



VAJIRAM & RAVI
Institute for IAS Examination

The RECITALS



**CURRENT
AFFAIRS**

**2026
APRIL**

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Eight years after its launch, **POSHAN Abhiyaan** has emerged as one of India's most ambitious attempts to place nutrition at the center of national development.

What is POSHAN Abhiyaan?

POSHAN Abhiyaan (Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition), launched on **8 March 2018**, is India's flagship **multi-ministerial mission** to improve nutritional outcomes among children (0-6 years), pregnant women, lactating mothers and adolescent girls.

**** Note: PM POSHAN Scheme (Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman) is the restructured version of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, launched in 2021. The scheme currently provides one cooked meal per day to**

Students of government & government-aided schools (Class 1 to Class 8). It also covers students of balvatikas (3-5 years age group) from pre-primary classes.

Need	Objectives
To shift the policy focus from food security to nutrition security and human capital development , recognizing malnutrition as a multi-dimensional problem requiring convergence across sectors like health, sanitation, education and women's empowerment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To Prevent and reduce stunting, underweight and low birth weight by 2% per annum and the reduction of anaemia by 3% per annum. To Improve maternal and child nutrition. To Promote behavioural change in diet, hygiene, and feeding practices. To Strengthen service delivery and monitoring systems.

Policy Evolution- POSHAN Abhiyaan to POSHAN 2.0 (Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0):

- India's nutrition efforts were earlier fragmented, necessitating convergence of **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) (1975)** which laid the base, followed by **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) (2017)** and the **National Nutrition Strategy (2017)**. Building on this, POSHAN abhiyaan (2018) introduced a unified, technology-driven and Jan Andolan-based approach.
- Mission POSHAN 2.0 (2021-22)** further integrated POSHAN Abhiyaan, Anganwadi Services, and Scheme for Adolescent Girls
 - Focus: Maternal nutrition and **Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF)**, management of **Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM)** and **Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM)**, wellness through **AYUSH**.

Key Features of the Scheme:

- Nutrition Support:** Supplementary nutrition is provided to children, pregnant and lactating women, and adolescent girls focusing on **balanced diets and micronutrients**, including extra support for **SAM** children. **Poshan Vatikas** promote diet diversity, while Anganwadi workers screen children and ensure referral to **Nutrition Rehabilitation Centres (NRCs)** or home-based care.
- ECCE Integration under POSHAN:** Aligned with the **National ECCE Policy (2013)** and **National Education Policy (2020)**, POSHAN integrates Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) into the foundational stage (3-6 years), focusing on play-based, holistic development and school readiness through- **Poshan Bhi Padhai Bhi (PBPB)**: Strengthens Anganwadi-based ECCE through infrastructure and training.
 - Navchetana (0-3 years):** Early stimulation framework for holistic development
 - Aadharshila (3-6 years):** Activity-based national ECCE curriculum.
- Saksham Upgradation:** The Saksham Anganwadi initiative is concerned with improving service quality through upgradation of existing Anganwadi Centres. Under this, 2 lakh Anganwadi centres were sanctioned for strengthening with modern amenities such as LED screens, water purifiers, smart learning aids, and Poshan Vatikas (nutri-gardens).
- Technology & Governance Transformation:** POSHAN Abhiyaan uses the **Poshan Tracker (2021)** for real-time monitoring of ~14 lakh Anganwadi centres and ~9 crore beneficiaries. **Aadhaar and Facial Recognition (FRS)** improve transparency and reduce leakages, while the **Poshan Helpline (1515)** strengthens grievance redressal.
- Community Engagement- Jan Andolan:** It promotes nutrition as a **Jan Andolan** through campaigns like **Poshan Pakhwada** and **Rashtriya Poshan Maah**, focusing on behavioural change, maternal and child nutrition, and healthy lifestyles. These initiatives strengthen **community participation and last-mile delivery**.
 - 8th Poshan Pakhwada was observed recently with the theme- maximising brain development in the first six years of life.

Significance	Challenges Faced
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transformational Governance Reform: Shift from fragmented schemes to mission-mode convergence • Massive Coverage: ~14 lakh Anganwadi centres and ~9 crore beneficiaries • Digital Innovation: Poshan Tracker enables transparency, reduces leakages and improves targeting • Human Capital Development: Integrates nutrition with early childhood education and school readiness • Behavioural Change: Large-scale awareness campaigns promoting healthy diets and practices • Strengthened Delivery System: Improved capacity of Anganwadi workers and infrastructure • Targeted Inclusion: Focus on vulnerable groups helps break intergenerational cycle of malnutrition. • Global Relevance: Aligns with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2- Zero Hunger, 3- Health and 4- Education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation Gaps: Uneven performance across states and weak last-mile delivery • Data & Digital Issues: Quality concerns in real-time data and digital infrastructure gaps • Capacity Constraints: Overburdened Anganwadi workers and skill gaps. • Persistent Malnutrition: Slow improvement in indicators like stunting and anaemia. NFHS-5 (2019-2021) shows that while stunting reduced from 38.4% to 35.5%, anemia increased from 58.6% to 67.1% in children. • Behavioural Barriers: Cultural food practices and low awareness hinder diet diversity • Infrastructure Deficits: Many Anganwadi centres lack basic facilities • Convergence Issues: Coordination challenges among multiple ministries • Funding Constraints: Delays and inadequacy in fund allocation.

Way Forward

Strengthen convergence and last-mile delivery; decentralize funds to **Gram Panchayats**; scale up fortified foods and millets (**Shree Anna**); and fill Anganwadi worker vacancies with better remuneration.



131st Constitutional Amendment Bill, 2026; Delimitation Bill, 2026; UTs Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026

Background: The 106th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2023 (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam) provides for one-third reservation for women in Lok Sabha, State Assemblies and Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, including those reserved for SCs and STs. But its implementation was linked to delimitation after the first census conducted post-enactment.

Delay in Implementation: The reference census is expected around 2027, and since delimitation is time-consuming, reservation is unlikely to apply to the 2029 Lok Sabha elections.

New Legislative Push (2026 Bills): Three Bills introduced: (i) the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, (ii) the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, and (iii) the Delimitation Bill, 2026, aim to operationalise women reservation by restructuring seat allocation and delimitation.

Objective of Bills: They seek to increase Lok Sabha seats, enable delimitation based on the 2011 census, and facilitate earlier implementation of women's reservation.

Key Features of the three Bills:

- **Population-based delimitation:** Seats in Lok Sabha will be allocated in proportion to population, ensuring roughly equal population across constituencies.

- **Flexibility on census use:** The Constitution (**Article 82**) specifies that delimitation will be carried out after every census, and will be based on that census. The **Constitution Amendment Bill** authorises **Parliament** to pass a law to determine when delimitation will be undertaken, and which census will be used. Parliament could make these decisions with a **simple majority**.
- **Use of 2011 census:** The Delimitation Bill, 2026 provides that the latest published census as on the date of the constitution of the Delimitation Commission, will be used. This implies that the 2011 census will be used for the next delimitation.
- **Increase in Lok Sabha strength:** The Constitution provides that Lok Sabha will have a maximum of 530 members from states, and up to 20 members from UTs. The Constitution Amendment Bill increases the maximum number of members to 850, with up to 815 members from states, and up to 35 members from UTs.
- **Removal of census condition for reservation:** The 106th Constitution (Amendment) Act, 2023 stated that reservation will come into effect based on the first census after the commencement of the Act. The Constitution Amendment Bill removes this requirement.
- **Extension to Union Territories:** Similar Reservation provisions will apply to Delhi, Puducherry, and Jammu & Kashmir through the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026.
 - The bill seeks to amend the Government of Union Territories Act 1963, the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991 and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019. The legislation provides for the readjustment of parliamentary and assembly constituencies by the Delimitation Commission.
- **Delimitation Commission structure:** The Delimitation Bill, 2026 empowers the central government to constitute a Delimitation Commission consisting of a Chairperson who is or has been a Supreme Court judge, the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) or nominee by CEC, and the concerned State Election Commissioner. The central government will appoint the Chairperson.


Issues Arising from the Three Bills

- **Federal imbalance (North–South divide):** Population-based delimitation using older census data may shift political power towards high-population northern states, raising concerns among southern states about reduced representation.
 - Larger states may gain more seats, potentially reducing the relative voice of smaller states and UTs.
- **Change in the relative size with Rajya Sabha:** Article 80 of the Constitution provides that Rajya Sabha will consist of a maximum of 250 members. The 131st Constitution Amendment Bill leaves this unchanged. The ratio of seats between Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha will change from 2.2:1 to 3.3:1, assuming the number of seats in Lok Sabha increases. This would reduce the relative share of Rajya Sabha members in the elections of the President and the Vice-President. It also increases powers of Lok Sabha in the event of a joint sitting of the two Houses.
- **Increase in the size of the Council of Ministers:** Whether an increase in the size of Lok Sabha requires a proportionate increase in the size of the Council of Ministers. The Constitution (91st Amendment) Act, 2003, restricted the size of the Council of Ministers at both Union and State levels to 15% of the total strength of the Lok Sabha or Legislative Assembly
- **Use of 2011 census:** Freezing delimitation on the 2011 census ignores demographic changes over the last decade, leading to **distorted and outdated representation**.
- **Parliament’s discretion over census:** Giving Parliament power to decide *when* and *which census* to use departs from the constitutional principle of automatic post-census delimitation, raising concerns about **political manipulation**.

- **Expansion of Lok Sabha (550 → 850):**
 - Increasing seats may improve representation but can weaken **efficiency and decision-making** in Parliament.
 - May dilute quality of debate, scrutiny, and accountability due to a much larger House.
 - Logistical challenges in managing proceedings, infrastructure, and coordination.
 - A larger Lok Sabha implies that each MP will have less time for making various interventions,
- **Delimitation–reservation linkage concerns:**
 - Combining women’s reservation with delimitation complicates implementation.
 - Reservation becomes dependent on a politically sensitive and time-consuming exercise.
- **Centralisation of power:** Central government plays a key role in constituting the Delimitation Commission and shaping the process, raising concerns about **reduced independence**.
- **Women’s reservation design issues:**
 - No clarity on **sub-quotas for OBC women**, leading to concerns about unequal benefits within the category.
 - Frequent rotation of reserved seats (as in earlier proposals) may affect **political continuity and accountability**.
- **Timing and sequencing problem:** Simultaneous introduction of three major structural reforms (seat increase, delimitation, reservation) reduces political consensus and increases complexity.

WOMEN RESERVATION AND RELATED DATA

- **Current representation (Lok Sabha):** Women’s share has increased gradually but remains low at **13.8% (75 out of 543 MPs)**.
 - **Rajya Sabha:** ~42 women members representing about 17%
- **Historical trend:** Women’s representation rose from **4.9% in 1952 to 13.8% in 2024**, showing slow but steady growth over decades.
- **Peak and stagnation:** The highest recent figure was **14.4% (Lok Sabha) in 2019**, indicating stagnation rather than consistent improvement.
- **Party-wise representation:**
 - **TMC:** Highest % share with around **39% women MPs**.
 - **BJP:** Around **17% women MPs**.
 - **Congress:** Around **14% women MPs**.
 - Other major parties remain below optimal levels.
- **State Assemblies trend:** Women’s representation in Vidhan Sabhas has **rarely crossed 15% across states**.
- **State-wise variation:**
 - **Chhattisgarh:** Only state exceeding 15% women MLAs in 2023.
 - Many large states like **Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka** remain below 10%.
 - Some states like **Nagaland** historically had negligible representation.
- **Regional disparities:** Significant variation exists across states, reflecting social, political, and cultural differences in women’s participation.
- **Global comparison:**
 - **India:** ~13.8% women in Parliament.
 - **Global leaders:** Rwanda (63.8%), Cuba (57.2%), Mexico (~50.4%).
 - **Global average:** Much higher than India, placing India **147th out of ~190 countries**.
- **Global trend insight:** Countries with **gender quotas or electoral reforms** tend to have higher women representation.
- **Local bodies success:** Reservation in Panchayats and municipalities has led to **over 33% (often ~50%) women representation**, showing effectiveness at grassroots level.
- **Key issue:** Despite success at local level, similar progress has **not translated to state and national legislatures**.
- **Structural reasons:**
 - Political parties give **fewer tickets to women**.
 - Electoral politics remains **male-dominated and resource-intensive**.
 - Social norms and patriarchy limit participation.



Defeat of Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026

The Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026— aimed to expand the Lok Sabha from 543 to 850 seats & to operationalise 33% reservation for women—was defeated in Lok Sabha. It secured 298 vs 230 votes but failed to meet the two-thirds majority requirement.

- The collapse of the constitutional amendment bill necessitated the immediate withdrawal of **dependent statutory legislation**, specifically the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, and the Delimitation Bill, 2026.

Why It Matters?

- **For Government:** Weakens aura of legislative invincibility
- **For Opposition:** Shows coordination capacity

- **For Women's Representation:** Reform delayed despite broad support

Core Reasons for Defeat

- **Special majority constraint:** Constitutional amendments require two-thirds of members present and voting, not just a simple majority.

- **Census linkage:** The legislation sought to **end the freeze** on parliamentary constituency boundaries, which has been in place since the **42nd Constitutional Amendment (1976)** based on the **1971 Census**, by enabling delimitation using the 2011 Census.

Rule 72 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha outlines the procedure followed when a member opposes the introduction of a Bill. Under the Indian parliamentary system, introducing a Bill is usually a formal step. However, Rule 72 provides a mechanism for members to challenge this introduction at the very start.

KEY PROVISIONS OF RULE 72

- **Opportunity to Object:** If a motion for leave to introduce a Bill is opposed, the Speaker may permit a brief statement from the member who opposes the motion and from the member (usually a Minister) who moved the motion.
- **No Further Debate:** After these brief statements, the Speaker may put the question to the House for a vote without further debate.
- **Constitutional Objections:** If the opposition is based on the ground that the Bill initiates legislation which is outside the legislative competence of the House (i.e., the House doesn't have the legal authority to pass it), the Speaker may permit a full discussion on that specific point.
- **Notice Requirement:** A member who intends to oppose the introduction of a Bill must give notice to the Secretary-General by 10:00 hours on the day the motion is scheduled in the List of Business. This notice must specify the precise objections they intend to raise.

Recent Context (2026)

In April 2026, Rule 72 was notably invoked during the introduction of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill and the Delimitation Bill, 2026. Opposition members used this rule to raise objections regarding the federal structure and the timing of delimitation, leading to a division of votes before the Bills were successfully introduced.

Note: Rule 72 specifically deals with the Introduction Stage. It is different from the later stages of a Bill where detailed clause-by-clause discussion and amendments occur.

- The freeze, originally meant to continue until the first Census after 2000, was later extended by 84th Constitutional Amendment (2001) until the first Census after 2026.
- The 87th Amendment (2003) allowed for rearranging constituency boundaries **within states** using the 2001 census data, without altering the total seat count for each state.
- **Linkage with delimitation:** Reservation was tied to delimitation exercise, triggering the opposition.
- **Increase in Lok Sabha seats:** The proposal to expand Lok Sabha strength to 850 members was seen as a major structural change without adequate consensus.
- **Federal concerns:** States, particularly from southern India, feared loss of representation due to population-based seat redistribution.
- **Perception of political intent:** Opposition parties viewed the Bill as politically motivated rather than a purely reform-oriented measure for women's empowerment.
- **Lack of consensus building:** Insufficient consultation and absence of broad political agreement weakened support for a constitutional amendment.



Promotion & Regulation of Online Gaming Rules, 2026

India has notified the **Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Rules, 2026** under the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming (PROG) Act, 2025, marking a major step to regulate the rapidly growing online

gaming sector while addressing concerns of addiction, financial loss, and illegal betting. The framework aims to balance **promotion of e-sports and innovation** with **strict prohibition of online money gaming** and protection of users.

Key Highlights of the Rules

- **Classification mechanism:** Provides a **clear, transparent and time-bound process** to classify games as online money games, permissible social games, or e-sports.
- **Central regulator:** Establishes an **Online Gaming Authority of India (OGAI)** as a unified regulator to oversee classification, compliance, and enforcement.
 - **Head office:** NCT of Delhi
 - **Composition:** Six members, chaired by the Additional Secretary of **MeitY**.
 - **Functions:** Inquiring into complaints, issuing compliance orders, and publishing a list of determined online money games.
 - **Inter-ministerial oversight:** The Authority includes representatives from key ministries (Home, I&B, Finance, Legal Affairs, Youth Affairs & Sports), ensuring coordinated regulation.
- **Flexible Determination System**
 - The determination test to classify whether an online game constitutes an online money game. Determination is triggered in three situations:
 - *suo motu* action by the Authority;
 - an application by a service provider offering the game as an e-sport;
 - or a notification by the Central Government requiring a category of social games to be determined.
 - Factors for determination — payment of fees or stakes, expectation of monetary winnings, the structure of the revenue model, and the manner in which rewards are redeemed.
 - Determination shall be completed within 90 days
- **Selective Registration system:** Registration is required **only** where the Central Government so notifies and for every online game intended to be offered as an e-sport.
 - On successful determination and registration, the Authority issues a digital Certificate of Registration with a unique registration number, valid for a period of up to 10 years.
 - An online money game shall not be eligible for registration as an e-sport under the National Sports Governance Act, 2025.
- **User protection measures:** Mandates safeguards such as **grievance redressal systems, transparency norms, and user safety features** for gaming platforms.
 - These include *age verification and age-gating, time restrictions, parental controls, user reporting tools, counselling support, and fair-play and integrity monitoring*
- **Financial Intermediaries as Enforcement Gatekeepers**
 - A major feature is the inclusion of banks and payment gateways in enforcement. They must verify a game's regulatory status before processing transactions and comply with OGAI's directions
- **Two-Tier Grievance Redressal Mechanism:** Aggrieved users can appeal to the internal grievance redressal systems (est. by service providers).

India's Online Gaming Sector

- As of 2025, around **591 million** Indians are online gamers—~40% of the population and nearly 20% of global gamers.
- The industry contributes significantly to the new media ecosystem, accounting for 30% of its revenue (\$3.8 billion) and is considered the fastest-growing segment.
- Between 2020 and 2023, the sector recorded a strong **28% CAGR**, and is projected to reach **\$9.2 billion** by 2029.
- Overall, the data highlights India's transition into a **high-growth, mobile-first gaming market** with expanding user base and revenue potential.



- A user dissatisfied with the provider's resolution (or in case of non-redressal) may approach the Authority within 30 days, which shall endeavour to dispose of the appeal within a further 30 days.
- Second Appeal to the Appellate Authority (Secretary, MeitY), aiming to resolve the matter within 30 days.
- **Data Localisation and Future Regulatory Scope**
 - Gaming platforms offering social games or esports must store data within India, ensuring regulatory oversight.
 - OGAI is also empowered to issue future guidelines on advertising, safety, and operational compliance, allowing the framework to evolve with the sector.
- **Penalties and Enforcement:** Proceedings are to be conducted in digital mode unless physical presence is deemed necessary and concluded within 90 days of receipt of a complaint

(For more about Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025, refer The Recitals-August 2025)



Grounds of Defection

Seven Rajya Sabha MPs of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) recently switched allegiance to the BJP, reducing AAP's strength in the Upper House to three. This has triggered a legal and constitutional debate on whether these members would face disqualification under the anti-defection law.

Will the Members Face Disqualification?

- **Two-thirds exception:** If at least **two-thirds of a party's members merge with another party**, they are protected from disqualification under the Tenth Schedule (Anti defection law).
- **Current case:** Since 7 out of 10 AAP Rajya Sabha MPs have shifted, they meet the **two-thirds threshold** and may avoid disqualification if the move is treated as a "merger."
- **Role of Chairman:** The decision rests with the Rajya Sabha Chairman, who can either accept the merger claim or initiate disqualification proceedings.

Anti-defection law (Tenth Schedule):

The Anti-Defection Law, enshrined in the Tenth Schedule of the Indian Constitution by the **52nd Amendment Act of 1985**, prevents elected members (MPs/MLAs) from switching parties for personal gain, curbing the "Aaya Ram, Gaya Ram" culture. It disqualifies members who voluntarily leave their party or disobey party whips.

ANTI-DEFLECTION
LAW



Key Aspects of the Anti-Defection Law:

- **Grounds for Disqualification:** A member is disqualified if they:
 - Voluntarily give up their party membership.
 - Vote or abstain from voting contrary to the party whip.
 - Are independent members and join a political party.
 - Are nominated members and join a political party after six months.
- 91st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003:
 - **The split exception (Paragraph 3):** Removed protection for splits (earlier one-third rule).
- The merger exception (Paragraph 4): Retained protection only for mergers involving **two-thirds of members**. Disqualification does not apply if at **least two-thirds** of the legislators of a party agree to a **merger** with another party.
 - Two sub-paragraphs govern this:
 - **Paragraph 4(1):** A member is protected if the original political party merges with another.
 - **Paragraph 4(2):** Such a merger is valid only if at least two-thirds of the legislature party consents to this merger.
- **Deciding Authority:** The Speaker or Chairman of the House has the power to decide on disqualification, though this is subject to judicial review.
- **Timeline:** The Supreme Court has noted that the Speaker should ideally decide cases within 3 months, based on Keisham Meghachandra Singh vs The Hon'ble Speaker, Manipur Legislative Assembly (2020).
- **Recent Legal Standing:** The Supreme Court has maintained that the Speaker must act as a neutral adjudicator, and their decisions can be reviewed by courts if they show mala fide intent.



- **Judicial review:** The Chairman's decision can be challenged in court after it is made. However, the law does not prescribe a time limit for the presiding officer's decision, allowing delays that can let members continue in office despite being liable for disqualification.

Legal Interpretation and Complications

- **Merger vs split:** The law recognises only mergers (**not splits**), requiring two-thirds members to shift together.
- **Legislature vs party:** Some argue that the merger provision applies to the entire political party, not just MPs in one House. AAP has members in other legislatures as well, raising the question whether a *Rajya Sabha-only shift* qualifies as a valid merger. The case highlights ambiguities in interpreting mergers, especially when shifts occur within only one House of Parliament.
- **Technical membership:** Even if members support BJP, they may still technically be treated as belonging to AAP until a formal decision is taken.
- **Whip violation:** If members defy AAP's party whip before a merger is recognised, they can still face disqualification petitions.

The Legal Ambiguity

- The crux of the current controversy lies in how **Paragraph 4's** two sub-paragraphs are **interpreted**.
- **Conjunctive vs disjunctive reading:**
 - **Conjunctive:** Both a national-level merger of the original party and two-thirds consent of the legislature party are required.
 - **Disjunctive:** A "deemed merger" is triggered by two-thirds consent alone, even without a formal merger at the national party level.

Judicial Precedents

- **Rajendra Singh Rana v. Swamy Prasad Maurya (2007):**
 - The Supreme Court, while interpreting the now-deleted split exception, endorsed a conjunctive reading.
- **Goa Congress Merger Case (2019–2022):**
 - Ten Congress MLAs in Goa joined the BJP, claiming they constituted two-thirds of the 15-member Congress legislature party.
 - The Speaker upheld the merger; the Bombay High Court (February 2022) affirmed this, adopting a disjunctive reading.
 - It ruled that a "deemed merger" occurs once two-thirds of a legislature party agrees to join another, without requiring national-level party approval.

Expert Opinions

- **P.D.T. Achary (former Lok Sabha Secretary-General) — Conjunctive view:**
 - A valid merger requires the **original party to first merge** at the national level, followed by two-thirds support from the legislature party.
 - In the AAP case, this would necessitate Arvind Kejriwal's consent to a merger with the BJP.
 - He noted that any member may now file a disqualification petition before the Rajya Sabha Chairman, whose ruling would be subject to judicial review.
- **Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy — Disjunctive view with caveats:**
 - The two-thirds threshold being met could allow the move to qualify as a "deemed merger."
 - However, he flagged a deeper anomaly — Rajya Sabha MPs are **elected by State MLAs**, and the AAP MLAs in Punjab who elected these members continue to belong to AAP.

- This creates a disconnect between the electoral base and party affiliation of the MPs, undermining the very logic of Rajya Sabha representation.

Challenges

- **Ambiguous drafting:** Paragraph 4 leaves room for contradictory judicial interpretations, which could be misused to legitimise opportunistic defections dressed up as mergers.
- **Absence of the split exception post-2003:** This means there is no explicit provision for partial defections, making the merger route the only legal pathway.
- **Structural anomaly:**
 - MPs switch parties while the MLAs who elected them remain in the original party, weakening the principle of **representative accountability**.

Way Forward:

- **Definitive ruling:** The Supreme Court needs to end interpretive uncertainty on the conjunctive vs. disjunctive reading of Paragraph 4.
- **Legislative clarification:** Through a fresh constitutional amendment that explicitly defines the conditions for a valid merger.
- **Structural reforms:** Strengthening the independence of the presiding officer (Speaker/Chairman) in adjudicating disqualification petitions — or vesting such powers in an **independent tribunal**.



US-Iran Two-Week Ceasefire

Key Takeaways from the Ceasefire

- A ceasefire between the United States and Iran was announced by US President Trump shortly before his stated deadline, with Iran's Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi agreeing soon after.
 - The ceasefire marked a significant step back from the brink, especially after strong threats regarding Iran's energy infrastructure and the Strait of Hormuz.
- **Trump Steps Back from Escalation**
 - After weeks of aggressive rhetoric and brinkmanship, the US gradually moved towards de-escalation through phased pauses in military action.
 - The ceasefire is directly tied to Iran's agreement to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, which Trump has framed as a major strategic win — particularly significant given the absence of direct military support from European allies.
 - **Iran's Strategic Leverage: The Strait of Hormuz**
 - Iran's greatest strategic asset throughout the conflict was its control over the Strait of Hormuz, through which nearly one-fifth of global energy flows pass.
 - By disrupting this chokepoint, Iran was able to **expand the conflict** beyond the military domain into the energy and economic domains, affecting Gulf countries and global oil markets even without direct US dependence on the route.
 - The temporary reopening of the Strait signals a calibrated de-escalation, preserving Iran's negotiating leverage for the talks ahead.
 - **Iran's Maximalist Peace Terms**
 - Iran has presented a comprehensive **10-point peace plan** with far-reaching demands:
 - Non-aggression commitments, formal acceptance of uranium enrichment, Iran retains control of the Strait of Hormuz, lifting of all sanctions (primary/secondary), Termination of UN resolutions, Termination of IAEA Board resolutions, Compensation for damages, Comprehensive ceasefire on all fronts and US troop withdrawal from the region.
 - The breadth of these demands makes the path to a final agreement extremely complex, requiring substantial diplomatic effort from both sides.
 - **Pakistan's Emerging Role as Mediator One**
 - The more consequential geopolitical outcomes of the ceasefire is Pakistan's elevated diplomatic profile.
 - Islamabad played a central role in brokering the agreement and is now actively seeking to institutionalise this role by hosting further negotiations branded as the "Islamabad Talks."
 - **Humanitarian and Regional Relief**
 - The conflict caused widespread devastation, with the death toll exceeding 5000, including casualties in Iran, Lebanon, Gulf countries, Israel, and among US military personnel.
 - Iran's retaliatory strikes on countries hosting American bases disrupted the relative stability of Gulf nations such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Oman, with continuous missile and drone attacks severely affecting economic and social life.

Impact on India: Economic Strain and Strategic Relief

- **Energy Crisis and Economic Impact** - The conflict disrupted oil and gas supplies from the Gulf, on which India depends, raising concerns about economic slowdown and growth stability.
 - India imports ~60% of its **LPG** consumption and out of these ~90% come through the Strait of Hormuz

- India now imports **crude** from 41 countries. Despite this diversification, ~30% of crude imports are still coming from Strait of Hormuz
- **Major Relief from Ceasefire and Strait Reopening** as India had managed to receive only a limited number of shipments during the conflict period.
- **Diplomatic Undercurrents** - While Pakistan's role as a mediator has drawn attention, India has officially welcomed the ceasefire and expressed hope for lasting peace, without acknowledging Pakistan's involvement.
- **Impact on Indian Citizens** - The conflict affected Indian nationals, with eight deaths reported and concerns for nearly 1 crore Indians in the Gulf, who contribute significantly to remittances.
- **Broader Strategic Concerns** - India highlighted the wider disruption to global energy supply and trade networks, emphasising the importance of free navigation through the Strait of Hormuz for economic stability.

Iran-US Ceasefire Talks Collapse & US Blockade of Iranian Ports

- High-stakes US-Iran negotiations collapsed after hours of intense talks in Islamabad.
- Following this breakdown, the **US initiated a blockade on all maritime traffic to and from Iranian ports**, sharply escalating regional tensions.
- Despite the diplomatic failure, the talks marked the **first high-level political contact** between the US and Iran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Issues That Broke the Talks

- **Nuclear Question**
 - The US demanded Iran commit to never pursuing nuclear weapons or the tools enabling rapid acquisition. Iran insists enrichment is its sovereign right under the NPT, which prohibits nuclear weapons but not civilian enrichment.
 - Iran had earlier offered to suspend operations temporarily but refused to surrender its 440+ kg of highly enriched (60%) uranium stockpile. The war has only hardened Iran's position.
- **Strait of Hormuz**
 - The US demanded immediate reopening of the Strait.
 - Iran asserts charging tolls on ships, recognizing this chokepoint as its single greatest strategic leverage and is unwilling to surrender it without substantial concessions.
 - ♣ It was only later that Iran declared the Strait of Hormuz "completely open" to commercial vessels.
- **Frozen Assets and Reparations**
 - Iran demanded release of \$27 billion in frozen revenues held across seven countries for post-war reconstruction, along with war reparations for six weeks of airstrikes. The US refused both demands.
- **Underlying Trust Deficit**
 - Iran cited America's "breaches of promise" — referring to US bombing on February 28 even while Geneva negotiations were underway — as a deep trust deficit that complicated even procedural progress.

Silver Lining Amid Deadlock

- Despite the collapse, diplomacy has not died. Iran's original **10-point maximalist plan** has been narrowed to **three core issues** (*lifting of sanctions, Iran's nuclear enrichment rights, & control over Strait of Hormuz*) — itself a sign of underlying progress.
- Both sides retain a **two-week ceasefire window**, and neither has walked away entirely. Iran will consult the **IRGC, clergy, and Supreme Leader** before any further movement.

US Blockade — Escalation After Failed Talks

What is a Naval Blockade?

