, of Bendekeri.
- Another text refers to the gift of several lands to BasavannaVodaya by the King for providing food offerings and conducting worship to the God Parasurameswara in Gudimallam.
- The inscriptions highlight the importance of 2nd-century BC shrine in Gudimallam, **known to be India's first Siva temple.**

Sushruta

- The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh in Scotland has unveiled a statue honouring Sushruta, the ancient Indian physician. The institution is considered the oldest surgical college in the world.
- **Sushruta** was an ancient Indian physician and surgeon, traditionally believed to have lived around the **6th century BCE** in **Kashi (present-day Varanasi)**.
- He is regarded as the **Father of Surgery** for his contributions to surgical science and is a celebrated scholar of **Ayurveda**, particularly in the branch of **Shalya Tantra (Surgery)**.
- Sushruta made significant advances in plastic surgery, rhinoplasty, ophthalmic surgery, orthopaedics, trauma care and wound management.

Sushruta Samhita

- It is one of the three foundational texts of **Ayurveda**. Along with the **Charaka Samhita** (internal medicine) and the **Ashtanga Hridaya** (clinical synthesis), it forms the **Brihat Trayi**, the great triad of Ayurveda.
- Attributed to **Sushruta**, it is the principal classical text on **Shalya Tantra (surgery)** and is considered one of the world's earliest and most comprehensive surgical treatises.
- Divided into the **Purva-tantra** and **Uttara-tantra**, the text covers surgery, medicine, paediatrics, toxicology, psychiatry, diseases of the eye, ear, nose and throat, and care for the elderly.
- It records 1,120 illnesses, over 700 medicinal plants, more than 300 medical procedures and around 120 surgical instruments.
- It **classified surgery into eight categories**, including excision, incision, scraping, puncturing, probing, extraction, drainage and suturing.

AWARDS/ PERSONALITIES IN NEWS

Bimal Patel Elected ITLOS Judge

- Eminent Indian jurist, Bimal Patel, has been elected as Judge of the International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea (ITLOS).
- Mr. Patel is a Member of the UN International Law Commission and Vice-Chancellor and Professor of Public International Law at Rashtriya Raksha University.
- He is an esteemed educationalist, jurist and administrator, and he has served as the Director at the Gujarat National Law University and Member of the 21st Law Commission of India.
- He has also worked at global organisations such as the United Nations of Youth and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) at the Hague, Netherlands.

ITLOS

- It is an independent judicial body **established by the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**.
- **Headquartered in Germany**, the tribunal is composed of 21 independent members elected by the States Parties to the UNCLOS. Its current Vice President is legal luminary **Neeru Chadha** of India.
- Disputes relating to the Convention may concern the delimitation of maritime zones, navigation, conservation and management of the living resources of the sea, protection and preservation of the marine environment, and marine scientific research.

Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar

- The Union Government has invited nominations for the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2026.
- Presented annually by the President on Veer Bal Diwas (26th December), it is the nation's **highest civilian honour for children**.
- The date commemorates the **sacrifice of Sahibzada Zorawar Singh and Sahibzada Fateh Singh**, the young sons of the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh.
- The award celebrates extraordinary accomplishments in **six categories**: Bravery; Social Service; Environment; Sports; Art and Culture; and Science and Technology. Each awardee receives a medal and a certificate.
- PMRBP is **organised by the Ministry of Women and Child Development**.
- **Eligibility**: Must be an **Indian citizen residing in India**;
 - Should be between **5 and 18 years of age** as of July 31, 2026;
 - Should not have previously received the award;
 - Should have achieved the recognised accomplishment within two years preceding the nomination deadline.