- A blockade is an act of war where a state prevents vessels from accessing an enemy's ports.
- It requires adequate naval force for actual enforcement — "**paper blockades**" without real enforcement are illegal under international law.
- Two types exist — **Close Blockade** (forces near enemy ports, more effective but more vulnerable) and **Distant Blockade** (forces farther away, less vulnerable but easier to evade).

Criteria for a Lawful Blockade

- For a blockade to be internationally lawful it must have:
 - a formal declaration with notification to all states,
 - continuous and impartial enforcement without discrimination,
 - lawful military objective that does not deny civilian humanitarian supplies, and
 - genuine operational effectiveness.

Why the US Moved to a Blockade?

- Earlier easing of sanctions had allowed Iran to export oil and fund its war effort — including through the Ayatollah's toll system.
- The blockade reflects a shift from economic pressure to strategic containment, aimed at cutting off Iran's financial resources.
- However, it carries high escalation risks given Iran's maritime leverage.



Federal Chancellor of Austria Visits India

- Austrian Federal Chancellor Dr. Christian Stocker paid an Official Visit to India — the **first visit** by an Austrian Chancellor to India in 42 years.
- This mirrors PM Modi's visit to Austria in July 2024, which was itself the first by an Indian PM in over four decades.
- The visit reaffirmed the **Enhanced India-Austria Partnership** announced in 2024 and produced significant outcomes across defence, trade, technology, education, and culture.

Key Outcomes of the Present Visit

- **Counter-Terrorism and Security**
 - Signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) to establish a Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism for information sharing and capacity building.
 - Launched an institutional Cybersecurity Dialogue to address emerging threats in the cyber domain.
- **Defence Cooperation**
 - Signed a LoI on Cooperation in Military Matters, providing an institutional framework for defence industrial cooperation, technology partnership, and defence policy dialogue.
 - Welcomed a proposed partnership between India's Centre for UN Peacekeeping and Austria's Armed Forces International Centre (AUTINT).
- **Trade and Investment**
 - Agreed to establish a Fast-Track Mechanism to address issues faced by investors and companies in both countries.
 - PM Modi appreciated Austria's strong support for early ratification of the India-EU Free Trade Agreement.
- **Infrastructure and Energy**
 - Renewed the bilateral MoU on technical cooperation in the road infrastructure sector, with the first Joint Working Group to meet within 2026.

- o Identified cooperation in **pumped storage renewable projects and Green Hydrogen storage and transportation** as emerging priority areas.

- **Science, Technology and AI**

- o Agreed to jointly organise a bilateral space industry seminar in Vienna in Autumn 2026.
- o Exploratory talks on India's possible association with EU's "Horizon Europe" research programme.

- **Education and Skills**

- o Signed a Joint Lol on dual vocational training, skill development, and recognition of vocational qualifications.
- o Launched a structured bilateral Dialogue on Cooperation in Education.
- o Austria's "TU (technical universities) Austria" launched a **dedicated portal** for Indian students to pursue engineering and technical programmes in Austria.

India-Austria Relationship

- India and Austria share a relationship founded on shared democratic values, promotion of human rights, rule of law, and mutual respect.
- The relationship received momentum after PM Modi's visit to Austria in July 2024 which produced the **Joint Statement on Enhanced India-Austria Partnership**.
- **Trade and Economic Ties**
 - India is one of Austria's most important trading partners outside the EU.
 - Bilateral trade between India and Austria is on an upward trajectory, crossing \$3 billion (as of April 2026) in total volume, driven by sectors like technology, infrastructure, and engineering.
 - The partnership, which saw India secure a trade surplus recently, is supported by over 160 Austrian companies in India, a new Fast-Track Investment Mechanism, and a strong focus on green technology and digitalization.
- **Science, Technology and Innovation**
 - High-technology cooperation has been identified as a central pillar of the Enhanced India-Austria Partnership.
 - The Austrian Institute of Technology (AIT) has emerged as a key institutional partner, particularly in electrical equipment and railway infrastructure.
 - The **India-Austria Startup Bridge** (launched 2024) fosters connections between startup ecosystems, incubators, and venture capital networks of both countries.
- **Education, Mobility and People-to-People Ties**
 - The **Comprehensive Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement** (CMMPA, 2023) serve as the institutional framework for facilitating legal migration of skilled workers, students, and researchers between the two countries.
 - People-to-people ties are further strengthened by growing interest in Yoga and Ayurveda in Austria, including the '**Bounce Back with Yoga**' initiative in Austrian schools, and ongoing cultural exchanges between the two nations.



Conclusion

- Austria plays an important role as a **bridge** between India and the European Union.
- Both sides welcomed the India-EU Free Trade Agreement (2026), the India-EU Comprehensive Strategic Agenda (2026-2030), the India-EU Trade and Technology Council, and the India-EU Security and Defence Partnership as landmark developments in India's engagement with Europe.
- Austria's consistent support for deepening India-EU ties makes it a strategic partner within the EU for India.



Visit of President of Republic of Korea to India

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung visited India & held a bilateral meeting with PM Modi in New Delhi. The visit marked a significant step in elevating the India-South Korea **Special Strategic Partnership**, with multiple agreements signed spanning trade, technology, maritime, and culture.

Key Outcomes of the Visit

- **Trade and Economic Cooperation**
 - Both leaders set an ambitious target of scaling bilateral trade from the current **\$27 billion to \$50 billion by 2030**.
 - India and South Korea agreed to **restart CEPA** (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement) upgrade negotiations — *CEPA has been in force since 2010* and has seen bilateral trade grow nearly 90% from \$14.2 billion to \$26.89 billion (2024-25).
 - However, **India runs a significant trade deficit** with South Korea — importing ~\$21 billion while exporting only ~\$5.8 billion — making CEPA renegotiation critical.
 - **Three new institutional mechanisms** were also established — an India-Korea Financial Forum, an Industrial Cooperation Committee, and an Economic Security Dialogue to enhance cooperation in critical technologies and supply chains.
- **Digital and Industrial Partnership**
 - A landmark **India-Korea Digital Bridge** was launched for deeper collaboration in AI, semiconductors, and information technology.
 - A **Korean Industrial Township** will be established in India to ease market entry for Korean businesses, particularly SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) — a practical step toward grounding investment commitments.
- **Maritime and Shipbuilding**
 - A Comprehensive Framework for Partnership in Shipbuilding, Shipping, and Maritime Logistics was signed — strategically significant given India's ambitions under Maritime India Vision 2030.
 - The partnership is complementary — Korea brings advanced shipbuilding technology while India offers policy support, land, and a growing order base.
 - A foreign ministry-level dialogue on climate change, the Arctic, and maritime cooperation was also launched.
- **Multilateral and Geopolitical Alignment**
 - South Korea formally joined two Indian-led multilateral frameworks — the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI).
- **Cultural Diplomacy**
 - The Mumbai Korea Centre was launched as a permanent **K-pop performance** hall and **international hub for Korean culture** — a space where K-pop and Bollywood can collaborate. An **India-Korea Friendship Festival** is to be organised in 2028.
 - K-pop and K-dramas are gaining traction in India while Indian cinema is gaining recognition in Korea — reflecting deepening people-to-people ties.

India-South Korea Bilateral Relations

- **Historical and Diplomatic Context**
 - Diplomatic relations were established in **1973** and have steadily evolved into a "**Special Strategic Partnership**" since **2015**.
 - The relationship is anchored in robust economic ties, technological and security convergence, defence collaboration, and major Korean corporate investments in India — most notably Samsung and Hyundai.
 - Culturally, the relationship is also enriched by historical links, symbolised by the **Queen Suriratna** memorial in Ayodhya, commemorating the legendary Korean queen believed to have been of Indian origin.
- **Strategic Convergence**
 - The bilateral relationship is reinforced by the alignment of two major foreign policy frameworks — India's Act East Policy and South Korea's New Southern Policy — both of which identify the Indo-Pacific as a priority region.
- **Defence and Technology Cooperation**
 - The most prominent example is the **K9 Vajra-T artillery gun system** — manufactured in India using South Korean technology — which represents successful defence co-production.
 - Cooperation is expanding into AI, shipbuilding, and semiconductor technologies, reflecting a shift toward high-technology defence and dual-use collaboration.

- **Economic and Trade Relations**

- CEPA (in force since 2010) has been the backbone of bilateral trade, growing trade by ~90% over 15 years.

Challenges

- The **trade imbalance** remains a structural concern with limited outcomes from **CEPA upgrade** talks so far, reflecting the complexity of aligning tariff structures and non-tariff barriers.
- **Enhancing shipbuilding capacity in India** requires sustained infrastructure investment, skilled labour development, and regulatory streamlining.
- **Geopolitical uncertainties** — particularly in West Asia and Europe — risk disrupting energy supply chains on which both countries depend.
- Finally, **grounding MoUs into actual implementation** — especially for SMEs and technology transfer — remains a persistent challenge.

Way Forward

- The path ahead involves **fast-tracking CEPA renegotiation** to reduce India's trade deficit and expand market access for Indian goods in pharmaceuticals, textiles, and IT services.
- Leveraging digital technology to **co-develop semiconductor** supply chains — critical in the context of global chip geopolitics — will be essential.
- Aligning shipbuilding cooperation with India's Sagarmala Project and Maritime India Vision, attracting Korean FDI into India's industrial corridors, and building resilient supply chains for critical minerals are the other key priorities.

Conclusion

The visit signals a deliberate shift from a conventional bilateral relationship to a forward-looking, technology-driven strategic partnership — captured in the formulation of "chips to ships, talent to technology." As India seeks to diversify its strategic partnerships and build resilient economic frameworks, South Korea — a technologically advanced middle power with shared democratic values — emerges as a key partner in navigating the challenges of a multipolar world.



India–New Zealand FTA

- India signed a **Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with New Zealand** — the latest in a series of landmark trade pacts with developed economies, following agreements with the **United Kingdom** and the **European Union**.
- The agreement is being projected as a model of **inclusive, development-oriented trade diplomacy**, aligned with India's vision of leveraging global commerce for domestic empowerment.

Key Highlights of the Agreement

- **Market Access and Tariff Elimination**
 - New Zealand has committed to the **immediate elimination of tariffs** on all Indian products — a significant gain given that key Indian exports currently face duties of up to 10% in the New Zealand market.
 - Sectors set to benefit include garments, carpets, yarn, fabrics, footwear, bags, belts, automobile components, machinery, tools, gems and jewellery, and handicrafts.
 - These are the sectors that form the backbone of India's MSME ecosystem and labour-intensive manufacturing clusters, directly impacting millions of workers and artisans.

- **Agricultural Cooperation with Safeguards**
 - New Zealand will support agricultural productivity action plans for kiwi, apples, and honey — covering research collaboration, improved planting material, post-harvest improvements, food safety systems, and Centres of Excellence (CoE).
 - Crucially, India has **ring-fenced sensitive agricultural products** from tariff concessions, including dairy products (milk, cream, whey, yoghurt, cheese), vegetables (onions, chana, peas, corn), and other items such as almonds, sugar, and select oils and fats.
 - This reflects India's consistent stance across all trade negotiations — farmer and fishermen interests are non-negotiable.
- **A Historic First — Women-Led Negotiation**
 - In what is being described as India's first women-led FTA, nearly the entire negotiating team comprised women — including the Chief Negotiator, Deputy Chief Negotiator, sectoral leads, and India's Ambassador to New Zealand.
- **Mobility and Opportunities for Indian Youth**
 - The agreement carves out unprecedented pathways for India's youth.
 - Key provisions include:
 - ♣ **no numerical caps** on Indian students in New Zealand,
 - ♣ permission to work at least 20 hours per week during studies,
 - ♣ post-study work rights of up to 3 years for STEM graduates and up to 4 years for doctoral scholars,
 - ♣ a Temporary Employment Entry Visa for up to 5,000 Indian professionals at any given time (3-year stays) in IT, engineering, healthcare, education, construction, and traditional fields like yoga, Ayurveda, Indian cuisine, and music.
 - ♣ a Working Holiday Visa for 1,000 young Indians annually for up to 12 months.
- **Investment Commitments**
 - New Zealand has pledged to facilitate **\$20 billion of investment over 15 years** into India, targeting manufacturing, infrastructure, renewable energy, digital services, and innovation ecosystems.
 - A notable rebalancing clause has been built in — allowing India to take corrective action if investment commitments fall short, ensuring accountability beyond paper pledges.

Challenges

- Despite its landmark nature, the agreement faces several implementation challenges.
- **Monitoring** the \$20 billion investment commitment requires robust institutional mechanisms — the rebalancing clause is promising but untested.
- **Ensuring trickle-down benefits** to artisan communities and small enterprises demands targeted policy support beyond the FTA itself.
- **Managing mobility pathways** effectively without creating **brain-drain pressures** in critical sectors like IT and healthcare is another concern.
- The **dairy and agricultural exclusions**, may face pressure in future review rounds given that New Zealand is a **global dairy powerhouse**.
- Finally, **MSME clusters must be made export-ready** to actually capitalise on zero-tariff access — market access alone does not guarantee market capture.

Conclusion

- The India-New Zealand FTA is not merely a bilateral trade deal — it is a **statement of India's negotiating strength**.
- India secured meaningful market access for its workers and exporters while firmly defending agricultural sensitivities.
- Its unique features position it as a **model for 21st-century trade diplomacy** — one that is inclusive, reciprocal, and anchored in domestic priorities.

India–New Zealand Bilateral Relations

- India and New Zealand established diplomatic relations in **1952** and share warm, friendly ties.
- New Zealand identified India as a **priority country** in its "*Opening Doors to India*" policy (2011), later reinforcing this through the **NZ Inc. India Strategy** and the "**India-NZ 2025 — Investing in the Relationship**" strategy paper (2020), which envisions a more enduring strategic relationship.
- **Bilateral Trade and Economic Relations**
 - Total bilateral trade stood at **US\$ 1.75 billion** in 2023-24 — with India importing **US\$ 0.84 billion** and exporting **US\$ 0.91 billion** to New Zealand.
 - **India imports from NZ:** Wool, iron and steel, fruits and nuts, aluminium.
 - **India exports to NZ:** Pharmaceuticals, mechanical machinery, made-up textile articles, pearls, precious stones and metals.
- **Education and Science Cooperation**
 - India is the **second largest source of international students in New Zealand**, with **~8,000 Indian students** pursuing higher education.
 - Key institutional partnerships include the **NZ Centre at IIT Delhi** (MoU signed February 2020), funded jointly to support **10 collaborative research projects** in cancer, waste management, cybersecurity, robotics, autonomous vehicles, and medical technology.
 - **Education New Zealand (ENZ)** signed Education Cooperation Arrangements with **GIFT City and IIM Ahmedabad** in February 2024 — signalling growing academic linkages.
- **People-to-People and Cultural Ties**
 - The Indian diaspora in New Zealand numbers **~2,92,000** persons of Indian ethnicity, with around **70,000** Indian passport holders. Hindi is the fifth most spoken language in New Zealand.
 - A new **Indian Consulate in Auckland** became operational in **September 2024**, strengthening consular outreach.



India Reconsiders Hosting COP33

- India has decided **not to pursue hosting COP33 (2028)** after initially offering to host it at COP28 (Dubai, December 2023), due to concerns over conflicts between global climate expectations and national interests.
- Earlier, India had offered to host COP33 signalling climate leadership ambitions post-G20 success.

Why India Stepped Back from COP33?

- **Role Conflict as Host Nation**

- o COP host is expected to champion the effective implementation of **Paris Agreement** — contradicting India's critical stance.
- o India would have faced pressure to push **higher emission-cut ambitions** during the 2nd Global Stocktake (GST) due in 2028.
 - *1st GST was held at COP28 (Dubai) in 2023*

- **Geopolitical Calculations**

- o **US withdrawal** from the Paris Agreement reduced the impact of unilateral ambition by others.
- o Post-COP29, **trust between developed and developing nations** has significantly eroded.
- o Global divisions made consensus-building harder, especially during a GST year.

- **IPCC AR7 Complication**

- o **AR7** (7th Assessment Report, due 2029) may be advanced to **2028** to inform COP33's GST.
- o Expected to show **worsening climate scenarios**, intensifying pressure on all nations.
- o India (along with China) **opposed early publication of AR7**, citing developing-country limited review capacity and fear of increased binding commitments.
- o As COP33 host, India would have been **compelled to support early publication** — directly against its interests.

- **Increased Scrutiny on India's Policies**

- o Hosting COP33 would have placed India under greater international scrutiny, especially as the third-largest emitter, potentially pressuring it to align with global expectations over domestic priorities.

Conclusion: India's decision to step back from hosting COP33 reflects a **strategic recalibration**—balancing global climate leadership with **domestic development, energy security, and policy autonomy**.

Strategic Implications

- India's decision to step back from hosting COP33 carries significant consequences across multiple dimensions.
- On the question of **energy security**, opting out allows India to avoid binding international commitments at a time when geopolitical uncertainties are already disrupting global energy supply chains.
 - Hosting would have created external pressure to accelerate the fossil fuel transition faster than India's domestic energy situation permits.
- In terms of policy flexibility, India preserves its crucial policy space to continue relying on coal and other fossil fuels to meet its growing developmental needs.
 - As the third-largest emitter, any commitment made from the host's chair would have attracted disproportionate international scrutiny and potentially locked India into positions difficult to walk back.
- Regarding India's role as a Global South leader, stepping back may appear as a short-term setback.
- At the level of **climate diplomacy**, this decision signals a broader and important **shift in India's approach** — moving away from cooperative multilateralism toward a more assertive, interest-driven engagement with global climate frameworks.
- India is increasingly willing to openly challenge prevailing international narratives rather than accommodate them for the sake of diplomatic optics.

India's Evolving Climate Stance

- Shift Toward Development-First Approach
 - Argues the Paris Agreement is skewed against developing nations needing carbon space for growth.
 - Prioritises adaptation over mitigation, unlike the dominant global narrative.
 - Seeks a model similar to China's development-led climate approach.
- Key Positions in Climate Diplomacy
 - Challenged fixed temperature targets (1.5°C/2°C) as unfair to developing nations.
 - Pushes for implementation of Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement (climate finance obligations of developed nations).
 - Resists pressure for early fossil fuel phase-out.
 - Has become increasingly assertive and vocal in global climate negotiations.



- The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has decided to exit OPEC and the broader OPEC+ alliance, effective May 1. This move ends nearly six decades of membership
- The move comes amid global oil market disruptions due to the US-Iran conflict and reflects both geopolitical and economic considerations.

OPEC and UAE Membership: Origins and Evolution

- OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) was founded in 1960 at the **Baghdad Conference** by five countries—*Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela*—to coordinate oil policies and ensure stable revenues for producing nations.
- It emerged as a response to the dominance of Western multinational oil companies (the “Seven Sisters”), which earlier controlled pricing.
- OPEC currently has **12 members**, including, aside from the **UAE**: Algeria, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela.
- The UAE joined OPEC in 1967, initially through Abu Dhabi, becoming part of the expanding group of oil-producing nations.
- **Emergence of OPEC+ and Global Role**
 - OPEC+ is a grouping formed in 2016 between OPEC and 10 major non-OPEC producers such as Russia, Mexico, and Kazakhstan.
 - It coordinates **oil production quotas** to manage global supply and stabilise crude prices.
 - This alliance today accounts for a large share of global oil production and trade, reinforcing its role in shaping energy markets.
 - ♣ As per a report, OPEC+ produced roughly 40% of the world’s crude oil and accounts for 60% of internationally traded petroleum.

Role of OPEC in Global Oil Markets

- OPEC acts like a “central bank” for oil by setting production quotas.
- It regulates supply to avoid extreme price fluctuations—cutting output during low demand and increasing it during shortages.
- This ensures stable revenues for oil-dependent economies and overall market stability.

Iran War and UAE’s Exit from OPEC

- **Security Risks and Disrupted Oil Flows** - The US-Iran conflict has heightened security concerns for the UAE, especially around the Strait of Hormuz.
- **Constraints within OPEC Framework** - As Iran is a founding member of OPEC, the bloc’s consensus-based decision-making limits the UAE’s flexibility in responding to the crisis and securing its oil exports.
- **Shifting Security Dynamics** - Gulf nations have traditionally depended on the United States for regional security. However, the conflict exposed gaps in this arrangement, as the U.S. could not prevent spillover impacts on Gulf infrastructure and trade.
- **Strategic Autonomy through Exit** - By exiting OPEC, the UAE seeks to remove diplomatic constraints, enabling it to independently leverage its oil production, pursue new strategic partnerships, and explore alternative security arrangements beyond traditional Western alliances.

Economic Drivers Behind UAE’s Exit

- OPEC production quotas restricted UAE from utilising its full oil production capacity.

- The UAE seeks higher short-term oil revenues to fund its transition to a diversified, knowledge-based economy.
- Thus, the decision reflects both immediate economic needs and long-term structural goals.

Implications for Global Oil Prices and Markets

- **Weakening of OPEC's Influence:** Reduced collective control over spare capacity may weaken price management.
- **Increased Competition:** UAE may act as an independent producer, intensifying competition.
- **Price Impact:** Higher supply could exert downward pressure on oil prices while increasing volatility.
- **Impact on Importers:** Countries like India may benefit from lower prices and diversified supply sources.
- **Risk of Fragmentation:** The move could encourage other members to reconsider commitments, potentially destabilising OPEC.

Conclusion

UAE's exit from OPEC marks a significant shift in global energy geopolitics. While it enhances UAE's strategic and economic flexibility, it could weaken coordinated supply management, increase competition, and introduce greater volatility in global oil markets.



1 Year of Pahalgam Attack

The April 2025 **Pahalgam terror attack**, exposed serious gaps in Jammu & Kashmir's security framework. It has led to a major shift in strategy toward intelligence-driven and terrain-focused security measures.

Pahalgam Attack: Exposure of Security Gaps and 'Normalcy' Myth

- **Breakdown of Stability Narrative** - The attack challenged the perception of improving normalcy in Jammu and Kashmir, where rising tourism had led to opening remote areas without adequate security.
- **Emergence of Vulnerable 'Soft Frontiers'** - Around **75 high-altitude tourist sites** were opened in sensitive zones near infiltration routes. These became "**soft frontiers**"—accessible but poorly secured areas vulnerable to attacks.
- **Misjudged Threat Perception** - Security agencies underestimated the possibility of **tourists being targeted**, assuming militants would focus on urban centres or security forces.
- **Corrective Measures** - Post-attack, over **50 tourist locations were closed**, acknowledging that tourism expansion had outpaced security preparedness.

Shift in Security Strategy in J&K: From Reactive to Intelligence-Led

- **Terrain Dominance Over Road Security**
 - Security forces have established **Temporary Operating Bases (TOBs)** in high-altitude regions (3,000–9,000 feet), focusing on **controlling ridgelines and infiltration routes** instead of just roads.
- **Technology Integration and Surveillance**
 - Aadhaar-linked ID system for tourism workers
 - Facial recognition systems at key points
 - Drone surveillance corridors
 - Emphasis on non-intrusive security to sustain tourism

- **Intelligence-Driven Operations**
 - **Operation Mahadev (2025)** neutralised attackers using intelligence and drones
 - Crackdown on terror networks like **Lashkar-e-Taiba modules**
 - Focus on **precision, preventive strikes** instead of reactive responses

Continuing Challenges in Security Framework of J&K

- **Border Surveillance Limitations**
 - Delays in deploying **all-weather surveillance systems**
 - Weather and terrain reduce effectiveness of **drones and sensors**
- **Intelligence Constraints in Difficult Terrain**
 - Dense forests in the **Pir Panjal range** hinder monitoring
 - “Hybrid militants” operate in small, flexible groups, evading detection
- **External Threats Persist**
 - Continued **cross-border infiltration support** sustains security risks
 - Sporadic attacks may continue despite improvements

Pahalgam Attack: Change in India's Counter-Terror Playbook

- **From Reactive to Proactive Strategy**
 - India has moved from episodic retaliation (like surgical strikes) to a continuous, pre-emptive counter-terror doctrine involving military, diplomatic, and internal measures.
 - Every major terror attack is now treated as a **strategic trigger**, requiring **sustained and coordinated responses** rather than one-off actions.
- **Indus Water Treaty as a Strategic Tool**
 - The Indus Waters Treaty, earlier a symbol of cooperation, has been put in abeyance. Water is now used as a strategic lever to pressure Pakistan, signalling a shift toward **economic and diplomatic coercion**.
- **Doctrine Shift: ‘Terror and Talks Cannot Co-Exist’**
 - India has adopted a **zero-tolerance approach**, emphasising:
 - ♣ No separation between terrorists and their sponsors
 - ♣ Willingness to act beyond conventional limits
 - **Strategic Principles**
 - ♣ Pre-emption over reaction
 - ♣ Persistent pressure on terror networks
 - ♣ Faster and decisive responses
- **Key Military and Security Operations**
 - **Operation Sindoor (2025)**
 - ♣ Precision strikes on terror hubs in Pakistan and PoK
 - ♣ Targeted groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed
 - ♣ Marked shift to deep, targeted strikes
 - **Operation Mahadev**
 - ♣ Intelligence-driven operation within Kashmir
 - ♣ Eliminated perpetrators of the Pahalgam attack

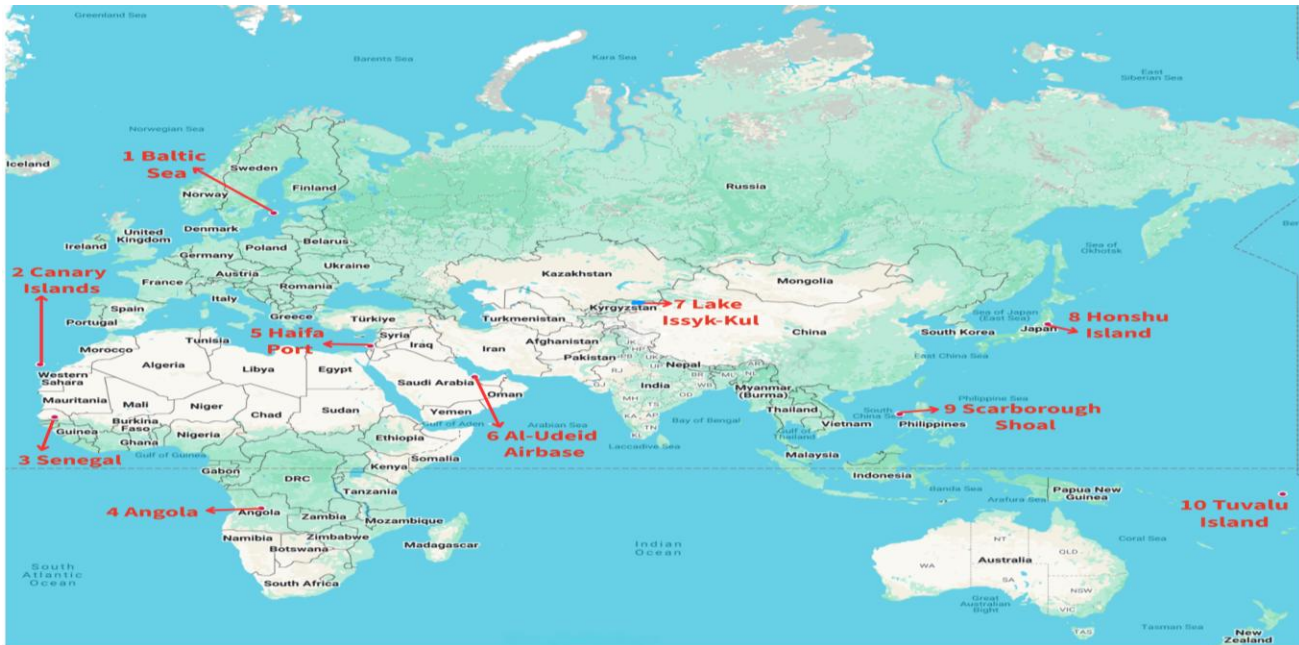
- **Operation Amrit**
 - ♣ Focus on terror recruitment and logistics networks
 - ♣ Increased pressure on local militant ecosystems
- **Operation Trident**
 - ♣ Strengthened coastal security to prevent maritime infiltration
- **Operation Vajra**
 - ♣ Nationwide crackdown on terror financing and sleeper cells
 - ♣ Arrests and shutdown of communication networks
- **Integrated Counter-Terror Architecture**
 - India now follows a four-track doctrine:
 - ♣ Military precision strikes
 - ♣ Sustained internal security operations
 - ♣ Zero-tolerance political stance
 - ♣ Hydro-diplomatic pressure

Conclusion

The Pahalgam attack has reshaped India's counter-terror playbook into a **continuous, multi-dimensional strategy**, combining military force, intelligence operations, diplomacy, and economic tools to exert sustained pressure on terror networks and their backers.

MAPS: PLACES IN NEWS

International Places in News

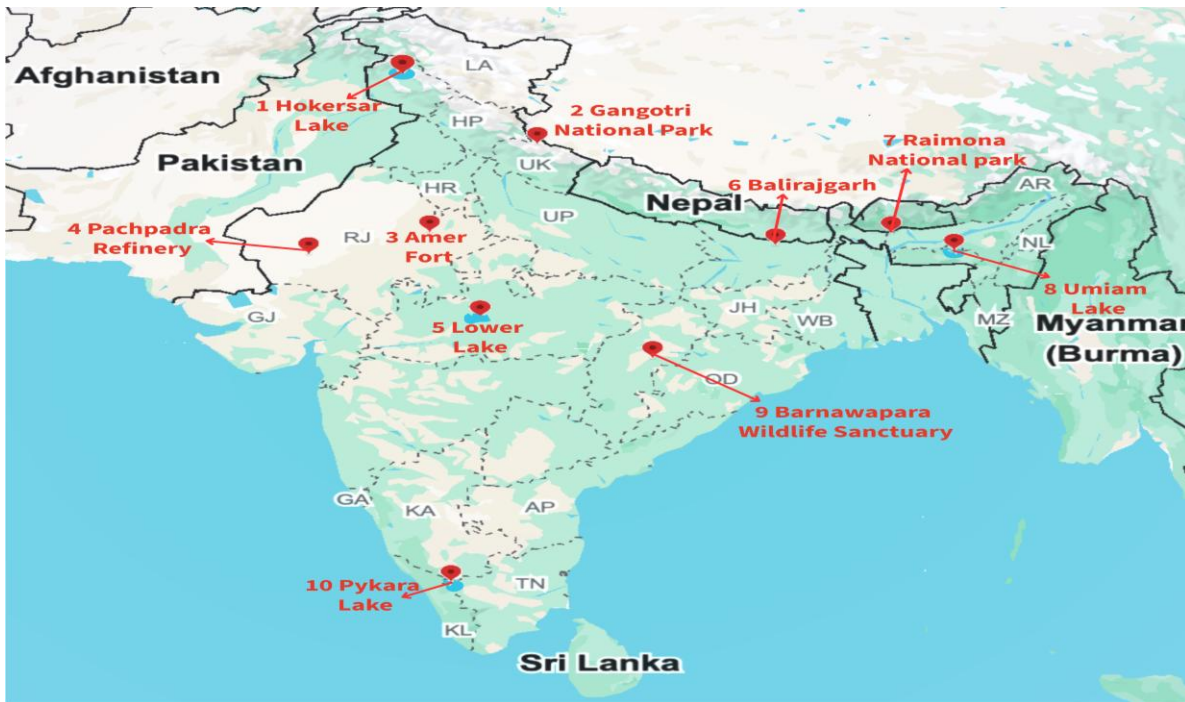


1	Baltic Sea	<p>NATO recently intercepted Russian strategic bombers and fighter jets that flew over the Baltic Sea.</p> <p>About Baltic Sea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type: Semi-enclosed inland sea of the Atlantic Ocean in Northern Europe • Connected To: North Sea via Kattegat–Skagerrak and Kiel Canal • Bordering Countries: Sweden, Finland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, Denmark • Key Fact: World’s largest brackish water body (low salinity) • Largest River Draining Into It: Neva River; Largest Island: Gotland (Sweden)
2	Canary Islands	<p>The Canary Islands were hit by torrential rains and flooding because of Storm Theresé.</p> <p>About Canary Island:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type: Volcanic archipelago in the North Atlantic Ocean (Macaronesia region) • Political Status: Autonomous community of Spain • Largest Island: Tenerife; Capital: Santa Cruz de Tenerife • Highest Peak: Mount Teide (Spain’s highest point) • Beach Feature: Famous for black sand beaches
3	Senegal	<p>Hundreds of people protested in Senegal, over rising living costs, alleged broken government promises, and the ongoing debt crisis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: West African country on the Atlantic coast; capital – Dakar • Borders: Mauritania, Mali, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau • Major Rivers: Senegal, Gambia, and Casamance Rivers

4	Angola	<p>Angola emerges as an important alternative to West Asia in gas supplies to India.</p> <p>About Angola:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Borders: Republic of the Congo, DR Congo, Zambia, Namibia • Capital: Luanda • Major Rivers: Cuango and Cuanza Rivers • Resources: Petroleum, diamonds, iron ore, gold, uranium, copper
5	Haifa Port	<p>Rescue operations were underway in Haifa after Iranian cluster munitions hit the northern Israel town.</p> <p>About Haifa Port:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Northern Israel on the Mediterranean Sea; near Suez Canal shipping route. • Functions: One of Israel's two largest commercial ports (Other is Port of Ashdod) • Feature: Natural deep-water harbour operating year-round
6	Al-Udeid Airbase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Near Doha, Qatar, about 190 km south of Iran across the Gulf • Established: 1996 • Importance: Largest US military base in West Asia; forward headquarters of US Central Command (CENTCOM) • Forces Present: Qatar Emiri Air Force, US Air Force, UK Royal Air Force, and allied forces • Strategic Role: Key hub for US operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Gulf region; used in 2021 Kabul evacuation
7	Lake Issyk-Kul	<p>Underwater archaeologists recently unveiled a hidden city in Lake Issyk-Kul, revealing a lost civilization from seven hundred years ago.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Northeastern Kyrgyzstan, surrounded by Tian Shan Mountains • Importance: World's 2nd largest high-altitude lake (after Lake Titicaca in South America) and Kyrgyzstan's largest lake. • Special Feature: Does not freeze in winter due to depth and low salinity; "Issyk-Kul" means "hot lake". • Recognition: Ramsar Wetland Site (1976)
8	Honshu Island	<p>An earthquake measuring magnitude 6.2 struck off the east coast of Japan's largest island, Honshu</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type: Largest island of Japan (7th largest island in world) • Location: Between the Pacific Ocean (east) and Sea of Japan (west) • Major Cities: Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, Hiroshima, Nagoya, Yokohama (~80% population of Japan) • Major Features: Mount Fuji (highest peak, active volcano) and Lake Biwa (largest lake of Japan)

9	Scarborough Shoal	<p>China is employing ships and a barrier to tighten control of the entrance to the Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea amid tension with the Philippines over the disputed feature.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claimants: China (Huangyan Island) and Philippines (Panatag Shoal). Effectively controlled by China since 2012. • Philippines' Claim: Within its 200-nautical mile EEZ under UNCLOS. • Feature: Largest atoll in the South China Sea with shallow lagoon • Importance: Rich fishing grounds and possible petroleum/natural gas reserves
10	Tuvalu Island	<p>Tuvalu battles rising sea levels that threaten to put large parts of the island entirely underwater by the end of this century.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Polynesian island country in the west-central Pacific Ocean, between Australia and Hawaii. Comprises 9 islands (coral atolls and reef islands)- 4th smallest country in world. • Capital: Funafuti Atoll. • Independence: From UK in 1978

National Places in News

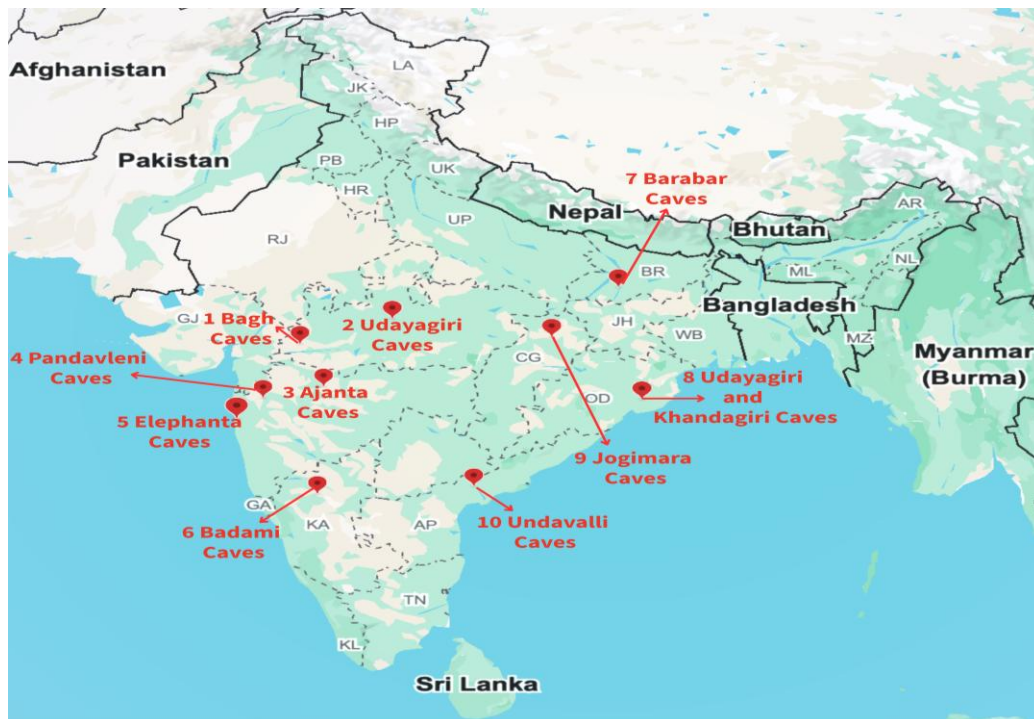


1	Hokersar Lake	<p>The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) recently warned of severe ecological degradation of Hokersar Lake, with over 2,500 kanals encroached.</p> <p>About Hokersar Lake (also known as Queen Wetland of Kashmir):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Near Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, in the Jhelum basin behind Pir Panjal range • Type: Natural wetland and largest bird sanctuary in Kashmir Valley • Water Source: Mainly fed by Doodhganga River (tributary of Jhelum) • Recognition: Ramsar Site
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2	Gangotri National Park	<p>The Gangotri National Park reopened after winter closure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Uttarkashi district, Uttarakhand • Famous For: Natural habitat of the snow leopard and source region of River Ganga. • Major Trek: Gaumukh-Tapovan Trek • Vegetation: Coniferous forests, alpine meadows, and glaciers
3	Amer Fort	<p>Recently, the Rajasthan High Court issued notices over alleged illegal elephant rides near Amer Fort.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Amer, ~11 km from Jaipur, Rajasthan; situated on Aravalli hills • Built By: Raja Man Singh I (1592), later expanded by Jai Singh I • Dynasty: Kachwaha Rajputs • Former Capital: Amer was the capital before Jaipur • Key Features: Diwan-i-Khas and Sheesh Mahal • Importance: It is part of the "Hill Forts of Rajasthan" serial UNESCO site (listed in 2013).
4	Pachpadra Refinery	<p>A fire at the Pachpadra refinery has drawn attention to one of the country's largest energy projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Balotra district, Rajasthan • Developed By: HPCL Rajasthan Refinery Ltd. (Joint Venture of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (HPCL) and Rajasthan Government) • Special Feature: India's first greenfield integrated refinery-cum-petrochemical complex.
5	Lower Lake	<p>The National Green Tribunal (NGT) recently directed the Madhya Pradesh Pollution Control Board to inspect Lower Lake and submit a detailed report with photographs and geo-coordinates.</p> <p>About Lower Lake:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also Called: Chhota Talaab- a man-made lake in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. • Part Of: Bhoj Wetland Ramsar Site along with Upper Lake • Location: East of Upper Lake; separated by Pul Pukhta bridge • Water Source: Receives seepage from Upper Lake • Drainage: Drains into Patra rivulet → Halali River → Betwa River • Importance: Supplies water to a large part of Bhopal city
6	Balirajgarh	<p>Recently, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has begun excavation at Bihar's historic Balirajgarh site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Madhubani district, Bihar • Importance: Linked with legendary King Bali; believed to be an administrative centre of the ancient Videha Kingdom. • Protected Status: Declared a site of national importance by ASI in 1938 • Findings: Remains from Northern Black Polished Ware period, Sunga, Kushan, Gupta, and Pala periods.

7	Raimona National Park	<p>A new species of gecko has been discovered in Assam's Kokrajhar district near Raimona National Park, adding to the state's biodiversity.</p> <p>About Raimona National Park:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Kokrajhar district, Assam, along India-Bhutan border in Eastern Himalayan foothills • Importance: Part of a transboundary conservation landscape linked with Bhutan's Phibsoo Wildlife Sanctuary and Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park • Major Rivers: Sankosh, Saralbhanga, and Pekua • Famous Fauna: Golden Langur (mascot of Bodoland)
8	Umiam Lake	<p>The Meghalaya government excluded Lumpondeng Island in the middle of Umiam lake from the proposed luxury resort project after local protests and concerns.</p> <p>About Umiam Lake (also called Barapani Lake):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: ~15 km north of Shillong, surrounded by East Khasi Hills • Type: Man-made reservoir on the Umiam River (tributary of Brahmaputra) • Created: 1965 under the Umiam Umtru Hydroelectric Project • Water Source: Fed by Umiam River formed from Umkhrah and Umshyrpi streams. • Importance: Umiam Lake project is First hydroelectric project in Northeast India; popular for water sports and tourism.
9	Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary	<p>Blackbucks were reintroduced into their natural habitat at Rampur grassland in Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary.</p> <p>About Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Mahasamund district, Chhattisgarh. Named after Bar and Nawapara forest villages. • Rivers: Balamdehi River (west boundary) and Jonk River (northeast boundary)
10	Pykara Lake	<p>The Madras High Court refused to lift the temporary stay on operating boating services for tourists on Pykara Lake.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: ~20 km from Ooty in Nilgiri district, Tamil Nadu. • Type: Artificial lake formed by Pykara Dam on Pykara River • River Origin: Pykara River originates from Mukurthi Peak; sacred to Toda tribe • Hydropower: The Pykara hydroelectric project was the first such project in Tamil Nadu (commissioned in 1932). • Nearby Feature: Pykara Falls with two cascades

Rock Cut Caves



S.No.	Cave	Description
1	Bagh Caves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Located in Dhar district, Madhya Pradesh, on southern slopes of Vindhya hills. • Period: 5th-7th century CE (Gupta age) • Religion: Mahayana Buddhism • Key Feature: Mural paintings though damaged, showcase scenes from the Jataka tales, Bodhisattvas, and royal processions in rich, flowing lines and deep color.
2	Udayagiri Cave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Located in Vidisha district, Madhya Pradesh. It is situated on sandstone hills near Betwa and Bes rivers • Period: 4th-5th century CE (Gupta period) • Religion: Hinduism • Key Feature: Varaha avatar sculpture of Vishnu in Cave 5.
3	Ajanta Caves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Located in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar (earlier Aurangabad), Maharashtra, nestled within the Sahyadri hills and overlooking the Waghora River. • Period: 2nd century BCE-6th century CE • Religion: mostly Buddhism <i>{Note: Ellora has a mix of Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist structures}</i> • Reference of the Ajanta caves can be found in the travel accounts of Chinese Buddhist travellers Fa Hien and Hieun Tsang • The painting of Bodhisattva Padmapani from cave I is one of the masterpieces • Key Feature: Murals depicting Jataka tales, Buddha's life, and court scenes, showcasing excellence in ancient Indian art. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site (1983).

4	Pandavleni Caves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Situated in Nashik district, Maharashtra, on the Trirashmi Hills. • Period: 1st century BCE-3rd century CE. Religion: Hinayana Buddhism • Key Feature: The caves feature spacious interiors, pillared verandahs, and rock-cut water cisterns. Cave 3 contains the famous Gautami Balashri inscription, an important source on the Satavahana dynasty.
5	Elephanta Caves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Situated on Elephanta Island, in Mumbai Harbour, Maharashtra, surrounded by the Arabian Sea, about 11 km from the Gateway of India. • Period: 5th -8th century CE • Religion: Shaivism • Key Feature: Massive Trimurti Shiva sculpture considered a masterpiece of Gupta-Deccan art along with carvings of Nataraja and Ardhanarishvara. Elephanta is a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for Shaivite rock-cut art.
6	Badami Caves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Situated in Bagalkot district, Karnataka, near Agastya Lake. • Period: 6th century CE (Chalukya period) • Religion: Hinduism & Jainism • Key Feature: Sandstone cave carvings of Hindu deities and Jain Tirthankaras.
7	Barabar Caves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Situated in Jehanabad district, Bihar, in the Barabar hills. • Period: Mauryan period (~250 BCE) • Religion: Ajivika sect • Key Feature: Earliest rock-cut caves with mirror-like polished granite walls.
8	Udayagiri and Khandagiri Caves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Situated in Khurda district, Odisha. These twin hills rise near the Daya River • Period: 1st -2nd century BCE; Religion: Jainism • Key Feature: Udayagiri (18 caves) and Khandagiri (15 caves) feature carved facades, pillared halls, and rock-cut reliefs. Important caves include Rani Gumpha and Hathi Gumpha- contains the famous Hathigumpha inscription of King Kharavela, an important source for early Odisha history and Jain patronage.
9	Jogimara Caves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Located in Surguja district, Chhattisgarh, on the Ramgarh hills, near the origin of the Rihand River, a tributary of the Son. • Period: 3rd century BCE • Religion: Non-sectarian • Key Feature: Earliest mural paintings and one of India's oldest Brahmi love inscriptions mentioning Devadasi Sutnuka. Along with nearby Sita Bengra Cave, it is important for early cave art and literary expression.
10	Undavalli Caves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Situated in Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh, on the banks of the Krishna River. • Period: 4th-5th century CE • Religion: Buddhist/ Jain origin, later Vaishnavism • Key Feature: Four-storeyed caves with huge reclining Vishnu sculpture sculpted from a single block of stone, along with shrines dedicated to Trimurti deities and Bodhisattvas.

SOCIAL ISSUES

NCERT Gets Deemed University Status

The Ministry of Education recently declared the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), along with its six constituent units (*Regional Institutes of Education (RIEs) in Ajmer, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Mysuru and Shillong, along with the Pandit Sunderlal Sharma Central Institute of Vocational Education in Bhopal*), deemed to be university under a “*De Nova* category (distinct category),” invoking Section 3 of the University Grants Commission (UGC) Act, 1956.

Expected Changes

- **Degree-Granting Autonomy:** NCERT and its RIEs are now completely independent of external affiliating universities and possess the authority to design their own curricula, introduce new courses, and independently award undergraduate, postgraduate, diploma, and doctoral degrees.
- **4-Year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) (NEP 2020 Alignment):** The status enables the creation of integrated Undergraduate (UG)-to-PhD programmes, heavily focusing on advanced pedagogy and addressing long-standing gaps in the professionalization of teachers as mandated by the National Education Policy 2020.
- **Regulatory & Administrative Restructuring:** The institution falls entirely under the UGC regulatory framework, requiring adherence to faculty qualifications and quality benchmarks which-
 - Necessitate the creation of independent academic councils and research boards.
 - Mandate compliance with modern higher education mechanisms like the **Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)**, mandatory **NAAC/NBA accreditation**, and participation in **NIRF** rankings.
 - ✓ ABC is a virtual/digital storehouse that contains the information of the credits earned by individual students throughout their learning journey.
 - ✓ The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)- an autonomous body established in 1994 to conduct assessment and accreditation of Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) such as colleges, universities or other recognized institutions and derive an understanding of the 'Quality Status' of the institution.
 - ✓ National Board of Accreditation (NBA) is an autonomous Indian body established in 1994 by AICTE to **promote and recognize excellence in technical education** in colleges and universities.
 - ✓ NBA focusing on program-specific quality (technical courses) and NAAC providing holistic institutional evaluation
- **Research & Technological Integration:** The mandate expands to facilitate doctoral-level research in education sciences, potentially integrating existing digital infrastructure (like DIKSHA) with advanced higher education research.
 - ✓ DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing)- launched in 2017 by NCERT serves as a one-nation-one-digital platform providing QR-coded Energized Textbooks, interactive learning resources, and teacher training courses to learners and educators across 36 Indian languages.

The **UGC Act, 1956** seeks to establish the University Grants Commission (UGC) for **coordinating, determining, and maintaining standards of higher education in India.**

- Section 3 of the UGC Act allows the **Central Government, on UGC's advice**, to declare any higher education institution (which is not a university) as a “**Deemed to be University.**” Normally, a “University” is one established by law (Central/State Act). This section **extends this definition** to include *deemed universities*.

The **NCERT** is an autonomous organization set up in 1961 to assist and advise the Central and State Governments on policies and programmes for qualitative improvement in school education.

Significance	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Specialized Excellence: Establishes NCERT as a premier authority in education sciences, mirroring the prestige of IITs or AIIMS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mission Drift: The risk of higher education demands diverting focus and resources from core school reform mandates.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy-Practice Alignment: Integrates school curriculum design with higher education research to ensure evidence-based classroom practices. • Operational Agility: Enables RIEs to update curricula rapidly, bypassing traditional university affiliation delays. • Global Standing: Legitimizes the institution for international academic exchange and high-level global partnerships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulatory Friction: Balancing newfound autonomy with strict UGC standardization. • Capacity Gaps: Immediate pressure to scale faculty, infrastructure, and administrative bandwidth to meet university standards. • Governance Dualism: Navigating complex accountability between the Ministry of Education (policy) and the UGC (regulation).
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One Health Approach

One Health, which draws on the interconnectedness between humans, animals and the environment, has emerged as a key concept gaining traction among nations.

Key Principles of One Health

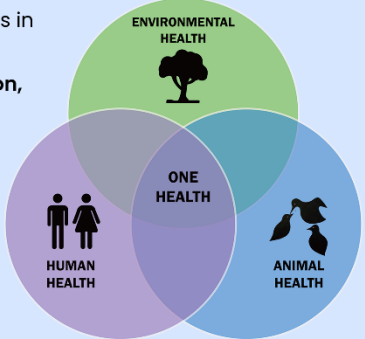
- **Interdisciplinary Collaboration across Sectors:** like human health (medical systems), animal health (veterinary services), and environmental sectors (ecology & climate systems), involving doctors, veterinarians, ecologists, and policymakers.
- **Prevention-Oriented Integrated Surveillance:** Focusing on early detection and control of diseases through combined surveillance.
- **Data Sharing & Global Coordination:** Promote timely exchange of pathogen and health data across sectors and countries, linking disease surveillance (human), animal monitoring, and environmental indicators.

Evolution of the Concept: The term “One Health” gained prominence around 2003–04 during the **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak**. The concept further strengthened during **Avian Influenza (H5N1)**. Adoption of **Manhattan Principles (2004)** emphasized human-animal-ecosystem linkages.

Need for One Health:

- **Rise of Zoonotic Diseases:** ~60–75% of emerging infectious diseases originate in animals like COVID-19, Ebola, Nipah, and Avian Flu.
- **Environmental Degradation:** Deforestation, climate change & biodiversity loss alter disease dynamics.
- **Globalization:** Increased **travel and trade** accelerate disease spread.
- **Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR):** Overuse of antibiotics in humans and livestock.
- **Food Security & Safety:** Animal diseases affect **nutrition, livelihoods, and economies**.

Institutional Framework: One Health is led by the Quadripartite collaboration- including **WHO (World Health Organization)**, **FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization)**, **WOAH (World Organisation for Animal Health)** and **UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme)**. In October 2022, they launched the One Health Joint Plan of Action.



Recent Development-

- **WHO Pandemic Agreement (2025):** It is a legally binding treaty to strengthen global pandemic prevention and response, ensuring **equitable access to vaccines** and **rapid sharing of pathogen data** through a benefit-sharing system.
- **One Health Summit (Lyon, France):** Held on World Health Day (7th April) under the G7 French Presidency. Focus areas included **zoonotic diseases, antimicrobial resistance, sustainable food systems, and pollution**, with the aim to strengthen **multisectoral collaboration and resilient health systems**.

One Health in India: Post Covid, India accelerated the **National One Health Mission** to integrate human, animal, and environmental health, strengthening **pandemic preparedness, disease surveillance, and zoonotic disease control**.

- Growing **climate change impacts** necessitate continuous monitoring and adaptive mitigation.

- Some State-led initiatives include **Odisha’s pioneering Climate Budget** to track climate-resilient development expenditures, **Kerala’s participatory carbon-neutral plan** in Meenangadi, and **Tamil Nadu’s Green Climate Company** implementing **Cool Roof Project** in Chennai.

Challenges in Implementing the One Health Approach:

- **Inadequate Funding & Resource Constraints**
- **Institutional Silos & Poor Coordination:** Fragmented functioning of health, veterinary, and environmental sectors limits integrated action.
- **Weak Surveillance & Data Sharing Systems:** Fragmented databases, poor interoperability, and delays in cross-sectoral/global data exchange.
- **Shortage of Skilled Workforce:** Lack of trained professionals with interdisciplinary expertise.
- **Policy & Governance Gaps:** Absence of clear legal frameworks, accountability mechanisms, and SOPs.
- **Political & Administrative Conflicts:** Competing priorities among ministries and nations hinder coordinated responses.
- **Limited Awareness & Community Participation**
- **Challenges from Climate Change & Environmental Degradation:** Dynamic and unpredictable ecological changes complicate disease prediction and control.

SHe-Box

To strengthen implementation and expand private sector outreach, the MWCD is coordinating with key ministries, regulators, and industry bodies to operationalize the SHe-Box portal and ensure compliance with the Supreme Court’s directives in *Aureliano Fernandes vs. State of Goa (2023)*.

- ✓ **The SHe-Box portal**, relaunched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) in 2024, is a digital platform to strengthen implementation of the PoSH Act, 2013 by enabling online complaint filing and monitoring.
- ✓ It was originally launched in July 2017 for government employees and later expanded to private sector employees

About Aureliano Fernandes vs. State of Goa, 2023 Case: It arose due to **poor implementation of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013 (PoSH Act-** aims to create a safe and secure work place for women free from sexual harassment), especially non-constitution of Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) under Section 4, and Local Committees (LCs) under Section 6, across workplaces. The systemic non-compliance and administrative inaction forced the Supreme Court (SC) to intervene and issue following directives-

- **Institutional Framework:** The Court directed states/ UTs to establish a robust district-level framework by appointing District Magistrates, Additional District Magistrates, Collectors, or Deputy Collectors as **District Officers** to oversee PoSH implementation, mandating **Local Committees in every district** for unorganized/small establishments or cases against employers, and designating **Nodal Officers at sub-district levels** as first points of contact to forward complaints to LCs within 7 days.
- **Compliance & Monitoring:** The District Officers must conduct surveys of all public and private organizations within their jurisdictions to verify whether ICCs have been constituted. Compliance reports must be submitted to the Chief Secretaries of States to ensure accountability.
- **Digital Transparency & Accessibility:** The Court directed states to strengthen the **SHe-Box portal** by uploading updated details of ICCs, LCs, and Nodal Officers, creating state-level portals where absent, and ensuring public disclosure of contact details on district websites to improve accessibility and grievance redressal.
- **Legal aid:** The court emphasized the availability of legal aid for complainants under the Act. Aggrieved women can approach Legal Services Institutions, helplines, or the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) for support. In urgent cases, complainants can seek police assistance to expedite the filing of their complaints.
- **Timelines:** Deadlines were fixed for appointment of officers, constitution of LCs, and full compliance under supervision of Chief Secretaries.



Challenges Faced by SHe-Box Portal	Steps taken by Government to Address the Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Incomplete Compliance & Data Gaps: Despite ~1.61 lakh workplaces onboarded, only ~68k ICs have been updated due to partial compliance and under-reporting. ● Weak Private Sector Participation: Uneven adoption, especially among MSMEs and informal sector establishments. ● Institutional Gaps at Grassroots: Inadequate constitution/updates of LCs and Nodal Officers across districts. ● Awareness & Capacity Constraints: Limited understanding of PoSH provisions and portal usage among employers and employees. ● Monitoring & Enforcement Issues: Ensuring real-time compliance across jurisdictions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inter-Ministerial & Stakeholder Coordination: MWCD engaging ministries (Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Department of Financial Services, National Medical Commission, AICTE (All India Council for Technical Education) etc.) and industry bodies to expand outreach and ensure compliance. ● SC-Backed Enforcement: Directions (2024-2026) for district-level surveys of organizations, with involvement of Labour Departments, and mandatory onboarding of data on SHe-Box. ● Capacity Building & Training: Regular hybrid trainings, consultations, and handholding sessions for government and private entities. ● Digital Expansion & Accessibility: Integration with Mission Shakti app, availability on mobile platforms, and multilingual support (23 languages) to widen reach. ● Awareness & IEC Campaigns: Social media outreach + repository of FAQs, manuals, audio-visuais to improve awareness and usability.

Social Security for Senior Citizens

- **Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY):** Umbrella scheme for **holistic welfare of senior citizens** covering services like shelter, healthcare, and support. It has **~37.7 lakh beneficiaries (2020-25)**. It has following components-
 - **Integrated Programme for the Senior Citizens (IPSc- under AVYAY):** Assistance is provided to state governments and NGOs to ensure senior citizens receive **basic amenities (shelter, food, healthcare)** and support **active, dignified ageing**.
 - **Seniorcare Ageing Growth Engine (SAGE):** Under AVYAY, it promotes **startups for elderly care (Silver Economy)**, supports innovations in healthcare, housing, fintech, etc. Govt provides **equity support up to ₹1 crore** through **single-window SAGE portal**.
 - **State Action Plan for Senior Citizens:** Mandated under *Maintenance and Welfare of Parents & Senior Citizens (MWPC) Act, 2007* for **state-led welfare & healthcare of elderly**. States/UTs prepare **5-year plan+ annual plans** for active ageing and quality of life. **Centre provides funds (under AVYAY)**; States add their own resources.
 - **Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana:** Launched in **2017** to provide **free assistive devices** to elderly (BPL category) with age-related disabilities (vision, hearing, mobility, dental). It aims to restore **functional ability and independence and provides doorstep delivery** for those aged **80+**.
 - **SCOPE (Senior Citizen Opportunities for Productive Engagement):** Portal that **matches experienced senior citizens with suitable jobs** in the private sector via virtual preference matching.
- **National Programme for Health Care of the Elderly (NPHCE):** Geriatric healthcare services are provided at district hospitals and Community Health Centres.
- **National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)- Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS):** Financial assistance of ₹ 200/- per month to BPL persons in the age group of 60-79 years and ₹ 500/- per month to persons of 80 years and above is provided.
- **Elderline:** Launched **2021**, a toll-free helpline- **14567** for elderly grievance redressal.

Composite Backwardness Index (CBI)

An independent expert committee constituted by the Telangana Government has developed the Composite Backwardness Index (CBI) for measuring the “backwardness” of castes.

What is CBI?

The CBI is an empirical, multidimensional framework designed to quantify caste-wise backwardness. It is built on large-scale caste survey data (as in Telangana, covering around 3.5 crore people) and assesses deprivation using 42 indicators spanning education, occupation, asset ownership, living conditions, and experiences of social discrimination, thereby enabling a comparative and evidence-based measurement of backwardness across caste groups.

✓ The Mandal Commission (1980) used only 11 parameters to identify socially, and educationally backward classes based on social, educational, and economic factors.

Core Findings

• **Empirical Gaps:** The CBI proves Scheduled Castes (SCs)/ Scheduled Tribes (STs) are **3x** and Backward Classes (BCs) **2.7x** more backward than General Castes. Crucially, it reveals that poverty alone does not explain inequality; Only **less than 10%** of SC/ST students have access to private schooling, whereas **~33%** of general category (GC) students attend private schools.

• **Intra-Caste Heterogeneity:** The index exposes deep fissures within broad categories. For example, SC Madigas rank significantly lower than SC Malas, and Shaik Muslims are 50% more backward than General Muslims.

• **Drivers of Mobility:** Access to **English and private education** is identified as a stronger determinant of progress than land or asset ownership.

Policy Significance & Reform: The CBI facilitates a transition from a “one-size-fits-all” approach to a “**Share Proportional to Backwardness**” model by:

- **Rationalizing Reservations:** Scientific data enables precise **sub-categorization**, ensuring that “creamy layer” or advanced sub-groups do not monopolize benefits (Elite Capture).
- **Addressing Welfare Mismatching:** Current data shows ~30% of benefits flow to those who do not need them. The CBI allows for a “social justice tap” that delivers resources directly to the most deprived groups.
- **Judicial & Administrative Logic:** It provides the “quantifiable data” required to justify affirmative action policies against legal challenges.

Challenges:

- **Political Resistance:** Rankings may trigger inter-caste tensions and lobbying from relatively better-off groups fearing loss of benefits.
- **Methodological Complexity:** Weighting 42 indicators (e.g., weighing discrimination vs. income) remains subjective and contested.
- **Dynamic Nature:** Backwardness is not static; constant data updates are required to ensure the index does not become an outdated tool that misclassifies evolving social realities.

Missing Urgency Around Learning

Despite the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** and the **NIPUN Bharat Mission**, India faces a persistent “Learning Crisis.” While enrollment is high, **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)** -the ability to read with meaning and perform basic math by Grade 3) remains alarmingly low, as evidenced by Annual Status of Education Reports (ASER) reports (published by the NGO Pratham).

✓ National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and

The “Salience” Deficit: Why is there no urgency?

- **The “Vietnam Paradox”:** As highlighted by the **RISE Programme (Oxford)**, Vietnam outperformed wealthier nations in learning outcomes despite having no significant advantage with respect to spending or infrastructure. This proves that learning outcomes are driven by **societal will (“wanting to”)** rather than just fiscal spending.
- **Invisible Crisis:** Unlike a broken road, poor learning is intangible. Rote copying from blackboards creates an “illusion of learning,” masking the lack of actual comprehension.
- **Accountability & Power Asymmetry:** Parents often lack the tools to assess quality, and the “**middle-class exit**” from public schooling has weakened the bottom-up pressure required for systemic reform.
- **Misattribution of Responsibility:** The state is seen as responsible for “Schooling” (infrastructure/uniforms), while “Learning” is unfairly blamed on the child’s innate ability or family background.
- **Institutional Denial:** Acknowledging that millions are not learning is politically and professionally unsettling, leading to a focus on **inputs (toilets/buildings)** rather than **outcomes**.

Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat)- launched in 2021 aims to ensure every child in the country necessarily attains FLN by the end of Grade 3, by 2026-27.

Way Forward

- **Building Public Salience:** Conduct **village-level assessments** to make learning deficits visible to parents and local officials, transforming an abstract statistic into a tangible community problem.
- **Pedagogical Shift:** Implement "**Teaching at the Right Level**" (TaRL)- grouping children by current ability rather than age or grade to ensure no child is left behind.
- **NIPUN Bharat Alignment:** Shift administrative focus from "completing the syllabus" to achieving **Foundational Reading Fluency**, ensuring children transition from "*learning to read*" to "*reading to learn*."
- **Incentivized Accountability:** Move from centralized control to a system where local bodies and teachers are empowered and held responsible for measurable FLN gains.

Nyaya Setu AI Chatbot

The Nyaya Setu AI Chatbot, along with its official mascot “Dishika”, was recently unveiled at the **DISHA** programme (*Designing Innovative Solutions for Holistic Access to Justice*) organized by the Department of Justice.

What is Nyaya Setu AI Chatbot?

It is a **voice-first, multimodal, multilingual AI-powered legal assistant** developed to **democratize access to justice** in India. It enables citizens especially those facing **linguistic, digital, or procedural barriers** to understand **legal rights, processes, and next steps** through simple **voice and text interactions** in their own language.

Developed by: Digital India BHASHINI Division (DIBD) under Meity as a **turnkey, end-to-end AI solution**

Significance

- **Legal & ethical safeguards:** Trained on **legal frameworks (e.g., Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023)** and operates within defined **legal guardrails**.
- **Responsible AI functioning:** Ensures **safe, reliable, and context-aware legal responses**.
- **Improves accessibility:** Benefits **rural, non-literate, and marginalized users**.
- **AI-driven Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):** Demonstrates use of **AI for scalable, public service delivery**.
- **Promotes inclusive governance:** Supports **citizen-centric and equitable justice delivery**.

Key Features

- **BHASHINI ASR (Automatic Speech Recognition):** Users can interact through **speech**, making it accessible to **non-literate and digitally unskilled users**.
- **Multimodal access:** Supports both **voice & text inputs/outputs**, ensuring wider usability
- **Multilingual capability:** Removing **language barriers in legal access**.
- **Conversational AI system:** Provides **simple, user-friendly legal guidance** through natural, interactive conversations.
- **Mascot “Dishika”** : Acts as a **friendly digital guide**, improving **trust, engagement, and ease of navigation**.
 - BHASHINI is an **AI-powered language technology initiative under MeitY**, implemented by the Digital India BHASHINI Division (DIBD) of Digital India Corporation. BHASHINI hosts the **National Hub for Language Technology (NHLT)**- one of the world’s largest AI inferencing platforms enabling multilingual speech and text capabilities across Indian and global languages.



eGramSwaraj

eGramSwaraj recently recorded over ₹3 Lakh Crores in online payments.

What is eGramSwaraj Portal?

eGramSwaraj (eGS) is a **comprehensive digital governance platform** for **Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)** launched in **2020** under the **e-Panchayat Mission Mode Project** by the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj**. It integrates **planning, budgeting, accounting, monitoring, asset management, and online payments** on a single platform.

Objectives: To-

- Enable **end-to-end digitization of Panchayat governance**.
- Ensure **transparency, accountability, and efficiency**.
- Promote **decentralized planning**.
- Facilitate **timely and direct payments** to vendors/service providers.
- Support **Digital India & Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** in rural areas.

Key Features of eGS:

- **Unified Digital Governance Platform:** It features a work-based accounting system via a web & mobile interface.

- **Real-time Public Financial Management System (PFMS):** The eGS-PFMS interface enables direct, real-time payments to vendors, eliminating cash transactions and manual paperwork.
- **Digital Planning through GPDP:** It allows Panchayats to digitally prepare and upload Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) to prioritize local needs.
- **AI Integration via "SabhaSaar":** an advanced AI-powered **voice-to-text tool** that automatically records, transcribes, and summarizes Gram Sabha meetings across 23 Indian languages, boosting inclusive rural participation.

Significance of eGS

- **Financial Traceability:** Real-time tracking has fundamentally reduced opacity in fund utilization. In FY 2025-26 alone, ₹53,342 crore was transferred digitally via eGS-PFMS.
- **Fiscal Standardization:** The platform enforces uniform accounting and audit trails. Currently, ~2.59 lakh PRIs are onboarded, with ~2.50 lakh PRIs actively making online payments.

Robust Vendor Ecosystem:

Direct payments have drastically reduced execution delays, supported by the registration of over **1.6 crore vendors** in FY 2025-26.

Grassroots Democracy:

The upload of over **2.55 lakh GPDPs** in FY 2025-26 proves a massive, wide-scale adoption of decentralized planning.

The "Digital India" Pillar:

End-to-end digital processes minimize leakages, ghost beneficiaries, and manual manipulation. The platform's massive scale demonstrates the deep, successful penetration of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) in rural governance.

Current Limitations

- **Digital Divide:** Uneven digital capacity and low digital literacy among Panchayat officials lead to partial usage.
- **Infrastructure Constraints:** Poor internet, power shortages, and inadequate hardware in rural areas hinder real-time operations.
- **Data Quality Issues:** Manual data entry results in delayed, incomplete, or inaccurate data.
- **Audit Variability:** Differences in audit practices across states weaken oversight and accountability.
- **Integration Gaps:** Limited interoperability with other rural development platforms creates isolated data silos.
- **Language Barriers:** Despite multilingual support (through BHASHINI), localization gaps persist.
- **Cybersecurity Risks:** Expansion of digital systems increases vulnerabilities to data breaches at lower administrative levels.

The Way Forward

- **Capacity Building:** Strengthen training via Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan with continuous handholding for officials.
- **Infrastructure Push:** Aggressively improve rural internet connectivity, power supply, and hardware availability.
- **User Interface (UI) Upgrades:** Adopt a mobile-first, user-friendly interface based on continuous grassroots feedback.
- **Data Governance:** Ensure accuracy through automated validation checks and performance-linked incentives.
- **Standardized/ Regular Audits:** Harmonize audit procedures and compliance timelines uniformly across all states.
- **Platform Convergence:** Enable seamless interoperability with associated rural development platforms.
- **Deep Localization:** Expand regional language support, integrated tutorials, and localized help systems.
- **Security Strengthening:** Implement robust security protocols and user awareness training.

Sādhana Saptah 2026

Strengthening Adaptive Development and Humane Aptitude for National Advancement (Sādhana) Saptah 2026 was recently organized from 2-8 April 2026.

What is Sādhana Saptah?

It is a **nationwide capacity-building initiative** for civil servants organized by Department of Personnel and Training, Capacity Building Commission (CBC) and Karmayogi Bharat to create **citizen-centric, future-ready governance**.

Tagline: "Ham Bane Karmayogi" - marks the Foundation Day of the CBC and five years of *Mission Karmayogi*.

Objectives: To-

- Encourage **competency led capacity building** at scale.
- Promote **role-based, outcome-oriented governance**

- Enhance **skills, mindset, and accountability**
- Improve **public service delivery** aligned with *Viksit Bharat 2047*.
- Enables **whole-of-government collaboration**.

Key Features

- **National Scale & Participation (whole-of-government**

collaboration): It brings together 100+ Central Ministries & Departments, 36 States & UTs and 250+ Civil Services Training Institutions to create a **unified national framework for capacity building**, enable **pan-India participation** (officers at all levels) and promote exchange of best practices and collaborative problem-solving.

- **Structured Thematic Approach (3 Sutras)**:

- **Technology**: Focus on leveraging emerging technologies like **AI, Digital Public Infrastructure, data-driven decision-making, and automation tools**.
- **Tradition**: Emphasis on **Indian Knowledge Systems, ethical principles, and community-based governance models** to make administration more culturally rooted and responsive.
- **Tangible Outcomes**: Focus on **measuring public value, strengthening monitoring, and ensuring visible citizen impact** through outcome tracking and dashboard-based governance.

- **Outcome-Oriented Framework**: Each Ministry/Department to deliver 2 technology interventions, 2 traditional/indigenous models and 3 measurable outcome commitments (FY 2026-27). Outputs compiled into a **cross-sectoral national compendium (10 sectors)**.

- **Diverse Learning Ecosystem**: It offered multiple learning modes through iGOT platform courses, *Samuhik Charcha* sessions, webinars, and workshops, with a focus on building key competencies such as leadership, communication, data analysis, project management, and digital governance.

- **Continuous Capacity Development**: It promoted a **lifelong learning culture** in civil services by integrating technology, and practical application, while aligning skills with evolving governance needs and improved service delivery outcomes.

About CBC: Established in 2021 as a nodal body for **implementing and overseeing Mission Karmayogi**. It-

- Supports Ministries/Departments in **capacity-building plans**
- Develops **competency frameworks & standards**
- Promotes **citizen-centric, transparent, and accountable governance**
- Focuses on **individual + institutional capacity development**
- Acts as **custodian of civil services capacity-building reforms**

About Mission Karmayogi: It is a National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building aimed at building a **future-ready, competency-driven civil service**.
Implementation: Across all Ministries/Departments via **Civil Service Training Institutions and iGOT**.
 • **iGOT** (Integrated Government Online Training) **Karmayogi Platform**: Digital learning portal for **anytime, anywhere training**. It covers **behavioural, functional, and domain skills**.
Impact (So far):
 • 1.5+ crore learners onboarded
 • 8+ crore course completions
 • 4600+ courses (multi-language)
 • Learning outcomes Integration with **performance appraisal systems**

♦ **Key Capacity-Building Initiatives**: were launched during the week-

- ▶ **Karmayogi Kshamata Connect**: To build capacities of frontline functionaries through structured learning modules, enabling them to deliver citizen centric services with improved efficiency and digital awareness.
- ▶ **Rashtriya Jan Sewa Programme**: Strengthens citizen service delivery by training youth volunteers and officials as facilitators, promoting sewa bhav at the grassroots level.
- ▶ **UNNATI Portal**: Unified New-Age National Training Institutions (UNNATI) portal establishes a unified digital backbone for training institutions, enabling real time monitoring, collaboration and data driven capacity building across the ecosystem.
- ▶ **iGOT Learning Assessment Framework**: Introduces a trust-based evaluation system to ensure that learning outcomes are applied in real workplace scenarios and improve governance impact.
- ▶ **Karmayogi Gaan**: Reflects the spirit of dedication, service and continuous learning, and will be integrated into training programmes to reinforce the ethos of Mission Karmayogi.
- ▶ **AI Powered Amrit Gyaan Kosh Suite**: Enhances creation and use of governance **case studies** through AI tools that support analysis, discovery and integration into training programmes.
- ▶ **Capacity Building for Viksit Panchayat**: Focuses on strengthening grassroots governance through e learning modules and AI enabled tools for better decision making and service delivery.
- ▶ **Administrative Capacity Building for Scientists**: A specialised programme designed to equip scientists with governance, leadership and decision-making skills as they transition into administrative roles.

Sattankulam Custodial Deaths Case

The Sattankulam custodial deaths case (*CBI vs Sridhar*) represents one of the most disturbing instances of police brutality in 2020, where a father and son, arrested on minor charges, were subjected to extreme torture leading to their deaths. The recent trial court verdict sentencing nine policemen to death has been described as both a moment of **judicial reckoning** and a reflection of deeper structural issues in India's criminal justice system.

Major Points of the Judgement

- The Madurai trial court convicted **nine policemen** based on strong **CBI-led scientific evidence**, despite earlier attempts to destroy proof.
- The crime was categorised under the **"rarest of rare" doctrine** (from *Bachan Singh v State of Punjab*), leading to the award of **death penalty**.
- The court highlighted that the accused, who were custodians of law, had instead committed **grave abuse of power**, violating fundamental rights and human dignity.
- The judgement reflected a key constraint: **Trial courts lack the power to impose fixed-term (E.g. 20, 30 years etc) or non-remittable life sentences**, as recognised by the **constitutional bench in *Uoi v/s V Sriharan (2015)***.
 - The principle has been reaffirmed in *Kiran v State of Karnataka (2025)*.
- Due to this limitation, the court faced a **binary sentencing choice**:
 - Ordinary life imprisonment (with remission possible after ~14 years)
 - Death penalty
- The judge considered life imprisonment inadequate given the brutality and therefore chose death penalty.
 - The verdict also demonstrated the importance of **judicial vigilance, witness courage** (e.g., testimony of a police constable) and **scientific investigation**.
- The Sattankulam case will now be reviewed by the Madras HC, which has the authority to convert the death sentence into a fixed-term life sentence without remission.

Way forward

- Introduce **statutory reforms** allowing trial courts to impose **fixed-term or non-remittable life sentences**, bridging the gap between life imprisonment (with remission after 14-year) and death penalty.
- Strengthen **police accountability mechanisms**, including:
 - Independent oversight bodies
 - Strict implementation of custodial safeguards
- Ensure **mandatory compliance with arrest and detention guidelines** (e.g.,

Strengths of the Judgement

- ▶ The judgement marks a **rare instance of systemic accountability**, where an entire group of police personnel was convicted, challenging the culture of impunity.
- ▶ It sends a **strong deterrent message** that custodial violence and abuse of authority will not go unpunished. Highlights the seriousness of **custodial torture as a violation of Article 21 (Right to Life and Dignity)**.
- ▶ Reinforces the idea that **rule of law applies equally**, even to state authorities wielding coercive power.
- ▶ Demonstrates the role of independent investigation (CBI), active judiciary and public pressure in ensuring justice.
- ▶ Restores some **public faith in the justice system**, showing that even delayed justice can be delivered.

Limitations and Concerns

- ▶ The use of death penalty raises concerns regarding reformatory vs retributive justice, as it goes against the rehabilitative approach favoured in modern jurisprudence.
- ▶ **Sriharan vacuum**: The case exposes a **"sentencing gap"**, where trial courts lack intermediate punishment options.
- ▶ Creates a **"binary trap"**:
Either inadequate life imprisonment Or irreversible death penalty
- ▶ Reveals systemic failures beyond the individuals involved, including:
 - Weak safeguards against custodial violence
 - Failure of medical and judicial oversight
 - Institutional silence within police forces
- ▶ Supreme Court guidelines (e.g., *Manoj v/s State of Madhya Pradesh, 2022*) requiring detailed mitigation analysis are often **not fully implemented at trial level**.

D.K. Basu v. State of West Bengal (1997).

- Improve **forensic and investigative capacity** to reduce reliance on confession-based policing.

This case ultimately serves as both a **warning and a lesson**—while the conviction represents a significant step toward accountability, it also reveals that custodial violence is not merely an aberration but a **systemic problem requiring structural reform**, not just punitive responses.

Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar (Amendment) Bill, 2026

Punjab has recently witnessed a renewed push for stricter legal provisions to address incidents of sacrilege (*treating a religious object without the respect*), particularly involving the Guru Granth Sahib, which holds immense religious significance in Sikhism.

Concerns

- The bill applies **only to the Guru Granth Sahib**, raising concerns about **selectivity** and potential exclusion of other religious texts, which may lead to allegations of unequal treatment.
- **Threat to free speech:** May conflict with Article 19(1)(a), as “hurt sentiments” could become grounds for prosecution. Religious beliefs being enforced through criminal law may restrict open debate and expression.

Major Provisions of the bill

- The Punjab Cabinet has approved the **Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar (Amendment) Bill, 2026**, proposing life imprisonment as punishment for sacrilege involving the Guru Granth Sahib.
- The bill also prescribes a **fine upto ₹25 lakh**, significantly enhancing penalties compared to existing provisions.
- It specifically targets acts of “beadbi” (desecration) of the Guru Granth Sahib, recognizing its central place in Sikh faith as the eternal Guru.
- It expands the **definition of Sacrilege** to include not just physical damage but also spoken, written, symbolic and even electronic expressions that may be construed as hurting religious sentiments.
- The legislation includes punishment for those who **conspire or abet sacrilege**, including masterminds who use individuals with mental challenges.
- Investigations into such offences are to be conducted by a **Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP)-rank officer**, ensuring seriousness in enforcement.
- The bill is intended to act as a **strong deterrent** and promote **communal harmony and respect for religious sentiments**.



- Existing provisions under the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (Sections 298–300)** already deal with offences related to religious sentiments, raising questions about **overlapping laws and redundancy**.
- There are concerns about **constitutional validity**, particularly regarding:

Equality before law (Article 14)

Freedom of religion (Article 25)

- Past attempts (2016, 2018) to introduce similar stringent laws failed due to **lack of Presidential assent and legal objections**, indicating potential hurdles again.
- **Proportionality of punishment:** Life imprisonment for non-violent offences such as sacrilege are seen as **excessive and disproportionate**.
- Risk of **misuse or politicisation**, especially in a sensitive religious and electoral context.
- Civil society groups warn that harsh punishments without procedural safeguards may lead to **over-criminalisation**.

Way forward

- A **uniform and inclusive legal framework** covering all religions is needed to avoid perceptions of bias.
- **Investigation and evidence standards** need to be strengthened to prevent misuse and wrongful prosecution.
- **Community dialogue and awareness** need to be promoted to address the root causes of such incidents rather than relying solely on punitive measures.

- **Broad stakeholder consultation**, including religious bodies and legal experts, needs to be sought to build consensus and legitimacy.

Validity of Judgements by Khap Panchayats

The Rajasthan High Court, in a significant judgment addressing the growing issue of extra-legal caste bodies, held that diktats issued by khap panchayats and similar councils are **unconstitutional** and undermine the rule of law. The Court was responding to a batch of petitions highlighting instances of coercion, monetary penalties, social boycott, and ostracism (*exclusion*) across districts such as Sirohi, Barmer, Nagaur, Balotra, Jalore and Jodhpur, where authorities had failed to take effective action despite complaints.

What the Court Observed?

- The Court held that khap panchayats and caste councils operate as **parallel adjudicatory systems without any statutory authority**, issuing binding directions outside the legal framework.
- It emphasised that such diktats violate **core constitutional** guarantees under Articles 14, 15, 19 and 21.
- The Court specifically criticised practices like “**hukka-pani band**”, noting that they:
 - Sever individuals and families from community life
 - Undermine the dignity and social existence of individuals.

Findings and evidence before the Court

- The judgment relied on a **court-appointed panel**, which documented that families are being punished for choosing partners of their choice; individuals are penalised for speaking against entrenched customs and there are cases of severe social exclusion from community networks.
- The Court described the issue as a matter of **serious social concern**, not isolated incidents.



Directions to the State government



- The Rajasthan High Court directed the State to:
 - Frame a **clear policy with a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)**
 - Effectively address complaints of social boycott
- It suggested that the State consider enacting legislation similar to the **Maharashtra Protection of People from Social Boycott Act, 2016**, which provides a structured mechanism for prosecution of such offences.
- **It mandated that:**
 - Guidelines must be **uniformly implemented across districts**
 - Measures must be **adequately publicised to ensure awareness**

Directions to the police

- The Court instructed that a **senior officer not below the rank of Additional SP** be designated to **supervise investigations into all pending cases of social ostracism**
- It further directed that investigations must be **completed within 90 days**, ensuring timely justice



Why the Judgment Matters?

- It reinforces that **customary or community authority cannot override constitutional rights**
- It recognises social boycott as a **serious human rights violation**, not merely a cultural practice
- It addresses **state inaction** by mandating policy, SOPs, and administrative accountability
- It strengthens the **rule of law by delegitimising informal justice systems**

Challenges Ahead

- Implementation may be difficult in regions where **caste-based bodies have deep social influence**.
- The absence of a dedicated law could weaken enforcement until legislative action is taken.
- Victims may hesitate to report due to fear of retaliation and social pressure.
- Administrative capacity and awareness gaps may affect execution on the ground.

The judgment sends a clear signal that in a constitutional democracy, **individual dignity, liberty, and choice are non-negotiable**, and any parallel system that enforces social conformity through coercion must yield to the rule of law.

Project SANGAM

Delhi has introduced **Project SANGAM (Synergistic Action for Networked Governance for Area Mobility)** as a first-of-its-kind initiative aimed at tackling urban traffic problems through **citizen participation and inter-agency coordination**, marking a shift from top-down enforcement to collaborative governance.

Significance

- Marks a shift from **enforcement-based policing** → **participatory urban governance**
- Enhances **citizen ownership and behavioural change**, improving long-term compliance
- Demonstrates a **scalable model** for other cities.

About Project SANGAM

- It is a **collaborative platform** launched by Delhi Police following directions from the Lt. Governor.
- The initiative brings together:
 - **Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs)**
 - **Market Welfare Associations (MWAs)**
 - Civic agencies like **MCD and PWD (Public Works Dept.)**
- It is based on the idea that **traffic management is a shared civic responsibility**, not just a policing function.

Key features of the initiative

- Focuses on **participatory governance**, where citizens actively identify and suggest solutions to local traffic problems.
- Since its launch on **April 3**, over **30 meetings involving more than 6,000 residents** have been conducted. The project has already covered major areas such as Connaught Place, Khan Market, Chanakyapuri etc.
- Citizens' inputs are collected through **meetings and the SANGAM digital platform**, creating a central repository of issues and solutions.

Problems identified through SANGAM

- **Unauthorised parking** around homes and markets
- **Encroachments** narrowing roads
- **Wrong-side driving** and chaotic traffic behaviour
- **Irregular loading and unloading practices in markets**
- Issues arising during **VIP movement**

Actions taken

- Installation of **barricades along central verges** in key stretches like Khan Market
- Strengthening enforcement through:
 - **Targeted e-challans**
 - **Towing and clamping drives**
- Regulation of **bus lanes and parking norms**
- Civic agencies addressing **structural issues like encroachments and road design**

Section 17A of Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988

The Supreme Court has allowed former Bihar Chief Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav to raise the issue of **prior sanction under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act (PoCA)** during the trial in the land-for-jobs case. The Court did not decide on the applicability of Section 17A at this stage but clarified that the issue can be examined by the trial court at the appropriate stage. The plea challenges a Delhi High Court order that had earlier dismissed the argument regarding **sanction** under Section 17A.

Judicial Position and Interpretation

- Courts have emphasized that Section 17A is **not an absolute bar**, but a procedural safeguard
- It does not apply where:
 - The act is **clearly criminal or mala fide intent**
 - There is **no connection with official duty**
- The stage of invoking Section 17A (pre-investigation vs trial) remains a **contentious issue**, as seen in this case.

What is Section 17A of PoCA

- Inserted by the **Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Act, 2018**
- It mandates that:
 - **Prior approval of the competent authority is required** before initiating any inquiry, enquiry, or investigation against a public servant
 - Applies to acts done **in discharge of official functions or duties**

Key legal issues around Section 17A

- Whether the alleged acts fall within **"official duty"**, which determines if sanction is required.
- Whether Section 17A applies **retrospectively** to offences committed before 2018.
 - CBI has alleged that Lalu Prasad Yadav, along with his family, received land at steeply discounted rates or through fraudulent transfers in exchange for providing railway jobs between 2004-2009.
- Courts have generally held that:
 - Protection applies only when there is a **reasonable nexus with official functions**
 - It cannot shield **acts of corruption unrelated to official duty**

Way forward

- Need for **clear judicial guidelines** on:

- Scope of “official duty”
- Stage of sanction requirement

The case highlights the ongoing tension within anti-corruption law between **accountability and protection of public officials**, with Section 17A emerging as a crucial but contested safeguard in the legal framework. This will strengthen institutional mechanisms for granting timely and impartial sanction.

{For more detail on Section 17A PoCA, Refer The Recitals- Jan 2026}

Special Intensive Revision

The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls has emerged as one of the most consequential administrative exercises affecting electoral democracy in recent years. While conceived as a routine process to clean and update voter lists, its scale, methodology, and outcomes have raised serious concerns regarding due process, voter inclusion, and institutional accountability.

Scale and outcomes of SIR- Phase II

- Across **9 States and 3 UTs**, electoral rolls were reduced by about **5.18 crore voters (~10.2%)**, indicating the massive scale of the exercise. After the 2nd phase, the voter lists now stand at 45.81 crore names
- In **West Bengal**
 - Voters reduced from **~7.66 crore to ~7.04 crore**, with **over 63 lakh deletions**.
 - Around **60 lakh voters were placed under adjudication**, meaning their eligibility remained unresolved.
- In **Uttar Pradesh**, about **2.05 crore names were deleted**, showing similar large-scale changes. The number of electors now stands at 13.39 crore in the final electoral roll.

Way forward

- Ensure that SIR processes are guided by the principle of **maximum inclusion with minimum exclusion**
- Strengthen **transparent and accessible grievance redress mechanisms**, especially before elections
- Provide **clear guidelines on documentation and discrepancies**, reducing arbitrariness
- Use technology carefully, ensuring **data accuracy and human oversight**
- Introduce safeguards such as:
 - Allowing **provisional voting rights** for those under adjudication
- Enhance **accountability of ECI processes**, while preserving its independence

{For more details on SIR, refer The Recitals-October 2025}

Issues observed

- The process involved **fresh enumeration and documentation requirements**, shifting the burden onto citizens to prove eligibility. Thus, large numbers of voters were flagged for:
 - **“Logical discrepancies”** (data inconsistencies across records)
 - Mismatch with earlier rolls (spelling or age mismatch notably 2002 rolls in many cases like in West Bengal)
- Many voters were moved to **“under adjudication” category** excluding them temporarily from voting, pending verification.
- A major concern has been the **limited effectiveness of appeal mechanisms**, especially for those whose names were deleted.
- Tribunal-based adjudication systems faced:
 - **Time constraints (close to elections)**
 - **Administrative overload**
- Reports indicate that only a **small fraction of affected voters could access hearings**, raising concerns about effective remedy.
- The process has been criticised for **procedural opacity** and lack of clarity in decision-making
- The burden of proof was effectively placed on citizens, which is seen as contrary to the principle of **inclusive electoral rolls**.

Ground-level implications

- Large-scale deletions and pending adjudications have created:
 - **Uncertainty among voters**
 - Risk of **disenfranchisement**
- In some regions, deletions were clustered geographically, indicating uneven impact.

Borstal Schools

Maharashtra's decision to **repeal** the **Bombay Borstal Schools Act, 1929** marks the end of a century-old reformatory approach to dealing with young offenders, raising concerns about the future of institutions like the Nashik Borstal School and their rehabilitative role, which functioned as an alternative to prison for adolescents.

What has Changed?

The repeal is linked to the dominance of the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**, which provides a separate framework for dealing with children in conflict with law.

Issues Arising from Repeal

- The repeal removes a **specialised rehabilitative framework for older adolescents**.
- Lack of consultation before repeal raises concerns about **policy discontinuity**.
- Experts argue that instead of repeal, there was a need to:
 - **Reform and modernise borstals**
 - Align them with contemporary correctional and skill-development approaches
- Closure risks losing an institution focused on **rehabilitation rather than punishment**.

ABOUT BORSTAL SCHOOLS (IMPORTANT FACTS)

- Borstal schools were introduced in India in **1925 during colonial rule**, based on the **Indian Jail Committee Report (1919–1920)**.
- They were designed as **"second chance" institutions** for young offenders, focusing on **reform rather than punishment**.
- Typically housed **male offenders aged 16–21 years**, bridging the gap between juveniles and adult prisoners.
- **Emphasis was on:**
 - **Education and vocational training**
 - **Discipline and rehabilitation**
 - Preparing inmates for reintegration into society
- Courts could directly send eligible offenders to borstals instead of prisons.
- Borstals functioned under the **prison department**, but with a reformatory rather than punitive orientation.
- **They differed from Juvenile Justice institutions:**
 - JJ Act defines juveniles as **below 18 years** and prohibits imprisonment
 - Borstals dealt with older adolescents (16–21), creating overlap and legal complexity



EVOLUTION AND DECLINE

- The first borstal school in India was set up in **Dharwar (1930)**, later shifted to Kolhapur and then Nashik.
- Over time, with the rise of the **Juvenile Justice Act (2000 and later 2015)**, borstals became less relevant due to overlapping jurisdictions. As the JJ framework expanded, borstal institutions saw **declining inmate numbers** and administrative neglect.
- According to **Prison Statistics India 2023**, only **10 borstal schools remain across India**, and many are either defunct or repurposed.

Form 6 Row in West Bengal Elections

Recent election-related reports from West Bengal have flagged concerns over unusually high numbers of **Form 6 applications** and alleged irregularities in voter enrolment, with parties (TMC) claiming possible duplication or manipulation of entries while authorities maintain that due verification processes are being followed.

About Form 6

- **Definition:** Form 6 is the prescribed application by the Election Commission of India for inclusion of a person's name in the electoral roll.
- **Purpose:** It enables eligible citizens aged 18+ to register as voters in a constituency.
- **Use cases:** It is used for first-time registration and fresh inclusion after shifting residence.
- **Process:** Applications are verified by Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) and Booth Level Officers (BLOs) before approval.

Issues

- **Spike in applications:** A sudden increase in Form 6 submissions in certain constituencies has raised suspicion of abnormal enrolment patterns.

- **Allegations of duplicate voters:** Concerns have been raised about the possibility of the same individual being enrolled multiple times across constituencies.
- **Inclusion of ineligible persons:** Claims of non-residents or allegedly illegal migrants being added to voter lists through Form 6.
- **Verification gaps:** Questions over the effectiveness and uniformity of ground-level verification by BLOs.

Impeachment of Judges

The resignation of Justice Yashwant Varma of the Allahabad High Court in 2026, following the “cash-at-home” controversy, has once again brought the issue of judicial accountability and impeachment of judges into sharp focus. Large amounts of unaccounted cash were reportedly discovered at his residence after a fire in 2025, leading to an in-house inquiry and initiation of impeachment proceedings by Members of Parliament. Before the process could conclude, the judge resigned under Article 217(1)(a), effectively halting the impeachment process midway.

What the Present Case Highlights?

- **Resignation as a way out:** The resignation of Justice Varma during the inquiry phase **terminated the impeachment process**, as removal proceedings cannot continue once a sitting judge demits office. This reflects a recurring pattern where judges **resign before conclusion of impeachment**, avoiding a formal finding of guilt.

- The panel formally closed proceedings and submitted its report to the Lok Sabha. However, the resignation does not completely end accountability. Since the judge is no longer in office, criminal proceedings may still be initiated under ordinary law, subject to approval.

- **Constitutional gap:** It exposes a **constitutional gap**, as resignation ends the impeachment proceedings, prevents formal accountability and avoids precedential findings.
- **Weak systems:** Further, the in-house judicial inquiry system lacks transparency and binding enforceability.

- **Public trust:** Public confidence is affected when serious allegations remain **inconclusively adjudicated**.

- **No successful impeachment** in the 75 years since the SC and the Constitution came into being,

Need for Reforms

- Introduce a **statutory judicial accountability framework** short of impeachment.

UNDERSTANDING IMPEACHMENT OF JUDGES IN INDIA

- Impeachment is the **constitutional process for removal of judges** of the Supreme Court and High Courts.
- It is governed by:
 - **Constitution: Articles 124(4)-for SC ; 218- for HC**
 - **The Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968**
- Judges can be removed only on two grounds:
 - **Proved misbehavior (serious ethical or professional misconduct)**
 - **Incapacity (Inability to discharge duties due to physical or mental reasons).**
- The process is intentionally **rigorous and rare**, ensuring judicial independence is not compromised by political pressure.



PROCEDURE FOR IMPEACHMENT

- **Initiation:** An impeachment motion can be introduced in either the Lok Sabha or the Rajya Sabha. A motion for impeachment must be signed by either **100 members in Lok Sabha** or **50 members in Rajya Sabha**.
- **Admission:** The Speaker/Chairman may admit or reject the motion.
- **Inquiry:** A **three-member committee** is constituted under the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968, consisting of a Supreme Court judge, a Chief Justice of a High Court and a distinguished jurist.
- **Investigation:** The committee conducts a detailed inquiry and submits its report to the House that initiated the motion.
- **Parliamentary approval:** If charges are proved, both Houses must pass the motion during the same session with Special majority (majority of total membership + 2/3rd of members present and voting).
- **Final removal:** The President issues the order removing the judge.



- Allow continuation of inquiry even after resignation to ensure **institutional closure**.
- Strengthen transparency in **in-house mechanisms of the judiciary**.
- Consider establishing an independent body like a **Judicial Oversight Commission** to check cases of misuse of position and corruption.
- Balance must be maintained so that judges are protected from **frivolous allegations**, yet remain **answerable for misconduct**.

Ind AS Framework

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has issued an exposure draft requiring all insurers — life, general, health and reinsurance — to adopt Indian Accounting Standards (**Ind AS**) for their financial statements from 1 April 2026. This move aims to align the insurance sector’s reporting with global norms and improve transparency.

Challenges

- **Implementation cost:** Significant investment is required in IT systems, actuarial models, and data infrastructure.
- **Skill gap:** Limited availability of professionals trained in Ind AS and insurance accounting.
- **Complexity:** Detailed contract-level measurement increases operational and reporting complexity.
- **Transition burden:** Parallel reporting adds compliance workload and operational strain.
- **Profit volatility:** New valuation approaches may lead to short-term fluctuations in reported profits.

WHAT IS IND AS FRAMEWORK?

- **Definition:** Ind AS is a principle-based accounting framework aligned with global IFRS (International Financial Reporting Standards), ensuring comparability and transparency.
- **Core feature:** It focuses on market-consistent valuation of assets and liabilities rather than historical cost methods.
 - Risk assessment: Better valuation methods strengthen liability assessment and risk management.
- **Profit recognition:** Profits are recognised over the duration of insurance contracts instead of being booked upfront.
- **Key standards:** Ind AS 117 governs **insurance contracts** while Ind AS 109 deals with **financial instruments**.
- **Nature:** It requires extensive disclosures, professional judgement, and consistent application across firms.

IRDAI PROPOSALS

- **Implementation timeline:** Mandatory adoption of Ind AS from April 1, 2026 (FY27) for all insurers.
- **Parallel reporting:** Insurers will undertake dual reporting under existing GAAP (Generally Accepted Accounting Principles) and Ind AS during the transition phase.
- **Regulatory alignment:** Financial regulations and reporting formats will be modified to align with Ind AS.
- **Audit oversight:** Additional checks through IRDAI-empowered auditors to ensure compliance.
- **Preparedness:** Insurers are required to carry out gap assessments, system upgrades, and training initiatives.

Way Forward

- **Phased transition:** Ensure smooth implementation through regulatory support and structured transition mechanisms.
- **Capacity building:** Invest in training accountants, actuaries, and auditors.
- **Technology adoption:** Upgrade data systems, analytics capabilities, and reporting infrastructure.
- **Regulatory clarity:** Provide detailed and consistent guidelines to reduce ambiguity.
- **Stakeholder coordination:** Strengthen collaboration between regulators, insurers, and industry bodies.

Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026

The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026 has been passed by the Parliament and received Presidential assent marking a significant step towards further enhancing Ease of Doing Business and Ease of Living in the country. It seeks to reduce the compliance burden by **decriminalising minor offences** and rationalising existing legal provisions.

- It reflects a shift towards minimum government and compliance-based governance.

- The Bill was initially introduced in the Lok Sabha in August 2025 as the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025. It was subsequently referred to a Select Committee of the Lok Sabha. Following the recommendations from a select committee to broaden the scope of reforms, it was withdrawn by the government in March 2026.

The Earlier Jan Vishwas 2023 Act amended 183 provisions across 42 Central Acts

Key Provisions of the Bill

784 provisions across **79 Central Acts** administered by **23 Ministries** have been amended. Of these, **717 provisions** have been decriminalised, while 67 provisions have been amended.

- The Bill rationalises over 1,000 offences by eliminating minor infractions, thereby improving the regulatory environment for both businesses and citizens.
- Around **805 offences have been decriminalised**, with imprisonment replaced by civil penalties, or warnings.
- About **125 offences have been omitted entirely** as they were redundant, outdated, or already covered under laws like the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023**.
- A clear distinction has been introduced between **criminal fines (court-imposed)** and **civil penalties (administratively imposed)**.

Significance of the Act

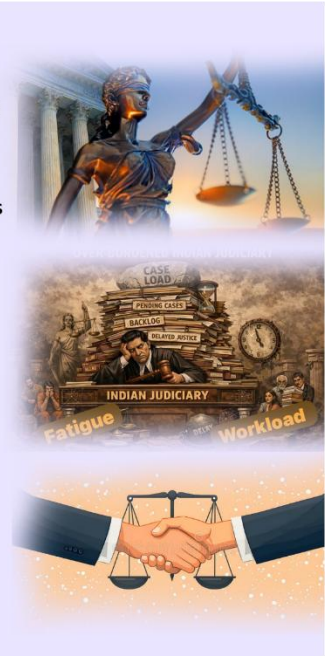
- India had around **370 Central laws with over 7,300 offences as of December 2024**. Nearly **74% of these offences were regulatory rather than core criminal offences**
- Excessive criminalisation led to **judicial backlog, compliance burden, and misuse of penal provisions**

Concerns and limitations

- Risk of reduced deterrence if penalties are too low
- Does not directly address deeper issues like **judicial delays and police reforms**

Way forward

- Strengthen capacity and accountability of **adjudicating authorities**
- Ensure penalties remain **proportionate and effective as deterrents**
- Periodically review laws to prevent re-criminalisation of minor offences
- Balance regulatory ease with enforcement effectiveness



Amaravati Notified as Andhra Pradesh Capital

The Government of India has officially notified Amaravati as the permanent sole capital of Andhra Pradesh, finalized by the **Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation (Amendment) Act, 2026**. This legal recognition, passed in April 2026, ends 12 years of uncertainty following the **2014 bifurcation** where Hyderabad was declared the common capital of both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh for up to 10 years.

Key Aspects of the Notification

- **Legal Status:** The Parliament passed the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2026.
- **Retrospective Effect:** The law will recognize Amaravati as the capital with retrospective effect from 2nd June 2024, the date marking the end of the 10-year common capital period with Telangana.
- **End of Uncertainty:** First time in the history of independent India that a specific Bill has been brought to Parliament to declare a particular city as the permanent capital of a state.
- **Reversal of Multi-Capital Plan:** The Act nullifies previous proposals from the YSRCP government that proposed distributing capital functions among three different cities with Visakhapatnam as the executive capital and Amaravati as legislative and Kurnool as judicial capitals.
- **Significance:** The move has been described as a major victory for the farmers of Amaravati; clear policy direction is likely to boost infrastructure investment in Amaravati and focused development of a single capital can enhance efficiency in planning and execution.

Uniform Civil Code in Bengal Elections

The idea of a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) has recently become a major political flashpoint in West Bengal, especially in the run-up to the 2026 Assembly elections. The PM has promised implementation of UCC if the BJP comes to power in the state, while Mamata Banerjee has opposed it and even indicated it would be revoked if enacted, turning UCC into a central electoral and ideological issue.

What is UCC?

- **Definition:** Uniform Civil Code refers to a common set of laws governing personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption, and succession for all citizens irrespective of religion.
- **Current system:** India follows religion-based personal laws (Hindu, Muslim, Christian, etc.), leading to legal diversity in personal matters.
- **Constitutional basis:** Mentioned under **Article 44** of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP), which urges the state to strive for a uniform civil code.

Significance of UCC

- **Equality before law:** Promotes gender justice and equality by removing discriminatory provisions in personal laws.
- **National integration:** A common civil code can strengthen unity by reducing legal fragmentation based on religion.
- **Simplification of laws:** Creates a uniform and streamlined legal system, reducing complexity in personal law disputes.
- **Political significance (current context):** In Bengal elections, UCC is framed as a tool to end “appeasement politics” and ensure equal laws for all citizens.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

- **Cultural diversity:** India's pluralistic society has diverse customs and traditions, making uniformity difficult.
- **Religious sensitivity:** Personal laws are closely tied to religious identity, leading to resistance from minority communities.
- **Political polarisation:** As seen in Bengal, UCC has become a highly polarising electoral issue rather than a purely legal reform.
- **Lack of consensus:** Absence of agreement among stakeholders, including political parties and communities.
- **Complexity of reform:** Harmonising multiple personal laws into one framework involves legal, social, and administrative challenges.
- **Concerns over majoritarianism:** Fear that UCC may reflect the practices of the majority community rather than a truly neutral code.
- **State vs Centre issue:** Debate over whether UCC should be implemented nationally or at the state level.

WAY FORWARD

- **Gradual approach:** Implement reforms in phases rather than imposing a single code abruptly.
- **Consensus building:** Engage with religious groups, civil society, and legal experts to build broad-based agreement.
- **Gender justice focus:** Prioritise reforms that address discrimination in existing personal laws.
- **Model code approach:** Develop an optional or model UCC for voluntary adoption before making it mandatory.
- **Depoliticisation:** Treat UCC as a social reform issue rather than an electoral tool to reduce polarisation.

Productivity of Budget Session of Parliament

Budget Session 2026: Key Highlights

- **Overall productivity:** Lok Sabha recorded **93% productivity** while Rajya Sabha exceeded expectations with **110% productivity** despite disruptions.
- **Session duration:** The Budget Session began on **January 28, 2026** and concluded with adjournment sine die (*April 18, 2026*) after a special sitting on women's reservation.

Key Statistics (Lok Sabha)	Key statistics (Rajya Sabha):
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bills passed: 9 out of 12 Bills passed• Sitting time: 151 hours 42 minutes (31 sittings)• Debate: Over 21 hours of discussion on key constitutional bills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sitting time: 157 hours 40 minutes.• Questions asked: 117 questions were raised.• Discussions: 446 zero-hour submissions and 207 special mentions.

- **Time lost:** ~53 hours lost due to disruptions.

Right to be Considered for Promotion as a Fundamental Right

In *Kulwant Singh v. State of Punjab* judgment, the **Punjab and Haryana HC** reaffirmed that the right to be considered for promotion is a fundamental right under **Article 14** (equality before law) and **Article 16(1)** (equal opportunity in public employment), especially when administrative delays denied an eligible employee this opportunity. While court have clarified that an employee cannot claim a fundamental right to be promoted (*Lift Irrigation Corporation case, 1991*) they have a legally enforceable right to be **fairly considered** for promotion if they meet the eligibility criteria.

Common Challenges and Judicial Interventions

- **Delayed DPCs:** Many departments delay DPCs, forcing employees to file petitions. Recent judgments (e.g., *Punjab & Haryana HC, 2026*) have warned that administrative delays cannot defeat fundamental rights.
- **Retirement Issues:** If an employee retires before their promotion is considered, courts may still grant notional financial benefits to ensure pensionary benefits are not impacted, although sometimes retrospective promotion after retirement is denied if not supported by specific rules.
- **Merit-cum-Seniority:** The evaluation must be fair and adhere to the rules, whether the promotion is based on merit or seniority.

Key Aspects of the Right

- **Fundamental vs. Statutory Right:** The Supreme Court (*Ajit Singh v. State of Punjab, 1999* and later in *Bihar State Electricity Board versus Dharamdeo Das, 2024*) established that the right to fair consideration is a constitutional guarantee, not merely a statutory rule.
- **Scope:** This right applies to all eligible employees within the "zone of consideration" (those eligible for promotion) when a vacancy exists.
- **Distinction:** Promotion itself depends on merit, seniority, and vacancies, but the process of evaluation must be unbiased, timely, and follow service rules.

How it Works in Practice?

This right is operationalized through structured administrative mechanisms and judicial supervision:

- **Departmental Promotion Committees (DPCs):** Government departments hold DPC meetings to evaluate eligible candidates. Failure to conduct these meetings regularly is considered a violation of the fundamental right to consideration.
- **Regularity in Promotions:** Courts have directed that DPCs must be held at regular, fixed intervals (e.g., every three months) to prevent employee stagnation.
- **Notional Promotion:** If an employee was eligible but not considered due to administrative delays or errors, courts often grant "notional promotion" with retrospective effect, treating the employee as promoted from the date they should have been promoted.
- **Correction of Administrative Error:** If an employee is wrongfully excluded (e.g., misinterpretation of service rules by the department), they can approach the High Court under Article 226 for redressal.

Right to Travel Abroad

The **Punjab and Haryana High Court** allowed a convicted former DSP to travel to Europe for one month, subject to strict conditions, reaffirming that the right to travel abroad is a basic human right.

Key Aspects of the Right to Travel Abroad:

- **Fundamental Liberty:** It is deeply intertwined with personal freedom, allowing individuals to nourish their character and expand their experiences.
- **Legal Standing:** The SC's landmark **Maneka Gandhi case, 1978** established that the right to travel abroad is included within the right to personal liberty.
 - In *Satish Chandra Verma vs UoI (2019)*, the SC affirmed that the right to travel abroad is a fundamental human right.
 - Similar rulings: *Parvez Noordin Lokhandwalla v/s Maharashtra (2020)*; *Srichand P. Hinduja vs State Through C.B.I. (2001)*

Legal Basis and Interpretation:

- **Article 21:** Provides the primary protection, interpreting **personal liberty** to include the freedom to go abroad.
- **Freedom of Movement:** Distinguishable from Article 19(1)(d), which specifically guarantees free movement within India.

- **Permissible Restrictions:** Restrictions must be reasonable and in accordance with the law, not arbitrary. Valid restrictions may involve:
 - **National Security:** Threats to sovereignty and integrity.
 - **Public Interest:** Protection of public order or health.
 - **Pending Legal Matters:** Court restrictions, such as those related to pending criminal cases.
- **International Recognition:** Freedom of movement is generally acknowledged in international law as a human right.

Welfare vs Development

Development has become a central electoral narrative, often used to signal growth, infrastructure expansion, and job creation. However, political discourse frequently **conflates welfare with development**, oversimplifying complex socio-economic challenges.

Welfare vs Development – Conceptual Difference

- **Welfare:** Refers to **short-term, redistributive interventions** aimed at reducing poverty and vulnerability, such as food security, subsidies, and income support.
 - **Examples:** Public Distribution System (PDS), Direct Benefit Transfers (DBTs) for vulnerable groups, Old Age Pensions, Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajivika Mission Gramin (VB-G RAM G) (providing immediate wage security).
- **Development:** Denotes a **long-term structural transformation** involving economic growth, productivity, technology adoption, institutional capacity, and human capital enhancement.
 - **Examples:** Building highways and ports, establishing IITs/AIIMS, investing in R&D, skilling initiatives (Skill India), and industrial corridors.

Nature of development process

- **Structural & Incremental transformation:** Development is a **slow, cumulative process** spanning decades rather than discrete short-term gains.
- **Human development focus:** Expansion of education, health, and social inclusion enhances long-term capabilities.
- **Institutional role:** Strong institutions and policy continuity are critical for sustained development outcomes.

Tensions between welfare and development

- **Fiscal constraints:** Excessive welfare spending may strain public finances and reduce funds for productive investment.
 - Policies like free electricity, loan waivers, and cash transfers prioritise immediate electoral gains.
- **Efficiency concerns:** Poorly designed welfare schemes may lead to leakages, exclusion errors, and limited impact. Such measures often do not enhance long-term economic capacity.
- **Crowding-out effect:**
 - Spending on populist schemes may reduce investment in education, health, and infrastructure.

Positive role of welfare

- **Human capability building:** Programmes in nutrition, health, and employment can improve productivity.
- **Social protection:** Reduces vulnerability and supports inclusive growth.
- **Complementarity:** Welfare can support development if aligned with long-term goals rather than substituting them.

- **Time horizon difference:** Welfare is immediate and consumption-oriented, while development is gradual and production-oriented.

Way Forward

- **Integrated approach:** Recognise welfare and development as **complementary, not interchangeable**.
- **Focus on quality:** Improve design and targeting of welfare schemes to maximise impact.
- **Long-term orientation:** Shift policy focus from quick gains to sustained structural transformation.
- **Institutional strengthening:** Ensure policy continuity and robust governance frameworks.
- **Electoral reform in discourse:** Political narratives should move beyond short-term promises to long-term development vision.

Premature Release of Prisoners

The Delhi High Court criticised the Sentencing Review Board (SRB) for rejecting the premature release plea of Santosh Kumar Singh, convicted in the 1996 rape and murder of Priyadarshini Mattoo.

- Acquitted in 1999 by a trial court; Sentenced to death by the High Court in 2006
- Given life imprisonment by the Supreme Court of India in 2010 (death penalty commuted)

The High Court termed the rejection as “proceeding on public perception” and noted that Singh has spent nearly three decades in custody. The case has been sent back for fresh consideration, marking the **second review** after an earlier rejection in 2025.

Court’s Observations in this Case

- **Public perception test:** Decisions **should not be based** solely on public sentiment or outrage.
- **Focus on reform:** Emphasised the need to assess reformation and time already served.
- **Concern over repeated rejection:** Court noted a pattern of SRB rejecting pleas in serious cases without adequate reasoning.
- **Victim perspective acknowledged:** Court also recognised the family’s opposition.

SRB’s Reasoning for Rejection

- **Nature of crime:** Described as heinous and disturbing public peace.
- **Public impact:** Concern that release could affect societal harmony.
- **Opposition:** Victim’s family and civil society groups opposed the release.

What is premature release?

- **Definition:** Premature release allows life convicts to be released before completing their full sentence if they are reformed and no longer a threat to society.
- **Constitutional basis: Articles 72 and 161** empower the President and Governors to grant remission.
- **Statutory basis:** Provisions under the **Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), especially Sections 473 and 474.**
- **Minimum requirement (Sec 475 BNSS):** In cases where death penalty is an option, at least **14 years of actual imprisonment** must be completed.
 - Eligibility after 14 years does not guarantee release, only consideration.

Process of consideration:

- **Role of SRB:** It evaluates cases and recommends remission to the government.
- **Composition:** Includes senior state officials such as the DG of Prisons, Police Commissioner, and Chief Secretary.
- **Criteria:**
 - Nature and gravity of offence.
 - Conduct of the convict in jail.
 - Compliance with parole or bail conditions
 - Psychological profile and rehabilitation potential.
- **Legal safeguard:** Supreme Court (SC) mandates judicial consultation & reasoned decision-making.
 - In *Uol v/s V Sriharan*, the SC clarified: Remission is not an absolute executive power.

Supreme Court’s Position on Fixed-Term Sentences (Eg 20 years)

- The Supreme Court clarified that:
 - Once a judicially fixed sentence is completed, no further SRB approval is required
 - The executive cannot override judicial decisions
- A SC bench strongly remarked that allowing the SRB to override court orders would mean convicts may never be released, raising concerns about executive overreach.



Similar Cases

- **Manu Sharma case (Jessica Lal murder):** Granted premature release in 2020 after around 20 years in jail. SRB recommended release based on good conduct in jail, which was approved by the Lieutenant Governor.
- **Sushil Sharma case (Tandoor murder):** Released in 2018 after 23 years, though earlier rejection was overturned by courts. The Delhi HC intervened after the SRB rejected his plea, and the Supreme Court of India upheld the release in 2023.

Premature release is not automatic but must be decided on objective criteria, balancing reformation, legal safeguards, and societal concerns rather than public sentiment alone.

Debate on Tenure of PM

India's Constitution does not prescribe any term limit for the Prime Minister, unlike many presidential systems. This debate has intensified following the long continuous tenure of Narendra Modi (over 8900 days, surpassing previous long tenures), raising questions about absence of limits on executive office.

Constitutional framework of Prime Minister's tenure:

- **Appointment (Article 75):** PM is appointed by the President based on majority support in the Lok Sabha.
- **No fixed term:** The Constitution does not prescribe any maximum tenure or term limit.
- **Tenure condition:** PM continues as long as they enjoy the confidence of the Lok Sabha
- **Removal mechanism:**
 - Loss of majority in Lok Sabha.
 - Passage of a no-confidence motion.
- **Collective responsibility (Article 75(3)):** Council of Ministers is accountable to the Lok Sabha, ensuring parliamentary control.

Comparative Perspective:

- **Presidential systems:** Countries like the US, Brazil, and Indonesia impose **fixed term limits** to prevent concentration of power.
- **Parliamentary systems:** Countries like the UK rely on **internal party democracy** and can challenge leadership instead of formal limits.
- **India's uniqueness:** Lacks both formal term limits and strong intra-party

Arguments against term limits:

- **Constituent Assembly vision:** Framers, including B.R. Ambedkar, believed continuous parliamentary accountability is a stronger check than fixed tenure.
- **"Daily accountability" principle:** Tools like questions, debates, and no-confidence motions were seen as ongoing checks on executive power.
- **Democratic choice:** Voters should decide leadership continuity, not constitutional caps.
- **Policy continuity:** Long-term reforms require stable leadership.
- **Westminster model:** India adopted a parliamentary system where leadership depends on legislative confidence rather than fixed tenure.
- **Proxy control risk:** Leaders restricted by term limits may still retain power informally by backing compliant successors, defeating the intent of limiting authority.
- **Power drift to unelected actors:** Frequent leadership changes or weaker leaders can shift real decision-making to bureaucrats, advisors, or party elites who lack direct electoral accountability.
- **Constitutional complexity:** Imposing term limits would require extensive constitutional amendments, potentially triggering wider institutional debates and unintended consequences.

Arguments in favour of term limits:

- **Concentration of power:** Long tenures may lead to **executive dominance** and weakening of institutional checks.
- **Weakening of parliamentary accountability:**
 - The **Anti-Defection Law (Tenth Schedule)** discourages MPs from voting against party lines. This reduces effectiveness of no-confidence motions as a check.
- **Institutional imbalance:** While the President (ceremonial head) has informal limits, the PM (real executive) has none. India has developed an informal convention limiting the President to two terms, despite the Constitution not mandating such a restriction.
- **Promotes internal competition:** Encourages leadership rotation within parties.



democracy, creating a distinct institutional scenario.

Way forward

- **Reform Anti-Defection Law:** Allow MPs greater freedom in confidence votes to restore genuine accountability.
- **Introduce term limits:** Consider limiting consecutive terms with a cooling-off period.
- **Strengthen intra-party democracy:** Mandate internal elections within political parties.
- **Reinforce parliamentary oversight:** Revitalise tools like debates, committees, and no-confidence mechanisms as checks on executive power.

Privilege Motion against PM

The Congress moved a privilege notice against PM Narendra Modi over his April 18 address to the nation following the defeat of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill in Lok Sabha. The opposition alleged that the Prime Minister made remarks questioning the **integrity, independence, and voting conduct of MPs**. The opposition called it an “unprecedented and unethical abuse of power” & a move undermining parliamentary dignity.

Parallel Election-related Issue

The opposition also approached the Election Commission of India alleging violation of the **Model Code of Conduct (MCC)**. The PM’s address during an ongoing election period was claimed to influence voters and create an uneven playing field.

What is a Privilege Motion?

- **Definition:** A privilege motion is a parliamentary tool used when a member believes that a **breach of privilege or contempt of the House** has occurred.
- **Purpose:** It seeks to protect the **rights, immunities, and dignity** of Parliament and its members.
- **Constitutional basis:** Derived from Articles 105 (Parliament) and 194 (State Legislatures), which grant privileges to legislators.
- **Grounds for motion:**
 - Misleading the House.
 - Casting aspersions on members.
 - Obstructing functioning of Parliament or its committees.
- **Procedure:**
 - Notice is given to the Speaker (Lok Sabha) or Chairman (Rajya Sabha).
 - The presiding officer decides admissibility.
 - If admitted, it may be referred to the **Privileges Committee** for examination.
- **Outcome:** The House may take action ranging from warning to reprimand or other measures depending on severity.



Supreme Court Directions on Disabled-Friendly Prisons

The Supreme Court in *Sathyan Naravoor v. UoI & Ors. (2026)* has recently intervened to address the poor conditions faced by prisoners with disabilities, directing the creation of a structured and enforceable framework for making prisons accessible and inclusive.

Background and Issues Identified

- **Systemic gaps:** Despite legal safeguards, disabled prisoners face **neglect, discrimination, and lack of accessibility**.
- **Legal gap:** Laws like the Prisons Act, 1894 and Model Prison Manual 2016 do not adequately address disability-specific needs.
- **Poor implementation:** Only a limited number of states had complied with earlier Supreme Court directions, indicating weak enforcement.

Recent SC Directions

- **High-powered committee:** The Court directed a committee chaired by Justice S. Ravindra Bhat to prepare a **comprehensive plan for disabled-friendly prisons**.

- The committee was originally constituted to reform open correctional institutions, and its scope has now been expanded
- **Objective:** Ensure prisons adopt a **humane, rights-based approach**, protecting dignity and equality of disabled prisoners under Articles 14 and 21.
- **Uniform standards:** Develop **national-level norms** for procurement, maintenance, and security of assistive devices while warning of penalties under the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016** for violations.
- **Shift to implementation:** Focus moved from issuing guidelines to ensuring **effective enforcement and compliance** across states.
- **Accessibility infrastructure:** Provide ramps, accessible toilets, mobility-friendly spaces, and barrier-free movement within prisons.
- **Assistive support:** Ensure availability of **assistive devices** such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, and mobility aids.
- **Healthcare and services:** Provide **specialised medical care** and support systems.
- **Enhanced rights:** Improve **visitation rights, legal access, and grievance redressal mechanisms**.

Implementation and Monitoring Mechanism

- **State accountability:** States and UTs must submit **compliance affidavits within a fixed timeline (about six weeks)**.
- **Central coordination:** Committee includes representatives from central and state departments to ensure **coordinated action**.
- **Expert involvement:** Committee can consult **civil society and disability experts** for practical solutions.
- **Time-bound reporting:** A **consolidated report is to be submitted within four months**.

Significance

- **Inclusive justice:** Reinforces that prisons must follow **reformative and humane principles**, not just punitive ones.
- **Uniform standards:** Aims to ensure **nationwide consistency** in prison conditions.
- **Rights-based governance:** Aligns prison administration with **constitutional values and disability rights frameworks**.

Supreme Court on Highway Safety

Following two major road accidents in November 2025 that killed 34 people, the Supreme Court of India took suo motu cognisance and invoked its powers under **Article 142** to address systemic failures in highway safety. The Court emphasised that the Right to Life under **Article 21** includes a **positive obligation on the State to ensure safe roads** and issued binding directions to central and state authorities.

Common Causes Of Road Accidents

Illegal parking on highways.

- Poor road conditions (potholes).
- Unregulated roadside establishments (dhabas).
- Gaps in enforcement and infrastructure maintenance.
- Lack of coordination among agencies like NHAI and state authorities.

Use of 'Complete Justice' Powers (Article 142)

- **Extraordinary intervention:** The Court invoked Article 142 to pass **comprehensive, binding directions** beyond routine adjudication.

- **Reason:** Failure of authorities (NHAI, PWDs) to prevent avoidable hazards like black spots and unsafe roadside practices.
- **Rights-based approach:** Interpreted Article 21 as a mandate imposing **duty on the State to ensure road safety**, not merely a guarantee against unlawful deprivation of life.

Key Directions Issued by the Court


- **Ban on highway parking:** Prohibited parking of heavy and commercial vehicles on highways except at designated areas.
- **Use of technology:**
 - Deployment of **Advanced Traffic Management Systems (ATMS)**-cameras, sign boards, emergency call box.
 - GPS-based tracking and photographic evidence collection.
 - Integration with e-Challan systems for enforcement.
- Deploy ambulance and recovery cranes at intervals not exceeding 75km on all national highway stretch, toll plaza, and wayside amenities.
- **Action on illegal structures:**
 - Demolition of unauthorised roadside dhabas and commercial establishments.
 - States to issue notifications restricting such structures within **40 m (residential)** and **75 m (commercial)** from mid point of highways.
- **Time-bound compliance:** Directions to be implemented within **60 days**.

Significance

- **Expansion of Article 21:** Reinforces that **safe infrastructure is part of the right to life**.
- **Judicial activism:** Demonstrates proactive judicial role in addressing governance failures.
- **Systemic reform push:** Moves beyond case-specific relief to **nationwide policy-level intervention** on road safety.

Concerns and challenges

- **Judicial overreach debate:** Use of Article 142 for policy-like directions raises concerns about encroachment into executive domain.
- **Implementation capacity:** States may face administrative and financial constraints in enforcing large-scale infrastructure and monitoring changes.
- **Impact on livelihoods:** Demolition of roadside establishments like dhabas may affect small businesses and informal sector workers.
- **Coordination issues:** Effective execution requires seamless coordination between multiple agencies (NHAI, police, transport departments), which has historically been weak.
- **Sustainability of enforcement:** Ensuring long-term compliance beyond initial deadlines remains a challenge.



Surveillance and Monitoring

- **Dedicated teams:** Creation of highway surveillance teams involving police and transport departments in coordination with NHAI.
- **24/7 monitoring:** Continuous vigilance to detect violations and ensure compliance.
- **Focus on black spots:** Identification and rectification of accident-prone zones.

FCRA Amendment Bill 2026

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 has generated significant political debate after being introduced in Lok Sabha, with the government arguing that it seeks to curb misuse of foreign funds and enhance transparency, while the Opposition has raised concerns about excessive executive control over NGOs and civil society.

What is FCRA?

- **Purpose:** The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 regulates acceptance and utilisation of foreign funds by individuals, NGOs, and associations.
- **Objective:** To ensure foreign contributions do not affect national security, sovereignty, or public interest.

Rationale of the Government

- **Prevent misuse:** To curb diversion of foreign funds for unlawful or non-permitted activities.
- **Enhance transparency:** Introduces clearer rules for fund usage, asset management, and compliance.
- **Strengthen oversight:** Centralised mechanisms aim to improve monitoring and enforcement.

Concerns and Criticisms

- **Excessive executive control:** Creation of a powerful authority raises concerns of **centralisation and overreach**.
- **Risk to property rights:** Vesting of assets in a government authority without strong procedural safeguards may conflict with the constitutional right to property under Article 300A.
- **Impact on NGOs:** Risk of **asset seizure** may threaten functioning and autonomy of civil society organisations.
- **Shrinking civic space:** Expanded restrictions may limit activities of NGOs, media-related entities, and minority institutions.
- **Due process concerns:** Requirement of prior government approval for investigations may affect independence of regulatory action.
- **Ambiguity and uncertainty:** Lack of timelines and clarity in some provisions (e.g., asset management decisions) may create legal uncertainty.

{For more details on Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Act, 2020 and 2022 Rules, refer The Recitals- Sept 2025}

Key changes proposed in the 2026 Amendment Bill

- **Creation of Designated Authority:** A central authority will be empowered to **take over, manage, and dispose of assets** created from foreign funds if an organisation's registration is cancelled, surrendered, or not renewed.
- **Government control over assets during suspension:** When an organisation's registration is suspended, it cannot use, transfer, or dispose of its foreign-funded assets without prior permission from the Central Government.
- **Asset vesting framework:** Foreign contributions and even **partly foreign-funded assets** can vest in the government-controlled authority, which may later transfer or sell them.
- **Automatic cessation of registration:** Registration will be deemed to have lapsed if renewal is not applied for, denied, or not granted before expiry.
- **Prior approval for investigations:** Any investigation against an organisation will require **prior approval of the Central Government**.
- **Expanded definition of "key functionary":** Includes directors, trustees, partners, and others in control, making them **personally accountable** for violations.
- **Time-bound utilisation of funds:** Introduces **specific timelines** for receiving and using foreign contributions under prior permission.
- **Restriction expansion:** Extends prohibition on receiving foreign funds to more categories, including those involved in **news and current affairs production**.
- **Appeals against orders of Authority:** Any person aggrieved by an order of the Designated Authority may appeal to the District Judge within 90 days.
- **Rationalised penalties:** Reduces maximum imprisonment for offences from **5 years to 1 year**, while restructuring penalties.



MEA Returns I&B's Proposal On Posting IIS Officers Abroad

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has returned a proposal from the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (I&B) regarding the foreign posting of Indian Information Service (IIS) officers, citing concerns over role duplication and jurisdiction. While initially planned to deploy 40 officers for "Brand India" promotion, the scaled-down plan for 10 officers in major capitals still faces resistance from the MEA.

- **Key Objections:** The MEA stated that Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officers already handle media and communication in missions, and questioned the need for a separate cadre.
- **Concerns Raised:** The MEA noted a lack of specific foreign language skills among IIS officers and raised potential diplomatic immunity issues under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 1961
- **Purpose:** The intended goal was to establish a dedicated communication presence to counter misinformation (especially seen in the wake of Operation Sindoor) and project India's growth story.

The MEA maintains that its existing External Publicity division and diplomatic staff are sufficient for foreign communication, highlighting a jurisdictional overlap between the two ministries.

Supreme Court on Use of ‘Stock Witnesses’

As of April 2026, the Supreme Court of India has expressed serious concern over the use of **‘stock/ fixed’ witnesses i.e.**, same individuals repeatedly used by police to formally corroborate investigation versions (as witnesses), particularly in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS), 1985 and Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 cases.

The Court has termed this practice an **“anathema to a country governed by the rule of law,”** as it undermines the fairness and impartiality of investigations.

Key Developments

- **Expansion of Judicial Committee:** The Supreme Court expanded a judicial panel set up to examine the practice and suggest reforms to **10 members** (from an initial 7).
- **1-Month Deadline:** The committee, chaired by Justice Vivek Agarwal of the Madhya Pradesh High Court, has been tasked with submitting recommendations within one month for a nationwide "common minimum procedure" to ensure witness credibility.

Issues w.r.t. Stock Witnesses

- **Fabricated Evidence:** Stock witnesses often do not witness the alleged crimes but rather sign documentation (panchnamas) under police pressure.
- **High Rate of Hostility:** These witnesses often turn hostile during trials, sabotaging the prosecution’s case.
- **Systemic Entrenchment:** The practice is described as deeply entrenched within the criminal justice system, affecting fairness and impartiality of investigation.

NITI Aayog Report: “Moving Towards Effective City Government – A Framework for Million-Plus Cities”

The NITI Aayog released the report *“Moving Towards Effective City Government – A Framework for Million-Plus Cities”*, highlighting that weak urban governance is a major constraint on India’s goal of becoming a \$30 trillion economy and achieving Viksit Bharat by 2047.

Key Highlights of the Report:

- **Urbanisation as growth engine:** Cities are central to economic transformation but their potential remains underutilised due to governance inefficiencies.
- **Focus on million-plus cities:** These cities are key contributors to GDP and require targeted governance reforms to unlock growth.
- **Core governance issues:**
 - Fragmented institutional structures.
 - Weak leadership and overlapping authority.
 - Limited fiscal autonomy of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).
 - Capacity constraints affecting service delivery.
- **Need for structural shift:** Emphasises aligning **functions, finances, and functionaries** at the city level for effective governance.

Key Recommendations	Implementation Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthening city leadership: Introduce a directly elected Mayor with fixed tenure supported by a Mayor-in-Council system for accountability and continuity.• Integrated service delivery: Bring key services like water supply, sanitation, and public transport under unified city authority to improve coordination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Phased approach: Reforms to be implemented gradually with pilot testing, learning, and scaling.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal finance reforms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improve own-source revenues (e.g., property tax efficiency). ○ Ensure predictable transfers via State Finance Commissions. ○ Promote municipal bonds and market-based financing. • Institutional restructuring: Integrate Parastatal agencies (development authorities, utilities) under city governments to reduce fragmentation and improve accountability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State-level reforms: States need to amend Municipal Acts in line with the framework. • Central support: Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to update Model Municipal Law and provide guidance.
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Way forward

- **Deepen decentralisation:** Ensure real transfer of powers, finances, and functions to ULBs.
- **Strengthen accountability:** Clear division of responsibilities between state & city governments.
- **Capacity building:** Invest in urban governance skills and institutional strengthening.
- **Adopt global best practices:** Learn from models like directly elected mayors and unified metropolitan governance.

Panchayat Advancement Index 2.0

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has released the **Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) 2.0 Report**, highlighting significant progress in grassroots governance and development outcomes across India’s Gram Panchayats. The report reflects improved participation, better service delivery, and strengthened local governance aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

What is Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) 2.0?

- India’s first nationwide data-driven framework to assess Gram Panchayat performance, PAI 2.0 evaluates each of the more than 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats across the country against **150 indicators and 230 data points** spanning **nine thematic areas** under the **Localization of Sustainable Development Goals (LSDGs)** – covering Poverty, Health, Child Welfare, Water, Environment, Infrastructure, Social Justice, Good Governance, and Women’s Empowerment.
 - PAI 2.0 has rationalized the indicator framework from 516 indicators and 794 data points in PAI Version 1.0
- The PAI serves as a robust tool for evidence-based planning, performance monitoring, and incentivising Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Key Highlights Of The Report

- **High participation:** Achieved **97.3% participation** from Gram Panchayats/Traditional Local Bodies, indicating wide adoption.
- **Top-performing states:** Smaller states such as Tripura, Kerala, and Odisha have performed better overall in grassroots governance.
 - A Panchayat from Tripura secured the highest national score (around 88.44), showcasing strong local governance.
- **Lagging states:** Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Rajasthan lag behind in Panchayat performance.
- **Improved outcomes:** Panchayats have shown **notable gains in livelihoods, poverty reduction, and basic services**.

Key Dimensions of Assessment

- **Economic development:** Livelihood generation, income levels, and poverty reduction.

- **Social development:** Health, education, and welfare indicators.
- **Infrastructure and services:** Access to basic amenities and public services.
- **Governance:** Transparency, participation, and institutional capacity.

RTE Act and Social Inclusion

The **January 2026 judgment** (*Dinesh Biwaji Ashtikar vs State of Maharashtra & Ors*) of the Supreme Court of India on the Right to Education (RTE) Act brought renewed attention to the poor implementation of the 25% quota for disadvantaged children in private schools. The Court intervened after multiple reports of **denial of admission, procedural hurdles, and lack of uniform rules across states**, and directed governments to frame binding rules to ensure effective enforcement of the law.

What is Section 12(1)(c)?

- **Reservation mandate:** It requires private unaided (non-minority) schools to reserve **25% of entry-level seats** for children from Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) and disadvantaged groups.
- **Free education guarantee:** These children receive **free education up to Class 8**, with the government reimbursing the private schools.
- **Constitutional basis:** It operationalizes **Article 21A (Right to Education)** and supports equality under Article 14.

Key Provisions of the Judgment

- **Reaffirmation of constitutional vision:** The Court held that Section 12(1)(c) is a **tool for achieving substantive equality**, not merely a welfare measure.
- **Mandatory admissions:** Private schools **cannot refuse or delay admission** once a child is allotted a seat under the RTE framework.
- **No discretion to schools:** Schools are **not allowed to question or override the State's selection process**.
- **Need for binding rules:** The Court directed states to frame **enforceable rules instead of mere guidelines**, as weak implementation was rendering the law ineffective.
- **Structured admission process:** It endorsed a **transparent, stage-wise admission system** (application, scrutiny, and post-admission monitoring).
- **Monitoring by institutions:** Bodies like the **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)** were tasked with oversight and grievance redressal of implementation of the provision.

Significance of the Provision:

- **Promotes social inclusion:** Enables children from diverse backgrounds to **learn together, reducing caste and class barriers**.
- **Creates equality of opportunity:** Converts the right to education into **real access to quality schooling**, not just formal entitlement.
 - Over 5 million children have benefited since its rollout with 90% retention rate.
- **Builds social capital:** Exposure to better peer networks, language, and institutional culture improves **confidence and aspirations**.
- **Breaks intergenerational poverty:** Access to quality education enhances long-term **economic mobility and life outcomes**.
- **Reinforces constitutional morality:** Advances the principle of **equality of status through shared public spaces like classrooms**.

Issues in Implementation

- **Admission barriers:** Complex procedures, lack of awareness, and documentation requirements prevent eligible children from applying.
- **Low seat utilisation:** Many reserved seats remain vacant due to **inefficient processes and poor outreach**.
- **Delayed reimbursements:** States often delay payments to private schools, discouraging compliance.
- **Hidden costs:** Families still bear expenses like uniforms and books, undermining the “free education” principle.
- **Weak grievance redressal:** Lack of effective complaint mechanisms leads to denial of rights without remedy.
- **Uneven implementation across states:** Differences in rules and administrative capacity lead to inconsistent outcomes.

Way forward

- **Frame enforceable rules:** Replace guidelines with **clear, legally binding procedures** for admissions and compliance.
- **Simplify admission process:** Use **centralised digital platforms and help desks** to improve access and transparency.
- **Ensure timely reimbursements:** Adopt mechanisms like **direct benefit transfer (DBT)** to maintain school participation.
- **Strengthen grievance redressal:** Empower bodies like NCPCR with **real-time monitoring and complaint systems**.
- **Remove hidden costs:** Ensure that education remains **truly free for disadvantaged children**.
- **Improve public schools simultaneously:** Strengthen government schools so that **inclusion is complemented by overall quality improvement**.

Energy Statistics India 2026

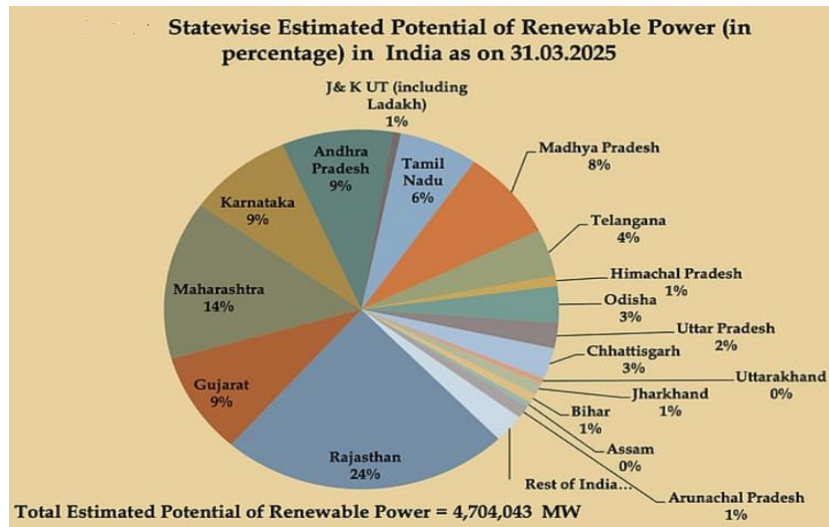
- The **National Statistics Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation** has released its annual publication Energy Statistics India 2026.
- The report provides a broad snapshot of reserves, capacity, production, consumption, trade and sustainability indicators shaping India's energy landscape.

Key Highlights

- India's energy sector is entering a decisive decade, balancing surging demand from a fast-growing economy with an accelerating transition towards cleaner sources.
- With urbanization, industrialization, and electrification deepening, the country's energy trajectory is expected to test both infrastructure resilience and climate commitments in the years ahead.

Rise in Renewable Energy

- India's **total renewable energy generation potential** has reached more than **4.7 million megawatts (MW)**, with **solar energy accounting for around 71%** and **wind close to 25%** as of March 2025.
- The installed-capacity for generating electricity from the Renewable resources has increased from 90,134 Mega Watt as of Mar-2016 to 2,29,346 Mega Watt as of Mar-2025, which is a CAGR of 10.93%
- This is driven by policy support, falling technology costs, and increased private investment.



**** Note:** According to Ministry for New and Renewable Energy total of **283.46 GW** of capacity from non-fossil fuel sources has been installed as on 31.03.2026. This includes **274.68 GW Renewable Energy (150.26 GW Solar Power, 56.09 GW Wind Power, 11.75 GW Bio Energy, 5.17 GW Small Hydro Power, 51.41 GW Large Hydro Power)** and **8.78 GW Nuclear Power capacity**. India stands **3rd** globally in Renewable Energy Installed Capacity

Demand and Consumption Patterns

- Energy demand is rising sharply. **Total Primary Energy Supply (TPES) grew by nearly 3%** in FY25, while **Total Final Consumption** has **increased by around 30%** since FY16.
- The **residential sector recorded the fastest growth in energy use**, followed by the

DOMINANCE OF FOSSIL FUELS

- Despite this progress, the transition away from fossil fuels remains uneven. **Globally, fossil fuels still account for over 90% of energy consumption**, and India reflects this trend, although with faster renewable growth.
- Domestically, **coal, oil and gas** together account for **over 96% of total primary energy supply**, highlighting the scale of transformation required to align with climate goals.
- **Coal** continues to dominate India's energy mix, accounting for nearly **79% of domestic energy supply** in FY25, highlighting the structural reliance on fossil fuels.
- Domestic coal production rose 4.98% year-on-year to 1,047 million tonnes, reflecting steady growth to meet rising electricity and industrial demand. Out of this, **Non-coking coal** accounted for around **93.65% of the total output**.
- Crude oil imports increased, with **import dependence remaining high at nearly 89%**, exposing the economy to global price volatility.
- Natural gas imports rose by 12.3% to 35.72 billion cubic metres, while crude oil imports increased from 234.26 million tonnes to 243.22 million tonnes.
- Coal imports, however, declined by 8.1% to 241.71 million tonnes.



commercial and transport sectors, signalling a shift towards consumption-led demand alongside industrial expansion.

- The **per-capita consumption of energy** over the years has gone up from 15,296 Mega Joule/person in FY16 to 18,096 Mega Joule/person in FY25.
- The utilization of electricity has significantly improved over the years due to **reduction in transmission and distribution losses**.
- Percentage loss due to Transmission and Distribution has reduced **from 22% in FY16 to around 17% in FY25**.

Balancing Security and Climate Goals

- Import dependence remains a key vulnerability. While coal imports declined slightly, natural gas imports rose sharply, and crude oil imports continued to climb.
- This highlights the dual challenge of ensuring energy security while accelerating domestic clean energy deployment.
- Looking ahead, India's energy pathway will depend on how effectively it integrates renewables into the grid while managing legacy fossil infrastructure.
- The government's target of achieving 500 giga-watt of non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2070 sets a clear direction, but execution will determine outcomes.
- Financial flows into clean energy are already rising, with **credit to the renewable sector increasing more than six-fold over five years** (from Rs 1,688 crore in 2021 to Rs 10,325 crore in 2025).
- This trend is expected to intensify as global capital aligns with climate targets and domestic policies incentivise green investments.
- The pace at which coal dependency declines and renewables scale will not only shape domestic sustainability outcomes but also influence global climate trajectories.

Extra mile: Highest Wind Energy Addition

- India achieved its highest-ever annual wind capacity addition of **6.05 GW during FY 2025-26** crossing the landmark of 5.5 GW capacity addition in FY 2016-17.
- This represents an increase of nearly 46% over the capacity in FY 2024–25 marking a significant acceleration in India's onshore wind deployment trajectory.
- With this addition, India's **cumulative installed wind power capacity has crossed 56 GW**.
- **Gujarat, Karnataka, and Maharashtra** have been the primary contributors to capacity addition during the year.
- The milestone reflects renewed momentum in the sector driven by **improved policy clarity, transmission readiness, competitive tariff discovery, a strong project pipeline, and better project execution**.

Government Initiatives to promote wind sector

- Concessional Custom Duty on certain components and raw materials used in manufacturing of wind turbines;
- Graded waiver of Inter-State Transmission System (ISTS) charges till June, 2028;
- Competitive bidding mechanisms;
- Separate wind Renewable Consumption Obligation (RCO) frameworks;
- Technical support from National Institute of Wind Energy.

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2026

- The Parliament has passed the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2026.
- The IBC was enacted in 2016 to create a time-bound mechanism to **deal with companies that default on their loans** — by **reviving them through resolution or liquidating them** if resolution is not possible.

- The amendment seeks to speed up the resolution process and introduces provisions for an out-of-court mechanism, group insolvency and cross-border insolvency.
- The IBC Amendment Bill has a total of 12 amendments, including 11 recommended by the Select Committee and one introduced by the government

Need for the Amendments	Key Changes to the IBC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before this amendment, the IBC had already been amended six times to address various issues and incorporate the needs of the stakeholders. • Over the years, the IBC has improved discipline among borrowers and lenders but has also faced criticism over delays, backlog of cases and low recovery rates for banks. • To address some of these concerns, the Bill to amend the IBC was introduced in August 2025, and referred to a Select Committee. • The committee submitted its report in December 2025 with 11 recommendations. All 11 have been incorporated, along with one by the Ministry of Corporate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to the existing code, the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), which oversees the corporate insolvency resolution process, has 14 days to decide on admitting an insolvency application. • But it often takes months to initiate insolvency proceedings. The amendment attempts to streamline this hurdle at the very first stage. • The NCLT must now admit applications once the default is proven. There are no other conditions except ensuring that the resolution professional faces no disciplinary proceedings and procedural requirements are met. • The Bill provides that an application cannot be rejected on any other ground.

Creditor-initiated Insolvency Resolution Process

- Another major change in the IBC framework is the introduction of the **Creditor-initiated Insolvency Resolution Process (CIIRP).**
- This **provides for an out-of-court initiation mechanism** which can be done **by only specified financial creditors. At least 51% of financial creditors will have to agree** to initiate this process.
- The CIIRP aims to address the problem of unsatisfactory alternatives to insolvency proceedings. The options were either a long, uncertain process under the NCLT with no opportunity for recovery or a weak out-of-court reorganisation process.

Framework for Group Insolvency

- The Bill also introduces a **framework for group insolvency** allowing insolvency resolution of multiple related corporate entities within the same corporate group in a coordinated manner.
- This is aimed at improving efficiency, reducing duplication of proceedings, and maximising value of interconnected businesses.

Cross-Border Insolvency Framework

- A structured framework for cross-border insolvency has been introduced to deal with cases involving assets or creditors in multiple jurisdictions.
- It includes provisions for recognition of foreign proceedings, cooperation between courts, and coordination mechanisms, thereby aligning India's insolvency regime with international standards and improving investor confidence.

Enhanced Role and Powers of Creditors

- The amendment strengthens the role of creditors and the Committee of Creditors (CoC) by giving them greater control over the resolution process.
- It also improves protection for dissenting creditors and enhances enforcement of resolution plans.

Reforms in Liquidation Framework

Changes have been introduced to make liquidation more efficient, including flexibility in the sale of assets (such as sale of individual assets instead of the entire business) and improved recovery mechanisms for lenders.

Inclusion of Guarantors

The amendment expands the scope of insolvency proceedings by including guarantors' assets and strengthening provisions to prevent avoidance of liabilities through fraudulent or strategic transactions.

Other Key Changes

- The bill removes conflicts of interest by disallowing the resolution professional (RP) of a corporate debtor from becoming the liquidator.
- The committee observed that the RP may have a potential “perverse incentive” to favour liquidation over resolution to secure additional fees, as the liquidator’s remuneration is often a percentage of the liquidation estate.
- The bill recommends a three-month timeline for the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) to reduce undue appellate delays.
- The committee recommended adding an explanation to Section 240C to clarify and broaden the term “corporate debtor” to explicitly include any person incorporated with limited liability outside India.
- It also recommended lowering the voting threshold for Pre-Packaged insolvency resolution process (PPIRP) to 51%, and empowering Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) to set timelines and conduct standards for the Committee of Creditors.
- The committee called for **replacing criminal penalties with civil penalties** for offences such as contravention of moratorium or resolution plan and non-disclosure of dispute.

AI powered Tax Administration

India’s Income Tax Department (ITD) has been utilising Artificial Intelligence (AI) in tax administration, under the Project Insight (PI) initiative.

Context

- A key tax policy challenge facing India has been the low tax to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) ratio and high levels of tax evasion.
- On average, during 2001-22, **India’s tax-GDP ratio (16.36%) was the lowest among emerging and developing economies**. India loses around 4.3% of tax revenues due to tax evasion annually.
- Deploying AI in tax administration has several benefits. It can assist tax agencies in accurately assessing taxpayers’ risk profiles and identifying tax evasion. It enables tax administrators to prioritise tax evasion cases based on the size and sophistication of evasion.
- AI can automate routine tax administration tasks, freeing tax administrators to focus on those that require greater human judgment.
- AI can enhance taxpayer services by assisting taxpayers with filing correct tax returns, answering queries through smart chatbots, and preventing tax scams.

Project Insight

- **Launched in 2017** and fully operational in 2019, PI aims to encourage voluntary tax compliance, reduce high-risk cases of potential tax evasion, make tax enforcement fairer and equitable, and reduce prejudice in tax enforcement. It has three components:
- **Income Tax Transaction Analysis Centre (INTRAC)** is the analytical engine that utilises AI and advanced data analytics to process financial data.

- It collates data from multiple sources, including banking and financial institutions, credit card and GST payments, and high-value purchases, to generate a 360-degree **taxpayer financial profile**.
- Such information helps the ITD detect inconsistencies between taxpayers' declared income and their actual financial activities.
- **Compliance Management Centralized Processing Centre** ensures behavioural compliance using information from the INTRAC. It uses campaign management approach to support voluntary compliance and resolution of compliance issues.
- **Non-intrusive Usage of Data to Guide and Enable (NUDGE) strategy** involves sending SMS or email reminders to the person to pay taxes that match their actual economic activities.
 - Taxpayers can either submit a revised tax return or stand by the initial returns they filed.

Concerns and Risks

As India transitions to algorithmic tax governance, several operational, ethical, and legal issues require attention.

- **Data source and quality:** AI systems such as the PI are only as good as the data they are trained on. They could identify outliers but cannot always distinguish evasion from legitimate complexity.
- Data on variable-income professionals, using prior savings, clerical errors, or joint family financial structures can trigger false positives. Without accessible human review, taxpayers must prove the legitimacy of flagged patterns.
- **Algorithmic bias:** AI models trained on historical enforcement data can unintentionally duplicate existing socio-economic or geographic biases, identifying tax fraud more often in some taxpayer or geographic areas than others.
- **Due process:** For an AI-based tax compliance system to be legitimate, taxpayers need to know why they were identified, how their information is used, how the system arrives at its decisions, and have a clear, easy way to challenge decisions.
 - There must be a human-in-the-loop evaluation for any decision with serious consequences for taxpayers.
- **Data privacy and security:** Accessing sensitive financial and personal information about taxpayers creates significant potential for exploitation.

Impact of PI initiative

- Implementation of PI is beginning to show the results. After receiving nudges, many taxpayers utilised the ITD's updated-return feature to make voluntary changes to their original tax returns.
- Since 2020-21, over one crore revised returns have been filed, resulting in an additional Rs 11,000 crore in taxes.
- Out of the 19,501 taxpayers contacted by the ITD as part of a targeted Foreign Income and Assets NUDGE campaign, 62% of them corrected the information originally reported in their tax returns.
- Also, 30,161 tax filers declared overseas assets totalling Rs 29,208 crore and foreign income of Rs 1,089 crore from cryptocurrencies or virtual digital assets.
- The NUDGE campaign covering 6.25 lakh taxpayers resulted in corrections of false claims for income-tax deductions amounting to Rs 963 crore for political donations, and the payment of additional taxes of Rs 410 crore.
- The average time taken to process a tax refund has decreased from 93 to 17 days.
- Recently, using big data analysis and AI tools, the ITD discovered that restaurants across India had suppressed sales turnover of RS 70,000 crore since 2019-20.
- This was done using sophisticated methods such as selective deletion of cash invoices, postbilling modifications, wiping of sales data, and manipulation of bill value.
- Many advanced countries, such as Australia, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States have successfully implemented AI-enabled platforms modelled on the PI and have generated additional revenue.

- **AI Ombudsman:** India lacks an **AI ombudsperson** to review contested decisions. There is also no framework for Algorithmic impact assessments, external audits of risk-scoring models, or public reporting on the rates of false positives and successful appeals.

Without such strong AI governance guardrails, the PI might turn into a hidden surveillance system that compromises accountability and tax system fairness. Thus, India must work on developing a modern tax intelligence system that is both ethical and effective.

Index of Service Production

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has proposed to compile an Index of Service Production (ISP) with 2024-25 as the base year, to measure the output of the formal services sector **every month**.

Index of Service Production

- ISP will cover **sub-sectors** such as wholesale and retail trade, transportation and storage, accommodation and food services, publishing, telecom, consultancy, computing infrastructure, finance and insurance, real estate, and arts, among others.
- **Three primary data sources** will be utilised for compiling the ISP:
 - **Goods and Services Tax (GST) data** utilising monthly outward supplies from GSTN (goods and services tax network) returns.
 - **Administrative data** from sector-specific ministries; and
 - **Annual Survey of Incorporated Services Sector Enterprises (ASISSE)** will supply GVA, turnover, and employment estimates.
- ISP will utilise service **Producer Price Indices (PPIs)** as the **primary deflator**. Where PPIs are unavailable, sector-specific **Consumer Price Indices (CPIs)** will be used.

Context

- The services sector is the most dynamic and rapidly expanding segment of the economy. In terms of economic **significance, the services sector contributes more than half of India's GDP**, generates millions of jobs and has been a major catalyst for the country's economic transformation in the last few decades.
- However, unlike the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) for the industrial sector, at present, there is no Index of Service Production (ISP) to **capture short-term movements in the services sector**.
- Quarterly and advance annual national accounts estimates rely on limited aggregated indicators for broad services groups such as trade, hotels, transport, and financial and IT services, released with lags of 2-23 months.
- To understand how India's services sector is performing, policymakers and economists currently refer to the S&P Global's HSBC Purchasing Managers' Index. However, the PMI is a surveybased sentiment index and does not measure actual output.
- The measurement of the service sector's output on a monthly basis is difficult for a variety of reasons.
- There has been no consistent high-frequency administrative data available for real estate, professional services, retail trade, and health, among other major segments.
- Further, for segments where output data was available – air and rail transport, banking, insurance, etc – their contribution in overall services was under 20%. Within these, data for banking and insurance services was in value terms.
- As a result, the diverse nature of the services sector made standardization of output indicators and compilation a challenging task.

Impact

- It would complement the IIP for holistic economic trend monitoring and provide disaggregated data at the National Industrial Classification (NIC) 2025 two-digit level (*granular insights into various service industries*), covering about 70% of services Gross Value Added (GVA).
 - NIC 2025 updates the previous NIC 2008. (It was first introduced in 1962). It moves from the 5-digit coding structure of NIC 2008 to a **new 6-digit coding structure**.
- It would also provide high-frequency information on the performance of the services sector to strengthen the existing statistical framework to support the analytical and policy framework.

Vulnerability of Global Choke Points Amid War

- The conflict around the Strait of Hormuz has highlighted how modern power still runs through a surprisingly small number of vulnerable trade routes.
- Narrow passages and concentrated systems are once again shaping conflict escalation, energy prices and financial stability far from any battlefield.
- During the First World War, the **struggle over the Dardanelles** was driven by the strategic importance of a narrow waterway linking the Mediterranean (via **Aegean Sea**) to the Black Sea (via **Sea of Marmara**)
- In the Second World War, the **Battle of the Atlantic** was essentially a contest over whether Britain and its allies could keep open the sea routes on which the war depended.
- Choke points did not merely influence those conflicts; they helped determine their outcome.

Geographic Choke Points

- The Strait of Hormuz is one of the world's most critical maritime choke points.
- A similar vulnerability runs through the **Malacca Strait into the South China Sea**. Malacca is the world's busiest oil transit corridor, linking Gulf producers to east Asia's industrial economies, while the South China Sea carries roughly one-third of global shipping making it one of the world's most consequential maritime corridors.
- Any conflict or disruption in the wider region would threaten not just the maritime routes surrounding it, but also global supply chains – particularly those of the semiconductor industry.
- Disruption around the **Strait of Bab el-Mandeb** on the **southern tip of Red Sea**, has already showed how quickly attacks on shipping cascade into freight rates, delivery schedules and food markets.
- Meanwhile, pressure on the **Suez and Panama canals**, combined with conflict in the Red Sea, has extended routes and raised costs across global supply chains.

Subsea Cables

- Global choke points extend beyond commodities to the realm of the internet too.
- Subsea cables carry majority of intercontinental traffic, and Egypt has become one of the critical passage points for cables linking Europe and Asia.
- **More than 90% of Europe-Asia subsea cable capacity runs through the Red Sea** cable corridor. A disruption here would reflect itself through finance, cloud infrastructure and government operations.

Modern choke points

- Beyond maritime geography, global choke points now also include **concentrated industrial and digital systems**.
- Taiwan dominates global foundry capacity and produces most of the world's most advanced logic chips.
- That has turned the **Taiwan Strait** into a double choke point: a shipping corridor on one side, a fabrication bottleneck on the other.
- Any conflict or disruption there would not just hurt trade routes but also cut the supply of components for smartphones to cloud computing and modern vehicles.
- **South Korea is a critical node in memory** – particularly high-bandwidth memory, the technology enabling advanced artificial intelligence systems.
- **Netherlands' ASML is the world's sole commercial supplier of extreme ultraviolet lithography machines**, without which the most advanced semiconductors cannot be massproduced.
- **Rare earths and minerals** that form the components on which high-tech devices rely are also now a critical global choke point.
- **China** is the leading refiner for 19 of 20 important strategic minerals. Thus, the industries meant to define the coming era – batteries, electric vehicles, wind turbines and defence electronics –are exposed to a small set of processing hubs and policy decisions

Climate Change

- For most of the modern era, strategic vulnerability at choke points has been associated with war, piracy or blockades. However, the **Panama Canal** has faced another frequent disruption to trade flows – that of climate change.

- Reduced water levels in the region constrained canal traffic and forced shippers to reroute or wait.
- The drought in Panama shows that a canal does not need to be bombed to become a strategic liability – it can simply run out of water.

Conclusion

- The Iran war has exposed, again, the fragility of a global order built on narrow corridors and concentrated capabilities.
- In quieter times, these choke points are easy to overlook. In wartime, or even prolonged crisis, they reappear as hidden levers of escalation. A missile strike in the Gulf can feed into food prices in Africa and factory schedules in Europe.
- The strategic significance of choke points lies not just in their throughput but in the absence of substitutes.

Unrest in India’s Manufacturing Hubs

- Recently large-scale protests by factory workers in Noida escalated into violence after several days of demonstrations.
- The unrest was not an isolated event but part of a broader pattern of labour protests across multiple industrial centres in North India and highlights structural tensions within the country’s industrial labour ecosystem.

Immediate Cause of Unrest	Structural Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The primary trigger for the protests was the demand for higher wages, particularly due to rising living costs and wage disparities between states such as Uttar Pradesh and neighbouring Haryana. • Workers also raised concerns regarding irregular payments, lack of overtime compensation, and poor adherence to labour standards. • Another significant factor was inflationary pressure and erosion of real wages, with workers reporting that stagnant incomes were insufficient to meet rising expenses. • These economic grievances were compounded by job insecurity, especially among contractual labour, which forms a large part of the workforce in manufacturing hubs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Noida unrest reflects deeper systemic issues in India’s industrial landscape. • A key issue is the prevalence of contractual and informal labour arrangements, which often limit access to social security and weaken bargaining power. • Additionally, compliance gaps in labour regulations, including delayed wage payments and inadequate safety standards, have been recurring concerns. • Industrial accidents and safety violations in factories also indicate shortcomings in enforcement mechanisms. • Urban industrial hubs like Noida also face pressures arising from rapid industrialisation, migration, and rising cost of living, which intensify worker grievances and increase the likelihood of unrest.

Government Response

- In response to the unrest, the Uttar Pradesh government announced measures such as increase in minimum wages and improvements in labour welfare provisions, including overtime compensation and timely payment mechanisms.
- At the administrative level, authorities strengthened policing and institutional mechanisms, including the creation of specialised industrial cells to handle labour disputes and prevent escalation of conflicts.
- Security measures were also enhanced in industrial areas to maintain law and order during subsequent demonstrations.

Broader Implications

- The unrest in Noida has reignited the debate on the sustainability of India's manufacturing growth model.
- It highlights the tension between maintaining global competitiveness through cost efficiency and ensuring fair wages and working conditions for labour.
- From an economic perspective, repeated labour unrest can disrupt supply chains, affect investor confidence, and undermine initiatives such as Make in India.
- At the same time, it highlights the need for inclusive growth that balances industrial expansion with social justice.
- Addressing these issues requires a balanced approach combining labour welfare reforms, effective enforcement of laws, and sustained dialogue between workers, industry, and the state.

Morchella Mushrooms

- The Sher-e- Kashmir University of Agriculture and Sciences and Technology (SKUAST) in Srinagar has cultivated the most expensive and rare edible mushroom called **Morels or Morchella** for the first time in **controlled condition**.
- Locally known as **Kangaech**, it is a highly valued gourmet mushroom known for its intense and distinct flavour, superior nutritional profile and medicinal properties. It costs between Rs 15,000 to Rs 40,000 per kilogram.
- Morchella grows naturally in specific **high elevation forest ecosystems** during a **narrow rainy season**.
- The harvesting of the wild Morchella is a laborious and time-consuming process as gatherers have to search through dense forests in harsh weather conditions.
- The cultivation has been a major scientific challenge especially as the species is known for a **complex life cycle, symbiotic ecological behaviour and highly specific environmental requirements** that makes the artificial cultivation extremely difficult.
- Thus, the cultivation of Morchella in controlled conditions marks a paradigm shift.
- Having a high-export value, the cultivation of Morchella is likely to open new frontiers in high value bioeconomy of Jammu and Kashmir.

FIU-IND and SEBI MoU

- The Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND) and Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) have signed a MoU to deal with money laundering and financial crimes.
- The collaboration will involve **sharing relevant intelligence and information** available in their respective databases.
- It also lays down the procedures and modalities for reporting by *Regulated/ Reporting entities* to FIU-IND under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering (PML) Rules.
- The MoU will also assist in exchange of information with foreign FIU through **Egmont Principles of Information Exchange**.
- It aims to enable both agencies to undertake training programmes for regulated/reporting entities, with a focus on upgrading **Anti-Money Laundering and Combating Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) capabilities** among entities regulated by SEBI.
- Further, both parties shall ensure alignment with applicable international standards and hold quarterly meetings to exchange information and deliberate on issues of mutual interest.

- It also includes assessment of **Money Laundering and Terror Financing (ML/TF) risks** across relevant financial sub-sectors, identification and dissemination of red flag indicators for suspicious transactions, and supervision and monitoring of compliance by reporting entities with obligations under the PML Rules and SEBI guidelines.

Financial Intelligence Unit – India (FIU-IND)

- FIU-IND is an independent body reporting directly to the **Economic Intelligence Council (EIC)** headed by the Finance Minister of India.
- It was established in 2004 as the **central national agency** responsible for receiving, processing and analyzing information relating to suspect financial transactions.
- It also undertakes investigations to pursue global efforts against money laundering and related crimes.

FIU-IND and I4C Sign MoU

- The Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND) and the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) have signed an MoU to enhance information sharing and coordination in **fighting cyber fraud and financial crimes**.
- It acts as an important step in adopting a **whole of Government approach** in fighting cyber-crimes.
- The MoU will assist both agencies in developing operational information and support investigative agencies to prevent financial crimes, protect digital transactions and undertake asset recovery.
- It aims to enable both agencies to establish robust feedback mechanisms.
- It will also facilitate the development and dissemination of guidelines and red flag indicators to financial institutions to strengthen cyber fraud prevention efforts.

Relief Measure for SEZs

- The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has introduced a one-time relief measure allowing **eligible** manufacturing units in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to sell goods in the Domestic Tariff Area (DTA i.e. within India) at **concessional** customs duty rates.
- The move aims to address challenges faced by SEZ units due to ongoing global trade disruptions and weakening export demand.

DETAILS OF THE MEASURE

- The duty concessions have been provided after taking due care to maintain a level playing-field for the units operating within India but outside the SEZs.
- The relief will be effective from **April 1, 2026 to March 31, 2027** and is being implemented through a notification issued under the **Customs Act, 1962**.
- To be eligible, SEZ units must have commenced **commercial production** on or before **March 31, 2025**.
- The goods cleared under the scheme must have a **minimum value addition of 20% over the inputs**.
- DTA sales at concessional rates by the eligible **SEZ units shall not be more than 30% of the highest annual Free On Board (FOB) value of exports** achieved by the unit, in any of three immediately preceding financial years.
- This provision aims to ensure the export-oriented nature of SEZs remains intact.
- Additionally, certain sensitive sectors have been excluded from the scheme to safeguard domestic industry interests.



Impact

- The policy change guarantees that the country's SEZ infrastructure does not lie idle.
- It is aimed at **improving capacity utilisation and achieving economies of scale** without diluting the export-oriented character of SEZs.

- It will reduce export costs and enhance the overall resilience of the SEZ ecosystem and boost global investor confidence.
- At the same time, domestic industry also benefits by utilising available capacity of SEZ and shall have reduced reliance on imports which are getting both delayed and expensive, due to the ongoing war.

SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES (SEZs)

- SEZ is a specifically designated **duty-free enclave** and deemed to be a **territory outside the customs territory of India** for authorized operations.
- They operate under a **distinct regulatory and fiscal framework** to promote trade and investment and serve as engines of export-led growth.
- SEZ units are set up for the manufacture of goods, for rendering of services and providing warehousing services through Free Trade Warehousing Zones. Currently, there are **368 notified SEZs** across India.



IMPACT OF SEZs

- Since the enactment of the **SEZ Act in 2005**, SEZs have played a transformative role in strengthening the economic landscape.
- They have significantly **accelerated export growth** while facilitating **industrial expansion** across sectors.
- Beyond **earning foreign exchange** and **building infrastructure**, SEZs have led to the development of local economies through direct and indirect **employment generation**, **emergence of new business ecosystems**, and **improved socio-economic outcomes**.
- By offering fiscal incentives, streamlined regulatory processes, and modern infrastructure, SEZs have **enhanced India's global competitiveness**.
- They have facilitated the growth of specialized industrial clusters, encouraged innovation and technological advancement, and **positioned India as an attractive and reliable investment destination in the global market**.

DOMESTIC TARIFF AREA (DTA)

- DTA means the whole of India (**including the territorial waters and continental shelf**) but does not include the areas of the SEZs.
- As per the SEZ Act, 2005 goods and services cleared **from SEZ to DTA are treated as imports into the country** and attracts all applicable duties and levies.
- Moreover, **supplies from DTA to SEZ are treated as exports to SEZ** and are eligible for applicable export benefits.

Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0

- The Union Government has notified the Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0 (FoF 2.0) for the purpose of mobilizing venture and growth capital for the startup ecosystem of the country.
- FoF 2.0 builds upon the strong performance of the Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS 1.0), launched in 2016 under the **Startup India Action Plan** to address funding gaps and catalyse the domestic capital for startups.

DETAILS OF FOF 2.0

- The **Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)** will commence operationalization of the scheme as the Implementation Agency (IA).
- In addition, another domestic IA will also be selected to implement the proposed scheme.
- FoF 2.0 will have a **total corpus of Rs 10,000 crore for commitments to eligible Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs)** spread across the 16th and 17th Finance Commission cycles.
- Investments under FoF 2.0 will focus on AIFs supporting priority segments including deep tech startups, early growth stage startups, technology-driven and innovative manufacturing startups, and sector or stage agnostic startups.
- The scheme will follow a structured selection process for AIFs involving screening by a **Venture Capital Investment Committee (VCIC)** comprising of veterans from the startup ecosystem.
- It incorporates robust monitoring and oversight mechanisms. An **Empowered Committee (EC)** will also be constituted to **monitor implementation and performance** of the scheme.
- Provisions for co-investment by government and institutional investors under an umbrella framework have been included with appropriate governance safeguards.
- The operational guidelines and the composition of VCIC will be issued by the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)**.

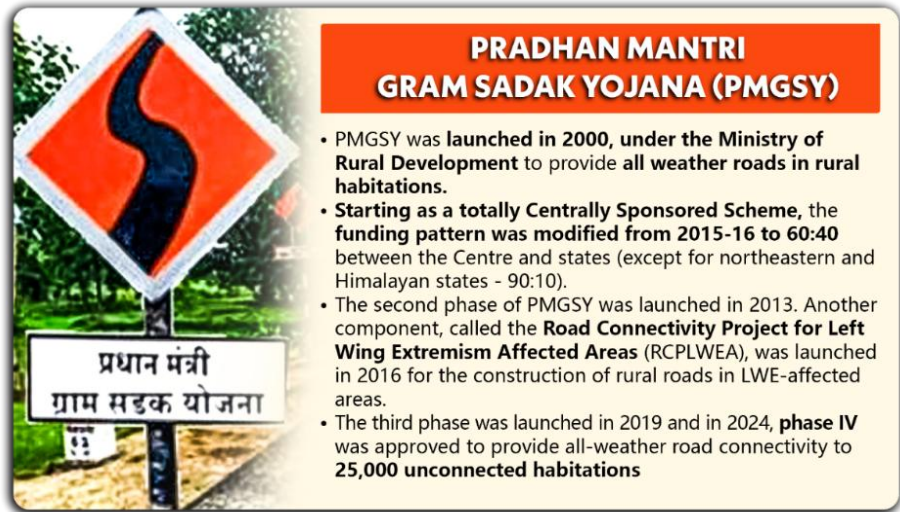


Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana-III Extended

- The Union Cabinet has approved the extension of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana-III (PMGSY-III) **beyond March 2025 up to March 2028**.
 - **PMGSY-III:** Launched in 2019, this phase differs from previous ones by focusing on the consolidation and upgradation of **existing routes** rather than just new connectivity.
- It involves consolidation of Through Routes and Major Rural Links connecting habitations to Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs), Higher Secondary Schools & Hospitals.
- The revised outlay of the scheme will be **Rs 83,977 crore** up from Rs 80,250 crore.

Benefits

- It will significantly **boost the rural economy and trade** by enhancing market access for agricultural and non-farm products, reducing transportation time and costs, and thereby improving rural incomes.
- Improved connectivity will **facilitate better access to education and healthcare institutions**, ensuring timely delivery of essential services, particularly in remote and underserved areas.
- It will also **generate substantial employment opportunities**, both directly through construction activities and indirectly by promoting rural enterprises and services.
- Overall, the extension will contribute to **inclusive and sustainable development** by bridging the rural-urban divide and advancing the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.



Revised Guidelines for TDIP Scheme

The Ministry of Communications has released the revised guidelines for the Technology Development and Investment Promotion (TDIP) scheme of the Department of Telecommunications (DoT)

TDIP scheme (*Central Sector Scheme*)

- The revised TDIP Scheme has a **total outlay of Rs 203 crore** for the **period 2026–31**.
- It has been designed as a **comprehensive support framework** to promote innovation, and enhance India's competitiveness in next-generation telecommunications technologies, including 5G Advanced and 6G.
- It seeks to **enhance India's representation and influence in leading international telecom standardization bodies** such as the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP) and oneM2M.
- It provides financial support to Indian stakeholders for participation in global meetings, submission of technical contributions, leadership roles in study groups, and hosting of international standardization events in India.
 - By supporting Indian contributions in international standardization processes, it aims to strengthen India's position from a **technology participant to a global standard-setter**.
 - At the same time driving creation of intellectual property, enhancing export potential and improving competitiveness of domestic telecom products and solutions.
- It **complements other initiatives** of the DoT, including the Telecom Technology Development Fund (TTDF) and the Bharat 6G Mission, in creating a comprehensive framework for next-generation telecom research, development and deployment.
- Scheme will be **implemented through designated agencies**, including the Telecommunications Standards Development Society, India (TSDSI), Telecom Centres of Excellence, India (TCoE) and Telecommunications Consultants India Limited (TCIL).

Expanded Scope

- The revised guidelines significantly expand the scope of the scheme to include startups, MSMEs, academia, research institutions, telecom service providers and industry players.
- It also supports pilot projects, proof-of-concept initiatives and technology demonstrations to facilitate transition from research to real-world deployment.

Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool

The Union Cabinet has approved the creation of the **Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool (BMI Pool)** with a sovereign guarantee of Rs 12,980 crore.

Significance

- It is expected to **reduce dependence on foreign underwriters**, ensure uninterrupted risk coverage for Indian shipping & insulate India's maritime trade from global volatility
- The move aligns India with major maritime nations such as the **United Kingdom, Japan and South Korea**, which have already established **state-supported insurance frameworks** to safeguard national trade interests.
- It also fits within the broader Maritime India Vision 2030, which identifies the development of robust insurance infrastructure as a key pillar in positioning India as a leading global maritime power.

NEED FOR THE BMI POOL

- India's maritime sector handles over 70% of the country's trade by volume and nearly 95% by value, yet insurance coverage for this vast ecosystem has largely remained in foreign hands.
- This structural vulnerability became evident during recent disruptions in key shipping corridors in the Middle East, when several **global insurers sharply increased premiums or withdrew coverage altogether**.
- This exposed Indian exporters and shipping operators to **increased financial risk and operational uncertainty**.
- Further, there is high dependence of Indian vessels on the International Group of Protection and Indemnity (IGP&I) Club for **protection and indemnity (P&I) insurance** covering third-party liabilities like oil pollution liability, wreck removal, cargo damage, collision liabilities etc.
- The BMI Pool is designed to address these issues by **ensuring continuity of coverage** irrespective of geopolitical developments, thereby **stabilising trade flows and reducing cost pressures** on exporters and logistics stakeholders.



DETAILS OF BMI POOL

- The pool will provide comprehensive coverage for **Indian-flagged and Indian-controlled vessels**, including those operating in conflict-prone international waters.
- It will extend insurance protection to **vessels carrying cargo between international ports and India in both directions**.
- It will cover the physical structure of ships under **hull and machinery insurance**, protect goods in transit through **cargo insurance**, and address third-party liabilities such as crew injury and environmental damage under **P&I coverage**.
- In addition, it will provide **war risk insurance** for vessels operating in conflict zones and high-risk maritime corridors, ensuring Indian shipping remains operational even in volatile regions.



Hydro-Electric Projects in Arunachal Pradesh

- In a major boost to hydro-electric power in Arunachal Pradesh, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved investments worth Rs 40,176 crore to construct two major hydroelectric power projects.
- The **Kamala hydro-electric project** will be constructed at a cost of Rs 26,069.5 crore and the **Kalai-II hydro-electric project** will be constructed at a cost of Rs 14,105.83 crore.

Impact

- The projects will aid peak demand management, contribute to national grid balancing and provide flood moderation in the Brahmaputra basin.

- From both projects individually, Arunachal Pradesh would receive **12% free power** and an **additional 1% earmarked for the Local Area Development Fund (LADF)**.
- The projects will also drive socio-economic development in remote regions through job creation, infrastructure expansion, and improved connectivity.

Project details

- The **Kamala hydro-electric project**, on the Kamala River (tributary of Subansiri), would account for a **total installed capacity of 1,720 MW** and is expected to **generate 6,870 million units of energy annually**. It is expected to be completed in eight years.
 - It spans across Kamle, Kra Daadi and Kurung Kumey districts of Arunachal Pradesh.
 - It is a **joint venture between state-owned NHPC Limited** and the govt. of Arunachal Pradesh.
- In addition to Kamala HEP, other hydropower projects—Subansiri Lower (2000 MW), Dibang Multipurpose (2880 MW) is under construction, and Etalin (3097 MW) is planned for development by NHPC Limited in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The **Kalai-II hydro-electric project**, would have an **installed capacity of 1,200 MW** and would be able to **generate 4,852.95 million units of energy annually**.
 - It is the **first hydro project along the Lohit basin** in Anjaw district of Arunachal Pradesh and is expected to complete in six and half years.
- It is being implemented as a **joint venture between mini-ratna THDC India Ltd (formerly Tehri Hydro Development Corporation) and the state government**.



Record Growth under Startup India

- Government has recognized **more than 55,200 startups** during Financial Year (FY) 2025-26, marking the **highest number of startups recognized in a single year** since the launch of Startup India initiative (2016).
- The number of startups recognized **increased by 51.6% year-on-year in FY 2025-26** compared to FY 2024-25 (36,400), while **direct jobs created rose by 36.1%**, from 3,66,870 jobs to 4,99,400 jobs, during the same period.

Growth under Startup India

- The Startup India initiative was **launched in 2016** with an Action Plan comprising schemes and incentives aimed at creating a robust ecosystem for nurturing innovation, encouraging private investments, and supporting startups across the country.
- Since inception, the **number of recognized startups** has crossed **2.23 lakh** as of March 2026, generating more than **23.36 lakh direct jobs**.
- Nearly **48% of these startups**, over **1.07 lakh**, **have at least one-woman director or partner**, highlighting **growing inclusivity** in the entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- Startups are now present across all States and UTs, with **Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Gujarat** emerging as **leading hubs** in terms of the number of recognized startups and direct employment generation.

Financial and Institutional support

- The Government has further strengthened financial and institutional support through key schemes such as the **Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS), Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS), and Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups (CGSS)**.
- Under FFS, more than Rs. 7,000 crore has been disbursed to over 135 Alternative Investment Funds, which have invested over Rs. 26,900 crore in more than 1,420 startups.
 - Building on this, the Government has notified Startup India **Fund of Funds 2.0** with a corpus of Rs. 10,000 crore.
- Under **SISFS**, 219 incubators have been selected and the entire corpus of Rs 945 crore has been committed. These incubators have approved funding of over Rs 605 crore to more than 3,400 startups
- The **CGSS has been expanded** in FY 2025-26 to enhance capital mobilization by increasing the guarantee cover per borrower from Rs. 10 crore to Rs. 20 crore.
 - By the end of FY 2025-26, more than 410 loans amounting to over Rs. 1,250 crore have been guaranteed.



- Startup-led innovation has also **strengthened intellectual property generation**, with more than **19,400 patent applications filed** by startups. Patent filings increased from over 2,850 in FY 2024-25 to more than 4,480 in FY 2025-26.
- The **Government e-Marketplace (GeM)** has further facilitated startup participation in public procurement. More than **38,600 startups have been onboarded** on the platform.

Orders to startups on GeM (in Rs. crore)	14,103+ (FY 2024-25)	19,190+ (FY 2025-26)
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FTO Ranking

- The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) has released the second phase ranking (April 2026) of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) Approved Flying Training Organizations (FTOs). The first phase of the ranking was published in October 2025.
- The FTO Ranking system **compiled by DGCA** is aimed at strengthening training standards, enhancing safety and promoting accountability across DGCA-approved flying training institutions.
- The larger objective is to **enhance the global competitiveness of Indian FTOs** by encouraging them to align with international benchmarks.
- And to promote self-reliance in pilot training with a call for **Train in India, Fly in India**.
- The goal is to establish a transparent, performance-driven and quality-oriented framework for pilot training in India.
- With several interventions in flying training, the number of Commercial Pilot Licenses (CPLs) issued has increased by more than 2.5 times over the last eight years, with record numbers in 2024 and 2025.
- In the last 18 months, six new FTOs have been permitted, and six more are in the pipeline.

Highlights of FTO Ranking

- One FTO has achieved Category 'A', marking a significant improvement compared to the previous phase where no FTO qualified in this category.
- The number of FTOs in Category 'C' has reduced, and Category 'B' has increased, indicating overall improvement.

Odisha's Marine Spatial Plan

- The Odisha government signed a MoU with the **National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR) under the Ministry of Earth Sciences** to launch a Marine Spatial Plan (MSP) in Odisha for **integrated coastal and marine planning**.
- Sustainable ocean planning has been underway in India since 2019, as part of the **Indo-Norway Integrated Ocean Initiative**.
 - In the **1st phase**, it was taken up in two Union territories, **Puducherry and Lakshadweep**.
 - Odisha has become the first state in the country to implement the MSP in the **2nd phase**.

Odisha Marine Biotechnology Research and Innovation Corridor (OMBRIC)

- In August 2025, the Odisha government launched the **OMBRIC**.
- OMBRIC would complement MSP by promoting marine biotechnology for environmental protection and economic development.
- OMBRIC aims to support the growth of marine biotech startups and enterprises and help in the field of research, ecology protection, scientific tourism and livelihood support to the coastal population.

Western Dedicated Freight Corridor Completed

- The Ministry of Railways has completed the entire Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC).
- It demonstrates that the newly commissioned high-rise electrified, high-capacity double-line infrastructure is fully prepared for seamless and efficient movement of goods

Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs)

- DFCs are **specific routes for freight transportation**, which offer higher transport capacity due to the faster transit of freight trains, running of double stack container trains, and heavy haul trains.
- The Ministry of Railways took up the construction of two DFCs in 2006:
 - The 1,337-km **Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC) from Sonnagar in Bihar to Sahnewal in Punjab;**
 - And the 1,506-km **Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC) from Jawaharlal Nehru Port Terminal in Mumbai to Dadri in Uttar Pradesh.**
- Consequently, in 2006, **Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Limited (DFCCIL)** was incorporated as a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for the construction, operation, & maintenance of corridors.
- The EDFC has already been completed and commissioned in 2024, with feeder routes to different coal mines and thermal power plants.

Current Status and Impact

- DFCs are improving India's GDP and adding significantly to the Indian Railways' revenue.
- The DFCs have created additional paths on the conventional network by diverting freight traffic to EDFC and WDFC. As a result, the national transporter has been able to run additional goods and coaching services over its network.
- The introduction of the DFCs provide great benefit due to **significant reductions in freight costs**, as the **freight trains on DFC are faster, heavier and safer.**
- Reduction in freight cost and travel time due to the DFCs has **helped reduce prices of commodities.**
- More than 10% of freight running of Indian Railways is now handled by DFC.
- Since inception, the DFCs have carried over 232 billion Gross Tonne Kilometres (GTKMs) and 122 billion Net Ton Kilometers (NTKMs) payload.

Marine Spatial Planning

- The MSP is a tool for **sustainable and integrated ocean management** aimed at **boosting the blue economy and strengthening climate resilience.**
- It helps for **sustainable utilisation of marine resources** in energy, economic activities like developing ports, harbours, setting up industries, environment, fisheries, aquaculture and tourism and to formulate policies accordingly.
- As part of the process, the experts analyse the coasts and specify areas for human activities in marine areas to achieve ecological, economic and social objectives.
- This aligns with the Centre's emphasis on the blue economy as one of the ten core dimensions of growth.



MSP in Odisha

- Odisha has a huge coastline of more than 550km featuring lagoons, mangroves and estuaries.
- The state's coastal and marine regions are rich in biodiversity and provide abundant natural resources, which play a vital role in livelihoods, economic growth and environmental balance.
- Due to increasing developmental activities, environmental impacts, and rising sectoral demands, there is a need for scientific management of the marine ecosystem.
- MSP is a timely step in this direction. It will help meet the needs of various sectors while ensuring the protection of marine ecosystems.
- The NCCR will study the components of the water in the entire ocean adjoining Odisha's coast as part of the MoU.
 - It will map the vegetation below the water, which is called **benthic mapping.**
 - It will study the kind of water—its salinity, temperature and other aspects and prepare parameters like areas suitable for tourism activities, fisheries, growing seagrass and seaweeds, and to take up economic activities.
- Appropriate policies can thus be made by the state government, which will aid the development of multiple economic sectors and stakeholders in coastal areas.



- DFCs have also led to a ‘**social-equalising effect**’, with states that have a lower per-capita GDP experiencing significant benefits.

Future Plans

- There are four more such proposed corridors:
 - The east coast corridor from Kharagpur (W.B) to Vijayawada (Andhra Pradesh);
 - East-west sub-corridor-I from Palghar (Maharashtra) to Dankuni (W.B.);
 - East-west Sub-corridor-II from Rajkharsawan (Jharkhand) to Andal (W.B); and
 - North-south sub corridor from Vijayawada (Andhra Pradesh) to Itarsi (M.P)

Sijimali Bauxite Mine

- Violent clashes took place between tribal villagers and police in Odisha’s Rayagada district amid protests against construction of an approach road leading to the Sijimali bauxite mine.
- The tribals’ opposition to the road reflects their discontent against the bauxite project, ever since the mine was handed over to Vedanta Limited in 2023 through an auction.

Details of the project

- Sijimali is part of the **Eastern Ghats hill ranges**. The bauxite reserve, covering an area of 1,500 hectares, is spread over the **Rayagada and Kalahandi districts**.
- It has an estimated reserve of **311 million tonnes of high-grade bauxite**.
- The project has received Stage-1 forest clearance from the Centre and is targeting to commission the mining project next year.
 - Stage-1 clearance is a conditional approval, where the company has to comply with certain conditions, like compensatory afforestation, deposit of funds for diversion of forest land, etc.
- Sijimali is located close to Vedanta’s alumina refinery at Lanjigarh in Kalahandi district, capable of producing 5 million tonnes per annum.
 - **Alumina is refined from bauxite ore** and used to produce aluminium.
 - Aluminium is the **most abundant metal in the Earth’s crust**, and the **third most common element, after Oxygen and Silicon**.
- Aluminium’s strength, lightness and conductivity allow for a variety of uses from making soda cans to aircraft.
- According to the Indian Bureau of Mines’ 2022 Yearbook, **Odisha alone accounts for 41% of India’s bauxite resources**, and was the leading producer in 2021-22, comprising about 73% of the total production.
- Beyond bauxite, Odisha has some of the richest mineral deposits in the country, including high-grade iron ore, coal, nickel, gemstones and graphite, together accounting for nearly 17% of **India’s** total mineral reserves.

RBI Proposes Measures To Prevent Digital Fraud

- In order to curb digital fraud, the RBI has released a discussion paper suggesting additional measures to prevent digital fraud.
- As per National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal Data, around **28 lakh cyber frauds** were reported in the year 2025, **amounting to Rs 22,931 crore**.
- Most of these incidents are authorised **push-payment frauds**, where users themselves initiate transactions under deception, limiting the scope

ONE HOUR WAIT PERIOD FOR HIGH-VALUE TRANSFERS

- Any payment of more than Rs 10,000 to a newly added beneficiary may be **delayed by up to one hour**. This time frame is designed to allow customers to analyse the transaction and **cancel it if they suspect fraud**.
- Users can be allowed to whitelist trusted beneficiaries, enabling instant transfers to frequently used contacts without delay.

ADDITIONAL AUTHENTICATION BY TRUSTED PERSON

- RBI has suggested introducing a **trusted person approval system** for **users aged 70 years and above and differently-abled persons** (persons with disabilities).
- Transfers exceeding Rs 50,000 may require confirmation from a nominated trusted individual before the transaction is processed.
- This trusted individual will act as another layer of authentication for high value transactions.

KILL SWITCH

- Customers can be provided an **emergency ‘kill switch’ function**, which would allow clients to **immediately halt all outgoing digital transactions**.
- Under this option, customers can instantly lock their online banking account via a mobile app or hotline and, thereby, disable fund transfers, digital banking access and payment functions.
- Kill switch can be used in cases such as fraud suspicion, phone misplaced or lost. The switch can disable all UPI, online banking and card-based transactions.

CURB MULE ACCOUNTS

- It has been observed that fraudsters frequently use mule accounts, which are accounts created in the names of gullible people, to route money proceeds of digital frauds.
- In order to control the use of bank accounts as mules, a **cap on annual credits** has been proposed.
- Accounts without Enhanced due diligence (EDD) may face a **ceiling of Rs 25 lakh in annual inflows**, beyond which funds would be held as shadow credits until verified. **Unverified funds could be reversed after 30 days**.

for recovery due to the instantaneous nature of payment systems such as UPI, IMPS, NEFT and RTGS.

- To address this, the central bank has proposed the following key measures and invited stakeholder feedback

Disable Digital Payment Features

- To reduce fraud risks at the account-opening stage, the RBI has proposed that digital payment features such as UPI or internet banking may be disabled by default for newly opened accounts.
- By limiting access during the early phase, regulators hope to reduce the creation of accounts used solely for fraudulent activities.

Customer Awareness and Reporting Systems

Banks and payment service providers may be required to provide clearer fraud alerts, faster reporting channels, and more visible warnings about suspicious transactions.

Truck Mounted Attenuators

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has deployed an advanced safety system - Truck Mounted Attenuators (TMAs) - on several National Highways to enhance safety standards.
- Behind every highway upgrade and maintenance activity are hundreds of workers who operate in challenging and high-risk environments.

- Maintenance and construction zones on busy highways are among the most vulnerable areas, where speeding vehicles and limited visibility can lead to severe accidents.

- To reduce these risks, MoRTH has consistently encouraged concessionaires to adopt advanced safety interventions across highway projects.

TRUCK MOUNTED ATTENUATORS (TMAs)

- TMAs are specially designed **impact-absorbing safety devices** that play a critical role in protecting both workers and road users.
- In the event of a collision, these systems **absorb and dissipate kinetic energy, reducing the force of impact.** This helps:
 - Protect maintenance crews working ahead of the vehicle;
 - Reduce injury risks for occupants of the impacting vehicle;
 - Minimize the severity of accidents in highway work zones.
- Thus, TMAs act like an invisible shield — standing between danger and human life.
- The deployed TMAs are equipped with **high-intensity wig-wag warning lights**, designed to flash in alternating patterns that form directional arrows. These signals provide clear and timely warnings to approaching drivers.
- This feature is especially valuable on high-speed highway corridors, during night-time operations and in foggy or low-visibility conditions.
- By alerting drivers well in advance, it helps prevent collisions before they occur.



Rise in Stagflation Fears

The energy supply and price shock from the ongoing conflict in the Middle East has revived fears of stagflation.

Past Example

- The most famous case of stagflation happened in the early and **mid-1970s** when OPEC (Organisation of

STAGFLATION

- Stagflation is a combination of **stagnant growth and rising inflation**. The term was coined in 1965 **Lain Macleod**, a British MP.
- Most economists typically focus on the three key macroeconomic indicators to assess the health of an economy.
- **Economic output** measured by gross domestic product, the **level of unemployment** and **inflation** (the pace at which the prices of goods and services are rising in the economy).
- The challenge for policymakers, is to facilitate conditions in which output grows at a healthy pace, helping businesses in the economy to create jobs and thus keeping unemployment low.
- Most crucially all this must happen in an atmosphere when prices remain relatively stable (stable inflation).
- However, in the real world, high economic growth generally leads to higher inflation. That's because people are earning more money and are capable of paying higher prices for the same quantity of goods.
- The most difficult problem for policymakers is when inflation runs high even as economic output either stagnates or, worse, shrinks.
- The slowdown in economic activity, in turn, leads businesses to reduce jobs and the resultant situation is termed as stagflation.

Petroleum Exporting Countries), decided to cut supply of oil, which led to a steep increase in oil prices.

- On the one hand, the rise in oil prices reduced the productive capacity of most western economies that heavily depended on oil, thus reducing economic growth.
- On the other hand, the oil price rise also led to inflation and commodities became more costly.
- The net result was stagflation - lower growth, higher unemployment, and higher inflation.

Samridh Gram Initiative Nominated for WSIS Prize

- The **Samridh Gram initiative** has been selected as a nominee for the **prestigious WSIS (World Summit on the Information Society) Prizes 2026** under the Action Line **AL C6: Enabling Environment** category.
- This is a major global recognition of India's efforts to harness digital infrastructure for driving inclusive growth in rural areas.

World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)

- The WSIS Forum is a globally recognized multi-stakeholder platform focused on **advancing digital development and facilitating inclusive information societies**.

SAMRIDDH GRAM INITIATIVE

- **Samridh Gram: Integrated Phygital Service Delivery Model Enabled by BharatNet**, it is an initiative of the **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)**.
- The **Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF)** is the field operations and community mobilisation partner.
- The initiative establishes **Samridh Kendras** as **one-stop community hubs** delivering integrated **phygital services** that **combine physical infrastructure with digital platforms**.
- Through these Kendras, rural citizens gain seamless access to essential services across healthcare, education, agriculture, governance, financial inclusion, and e-commerce.
- It enables transformative use cases such as telemedicine, smart classrooms, digital governance services, and technology-enabled agriculture.
- It demonstrates how telecom infrastructure can move beyond connectivity to become a catalyst for social and economic empowerment.



- It brings together key stakeholders—including governments, industry, academia, civil society, and international organizations—to collaborate on critical digital issues.
- The WSIS Prizes celebrate innovative Information and Communication Technology (ICT)-driven projects that contribute to sustainable development worldwide.

RBI Revises Business Correspondent Framework

- The RBI has proposed a comprehensive restructuring of the Business Correspondent (BC) framework.
- RBI had set up a committee comprising officials from the RBI, the Department of Financial Services, the Indian Banks' Association (IBA) and NABARD to review BC operations and recommend measures to enhance efficiency.
- Banking correspondents also known as **Business Correspondents** are assigned in remote areas to perform retail banking operations, expanding the reach of banks and helping in financial inclusion.
- Currently, there is no classification among BCs, while the commissions they get paid vary from bank to bank. As of June 2025, there were over 16 lakh business correspondents engaged by various lenders.
- The draft norms released by RBI introduce a differentiated structure for BC outlets, tighten governance norms and formalise remuneration standards to strengthen financial inclusion and oversight. The amendments, once finalised, will come into force from July 1.

- Banks must ensure adequate cash management, risk monitoring and consumer protection safeguards, including display of grievance redressal details and Ombudsman information at BC outlets.

Key Norms Proposed

- The RBI proposed defining **three types of delivery points** — bank branches, Business Correspondent-Banking Outlet (**BC-BO**) and Business Correspondent-Banking Touchpoint (**BC-BT**).
- A **BC-BO will function as a fixed-point service unit**, operating at least four hours a day for five days a week and working exclusively for one bank.
 - Such outlets will be treated as banking outlets for regulatory purposes and will count towards classification of a centre as banked.
- **BC-BTs will offer limited services** such as small-value transactions and remittances with flexible hours.
- The draft norms remove the separate category of Business Facilitators, requiring existing entities to transition to the new structure by September 30.
- It also revises the definition of an **unbanked rural centre** to include centres without a core banking solution-enabled branch or BC-BO.
- Boards must approve BC engagement policies and review operations at least once every six months.
- Furthermore, **banks would remain fully responsible for the acts of BCs** and their sub-agents.
- The framework also proposed a structured remuneration model. BC-BOs would receive fixed and variable pay, while BC-BTs would be eligible only for variable remuneration.
- All BC transactions must be conducted online and integrated with core banking systems, with offline transactions allowed only during temporary disruptions and reconciled the same day.

Skill Development Workshop under VVP

- The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) convened a Capacity Building and Review Workshop under the Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP), themed **Viksit Gaon for Viksit Bharat**.
- The **Vibrant Villages Programme**, a flagship initiative of Ministry of Home Affairs, aims

Outcomes from the workshop

- MSDE laid out a focused and action-driven roadmap to strengthen on-ground implementation.
- Districts will be guided to develop robust project pipelines with clearly defined timelines, training locations, trainers, and target beneficiaries ahead of proposal submission. Emphasis will be placed on rapidly operationalising in-situ training by utilising existing government infrastructure such as schools, ITIs, and community centres to enable swift rollout.
- To address implementation challenges, **enhanced handholding support** will be provided, particularly in areas like proposal development, trainer onboarding, and compliance with scheme norms.
- A structured **coordination framework** will be institutionalised among District Administrations, State Skill Development Missions (SSDMs), Sector Skill Councils (SSCs), and MSDE to ensure continuous monitoring, effective issue resolution, and timely course correction.
- The workshop also facilitated peer learning among districts, highlighting innovative practices and scalable solutions.

to develop 662 villages across Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Ladakh as self-reliant, well-connected first villages of the country.

- In alignment with this vision, MSDE is facilitating locally relevant, demand-driven skilling initiatives to enhance livelihood opportunities in these regions.
- Until now, MSDE has sanctioned 74 skill development proposals under the programme, marking significant progress in operationalising skilling interventions in border districts.

{For more about VVP-II refer The Recitals Feb 2026}

Land Inequality In Rural India

- The World Inequality Lab released a paper titled **Land Inequality in India: Nature, History, and Markets**.
- The World Inequality Lab (WIL) is a research laboratory based primarily at the Paris School of Economics (PSE).

- The paper draws its findings from the **Socio-Economic Caste Census conducted in 2011**, which covered **650 million individuals** from 270,000 villages across 10 of the largest states of India accounting for **~75% of the rural population**.
- The 10 states covered are Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and West Bengal.

Land Ownership Pattern

- Agricultural productivity is strongly associated with higher land inequality. Villages with **more favourable**

Key findings

- Land ownership in rural India is highly concentrated with the **top 10% of households owning 44% of total land area**, while **46% of rural households are landless**.
 - Further, the top 5% households own 32% of land,
 - Top 1% holds **18% of rural land**.
- **Bihar and Kerala** stand out among states for their high levels of land concentration in terms of **top 10% or 5% or 1% ownership**.
- Among the landed households the **average size of a landholding is 6.2 hectares**.
- However, 28.9% of land is held by households with 0-1 hectares, and 48.6% by households with 1-2 hectares.
- Large landholders dominate land ownership in many villages with **on an average the largest landholder controlling about 12% of village land**.
- In 3.8% of villages the largest landholder owns more than 50% of the land. Bihar and Punjab have the highest share of villages in which a single landlord owns more than half of the available land.
- **Punjab**, known for its highly developed commercial agriculture sector, has the **highest level of landlessness at 73%**.
- As per the all-household Gini measure, **Kerala has the highest Gini coefficient at 90**, followed by Bihar, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, each with a Gini coefficient of around 80.
- Karnataka and Rajasthan have the lowest Gini coefficient of below 65. **A lower Gini coefficient indicates a more equal distribution of income or wealth** within a population, meaning a smaller gap between the rich and poor.
- Excluding landless population reduces the Gini coefficient for all states, and reduces variation across states, indicating that landlessness contributes significantly to the all-household Gini measure.

agro-ecological conditions tend to exhibit greater land concentration, increasing the share of land controlled by large landowners.

- Villages with **higher shares of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population** have substantially **higher levels of inequality**, driven entirely by landlessness.
- The **impact of historical institutions** on land distribution is strongly persistent. Villages falling **under the direct-rule of British colonialism tend to have higher land inequality** compared to those which were under Indian rulers in princely states.
- The **‘market access’ variables also indicate land inequality**. Villages in closer vicinity to towns, large highways, and railroad stations have greater inequality. Additionally, villages with a bank or an agricultural market (mandi) have higher inequality.

Syngas in Steel Production

- Recently, syngas (synthesis gas) was utilised in steel production industry (by Jindal Steel) to counter the shortage of natural gas, Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) and propane, enabling the company to sustain operations amid supply disruptions.
- Syngas, is primarily **composed of carbon monoxide and hydrogen**, with small amounts of carbon dioxide and methane.
- The name comes from its use as an intermediate product in synthesising other chemicals and fuels.
- It is produced through a process called **gasification** — the partial combustion of a carbon-containing feedstock (coal, biomass, natural gas or solid waste) at high temperatures.
- It is a **clean-burning fuel** that offers a way to convert waste and biomass into valuable energy, acting as a **circular energy source**.
- It is used to **produce ammonia, methanol, and synthetic liquid fuels**.

- It can also be burned directly as a fuel in **power generation** or used in **fuel cells** after undergoing hydrogen purification.
- Jindal Steel has pioneered syngas injection into its blast furnace, reducing dependence on imported coking coal and lowering carbon emissions per tonne of steel.

RBI Tightens Bad Loan Rules

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has **revised the rules governing classification of bad loans**, definition, and recovery, to align with globally-accepted standards, effective April 1, 2027.

Impact

These directions are intended to further strengthen credit risk management practices, improve comparability across regulated entities, and align the regulatory framework more closely with internationally accepted financial reporting principles.

New rules

- According to the new rule, if one loan of a borrower with many loans is considered NonPerforming Asset (NPA), all the loans will also be considered NPA.
- The basis for **classifying a loan as NPA**, however, remains at **90 days overdue**.
- An NPA borrower will be **considered a standard asset only on repayment of entire arrears of interest and principal** pertaining to all the credit facilities.
- The new regulation also directed banks to establish automated systems to identify NPAs, a change from the older ways when banks tagged NPAs manually.
- The RBI also changed the way provisions are calculated to provide for potential NPAs.
- The new framework of **Expected Credit Loss (ECL)**, will calculate loss allowance based on **three stages**, ranging from no or low credit risk, a significant increase in credit risk, and the **final stage being credit impaired**.
 - The new method is stricter compared to the earlier method, called the Incurred Loss, where provisions are created only after a loan has been recorded as 90 day overdue.
- The RBI also introduced the **effective interest rate (EIR) as a measure to calculate ECL**, a change from the earlier contractual interest rate.
 - The EIR shall be estimated based on the expected cash flows by considering all the contractual terms of the financial instrument except the potential credit loss.
- While loans beginning April 1, 2027, will come under the EIR regime, banks have been given time to change their legacy loans to the new method by March 31, 2030.

E-PRAAPTI

The Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) is launching E-PRAAPTI (EPF Aadhaar-Based Access Portal for Tracking Inoperative Accounts). It is a digital initiative aimed at addressing the issue of **unclaimed and inoperative provident fund accounts**.

Background

- A significant number of EPF accounts in India have become inoperative over time, primarily due to job changes, migration, or the absence of a unified identification mechanism before the introduction of the **Universal Account Number (UAN) in 2014**.
- Many such accounts have remained unclaimed, leading to accumulation of idle savings.
- EPFO has a total of 31.83 lakh inoperative accounts, of which around 41% have been inoperative for over 5-10 years while about 22% are lying idle for over 20 years

E-PRAAPTI

- The portal is designed as a comprehensive digital platform to facilitate identification, tracking, and activation of old EPF accounts.
- In the initial phase, the portal will be **member ID** based and later the scope of E-PRAAPTI will be expanded to include members who may not be able to recall or access their old members' IDs.
- It uses **Aadhaar-based authentication** to provide secure access to members, enabling them to retrieve accounts even if they are not linked to a UAN.

- The portal allows users to update their personal details, link their accounts with UAN, and initiate activation processes in a seamless and paperless manner.

Impact

- The initiative is expected to unlock large volumes of unclaimed provident fund deposits, bringing idle savings back into the formal financial system.
- This has implications for both individual financial security and broader economic efficiency, as it improves utilisation of household savings.
- It enhances transparency and empowers workers, especially those in the informal or semi-formal sectors, by providing easier access to their retirement benefits.
- It also reduces dependency on intermediaries and minimises procedural delays.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

India Slips to 6th Largest Economy

- According to the IMF's latest World Economic Outlook (WEO), India is no longer the 4th largest economy in the world.
- In 2026, India's GDP is projected at **\$4.15 trillion (up from \$3.92 trillion in 2025)**, falling behind both **Japan (\$4.38 trillion)** and the **UK (\$4.27 trillion)**, pushing India to the **6th position** globally.

India's Economic Ranking — A Timeline

- **2022:** India overtook the UK to become the 5th largest economy — a milestone celebrated given the history of British colonial rule.
- **2025:** Niti Aayog CEO declared India had overtaken Japan to become the 4th largest economy.
- **2026:** India has slipped to 6th place, behind the US, China, Germany, Japan, and the UK.
 - Notably, Germany overtook Japan before India could overtake Germany — an unexpected development that disrupted earlier projections.

BVR Subrahmanyam

Why Did India Slip?

- **Revision of GDP Base Year**
 - In February 2026, India updated its GDP estimates with a new base year. The revision revealed that the previous GDP series had been overestimating India's GDP.
 - As a result, India's GDP for 2025-26 was rolled back from ₹357 lakh crore to ₹345 lakh crore in rupee terms.
 - This alone reduced India's dollar-denominated GDP from \$4.1 trillion to \$3.9 trillion, allowing Japan to overtake India.
- **Depreciation of the Indian Rupee**
 - The rupee has rapidly lost value against the US dollar over the past year.
 - What makes this worse is that this depreciation happened even as the dollar itself weakened against other major currencies like the British pound and the Japanese yen.
 - This double effect — a weaker rupee against a weaker dollar — significantly expanded the gap between India's GDP and that of Japan and the UK when measured in dollar terms.

How IMF Calculates GDP Rankings?

- The IMF arrives at dollar-denominated GDP using two data points — a country's GDP in local currency and the exchange rate with the dollar.
- India suffered setbacks on both counts simultaneously, making the ranking decline sharper than it might otherwise have been.

Will India Recover?

- According to IMF projections, the setback is temporary. India is expected to:
 - Retake 4th place in 2027, overtaking both UK and Japan.
 - Overtake Germany to become the 3rd largest economy by 2031.
- The close clustering of economies around the \$4 trillion band means India's strong growth trajectory — driven by domestic demand, demographic dividend, and structural reforms — will reassert itself in the medium term.

Global GDP Landscape (2026 Projections)

- Two important observations stand out.
- First, the US and China are in a league of their own — the US economy alone is larger than all the European Union (EU) member states combined.
- Second, the next four economies — Germany, Japan, UK, and India — are very closely bunched around the \$4 trillion mark, meaning small changes in exchange rates or growth estimates can significantly alter rankings.

Rank	Country	GDP (2026)
1	United States	\$32.38 trillion
2	China	\$20.85 trillion
3	Germany	~\$4.5 trillion
4	Japan	\$4.38 trillion
5	United Kingdom	\$4.27 trillion
6	India	\$4.15 trillion

Conclusion

- India's slip to 6th place is a **statistical and currency-driven setback** rather than a reflection of any fundamental weakness in the economy.

- The GDP base year revision corrected an overestimation, and the rupee's depreciation amplified the effect in dollar terms. However, the underlying growth momentum remains intact.
- The episode offers an important lesson — GDP rankings in dollar terms are sensitive to exchange rate movements and statistical methodologies, and should not be read in isolation from real economic performance.

Gulf States Non-Retaliating Against Iran's Missile Attacks

Although Iran's missile and drone attacks hit several Gulf states hosting U.S. bases—such as the UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman—these countries have not launched direct military retaliation for several interconnected reasons.

1. Desire to avoid full-scale war

- Gulf states fear that open retaliation could trigger a **wider regional war** with Iran, which would severely damage their economies, energy exports, and global trade routes through the Strait of Hormuz.
- They prefer to act through the U.S. and regional allies, letting Washington lead the military response while they focus on defense (air defenses, missile interception, and base protection) and avoid direct proportional strikes.

2. Heavy dependence on U.S. security

- Countries like Qatar, UAE, Kuwait, and Bahrain host major U.S. bases and rely on American air power, intelligence, and security guarantees.
- Instead of unilateral retaliation, they usually coordinate with the U.S. and issue joint statements condemning Iran and pledging “all necessary measures” in response, effectively leaving the strike role to Washington.

3. Economic and brand considerations

- Gulf states see themselves as global financial, tourism, and business hubs; open war with Iran would scare off investors, damage tourism, and disrupt shipping and oil exports.
- Leaders therefore emphasize diplomacy, restraint, and mediation (for example via Oman) while strengthening air defenses and intelligence sharing.

4. Mixed messaging and domestic politics

- Some Gulf governments face **public pressure to “stand up” to Iran**, but also risk angering their large expatriate workforces and trading partners if a war escalates.
- So, they publicly condemn Iran's attacks, call them “a flagrant violation of sovereignty”

5. Internal and Regional Political Calculations

- Retaliating against Iran could be seen as **siding with the US–Israel bloc** against a **regional Islamic country**, which may create domestic and regional backlash. Many states prefer maintaining a neutral or balanced stance.

Conclusion

- Many Gulf states, especially Qatar and Oman, have actively pushed for **de-escalation and diplomatic solutions**, even lobbying against use of their territory for attacks on Iran.
- Hence, the Gulf states' non-retaliation reflects a **calculated strategy of restraint**, driven by security vulnerabilities, economic risks, and diplomatic balancing, rather than weakness.

New PM of Hungary

- **Péter Magyar's** Tisza party won a resounding victory in Hungary's general election, defeating Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party after sixteen years in power.
- The result is significant not just for Hungary but for European geopolitics, given Orbán's role as Russia's key ally within the European Union.
- Orbán's defeat is remarkable because it overcame the extensive **institutional architecture he had built to prevent such an outcome** — including media control, political cronyism, electoral system manipulation, and sustained Russian disinformation efforts.

Significance of this Result

- **Reducing Russian Influence** – Now the focus will be on removing **Russian-linked networks** in key institutions.
- **Re-engagement with Europe** - Likely to strengthen ties with the European Union. Expected to lift Hungary's veto on EU aid loan to Ukraine.
- Hungary's 2026 election represents a **turning point in European politics**, demonstrating that entrenched regimes can be challenged through democratic mobilisation.
- However, Péter Magyar now faces the complex task of translating electoral success into **sustainable governance and systemic reform**.

Operation Wings of Dawn

- Israel airlifted around 240 members of the **Bnei Menashe community** from India to Israel under '**Operation Wings of Dawn**', amid ongoing conflict in West Asia.
- This has drawn attention to India's travel advisory for Israel (GoI has issued warnings citing the "prevailing security situation" in Israel.)
- This is the first large-scale relocation of Bnei Menashe during an active conflict. It highlights religious migration continuing despite geopolitical risks.

B'nei Menashe

- The B'nei Menashe are a community of approximately 7,000 people from the **Mizo and Kuki tribes** of Manipur and Mizoram, who claim descent from **Manasseh** — one of the ten lost tribes of Israel exiled by Assyria around 722 BCE. Their name literally means "sons of Manasseh."
- Exposure to biblical narratives through 19th-century Protestant missionaries and a pivotal 1951 vision by **Mizo mystic Chhalianthanga (Mela Chala)** catalysed a gradual shift from Christianity toward Judaism.
- With support from Israeli organisation Amishav, many formally adopted Judaism.
- Migration to Israel began in the 1990s, and recently 240 members arrived in Tel Aviv under the first Israeli government-backed official relocation programme — marking a significant new phase in their journey toward their claimed ancestral homeland.



Japan's Shift from Pacifism to Proactive Defence Policy

- Japan has **relaxed restrictions on arms exports**, marking a significant move away from its post-World War II **pacifist framework**. However, exports remain restricted to countries not engaged in active conflict, unless national security demands otherwise.
- The decision was taken under Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi amid rising regional security concerns.

Strategic Drivers Behind the Move

- **Rising Security Threats**
 - Growing concerns over China, North Korea, and Russia.
 - Increasing tensions in the Indo-Pacific, including around Taiwan.
- **Changing Global Order**
 - Perceived decline in reliability of the United States as a sole security guarantor.
 - Ongoing conflicts like Iran and Ukraine straining global security systems.
- **Strengthening Deterrence**
 - Aim to build a global arms supply chain among democratic nations.

- o Enhance regional and global deterrence capabilities.

Japan's pacifist principles

- Japan's pacifism is rooted in **Article 9** of the 1947 Constitution, adopted after World War II.
- It is often called the “**no-war clause**”, forming the basis of Japan's post-war security policy.
- **Core Principles**
 - o **Renunciation of War** - Japan renounces war as a sovereign right. Rejects the use or threat of force to settle international disputes.
 - o **No War Potential** - The Constitution states that land, sea, and air forces will not be maintained. Also prohibits creation of any war-making capability.
 - o **Defensive-Only Policy** - Japan follows a “passive defence” approach. Use of force is allowed only in self-defence when attacked. Military capabilities are restricted to the minimum necessary for protection.

Israel's 'Yellow Line': Redefining Security Boundaries Across the Levant

- Israel has introduced a “**Yellow Line**” buffer zone in southern Lebanon (potentially up to the Litani River) during a ceasefire.
- The move allows control over civilian movement, dismantling of militant infrastructure, and strikes beyond the zone—indicating a shift in its security doctrine.



Concept of the Yellow Line

- **Origin and Evolution**
 - o Emerged during the **Gaza war (October 2025)** as a military boundary.
 - o Initially temporary, it is now evolving into a **semi-permanent defensive feature**.
- **Strategic Purpose**
 - o Acts as a **forward defence mechanism**.
 - o Aims to prevent groups like Hamas and Hezbollah from regrouping near Israeli borders.
- **Shift in Military Doctrine**
 - o Transition from **mobile warfare to static, fortified defence**.
 - o Establishment of permanent infrastructure such as bunkers, towers, and troop deployments.
- **Key Features**
 - o Creation of deep buffer zones inside hostile territory.
 - o Displacement of civilians and dismantling of militant infrastructure.
- **Humanitarian and Legal Concerns**
 - o **International Criticism** - Seen as a possible violation of international humanitarian law. Reports of civilian casualties and continued strikes near the zone.
 - o **Impact on Civilians** - Restricts Palestinians to limited areas, affecting access to land and resources. Allegations of forced displacement and “ghettoisation.”
 - o **Strategic Risks** - Static positions may expose troops to **guerrilla attacks and sniper fire**.

Why China Is Less Affected by the West Asia Energy Crisis?

The ongoing Israel–US–Iran conflict has triggered fuel shortages and panic in India. However, China has remained relatively insulated, raising questions about its resilience.

<p>Strategic Energy Security Measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackling the “Malacca Dilemma” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ China reduced dependence on the Strait of Malacca for energy imports. ○ Built large Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR) with ~120 days of storage. ○ Capable of sustaining supply even if routes like the Strait of Hormuz are disrupted. • Diversification via Pipelines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Developed oil and gas pipelines from Central Asia and Russia. ○ Around 20% of crude imports now come through these routes. ○ Supported by strong state-owned firms like Sinopec, CNPC, and CNOOC. 	<p>Proactive Global Energy Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overseas Investments and Contracts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Secured long-term energy contracts globally. ○ Invested in conflict-prone but resource-rich regions (e.g., Africa). ○ Ensured diversified and stable supply chains. • Contrast with India <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ India’s pipeline projects like IPI (Iran-Pakistan-India) and TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) remained stalled, limiting diversification.
<p>Climate and Energy Transition Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean Energy Expansion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Invested heavily in: Solar and wind energy; Energy efficiency; Carbon capture; Electric mobility. ○ Built a strong foundation for reduced fossil fuel dependence. • Large-Scale EV Adoption <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Nearly 50% of cars sold in 2025 were EVs. ○ Supported by subsidies, mandates, and policy incentives. 	<p>Domestic Factors Reducing Energy Demand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Slowdown <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Growth target reduced to ~4.5-5% (2026). ○ Slower industrial activity lowers energy consumption. • Structural Economic Shift <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Decline in sectors like construction, steel, and cement. ○ Gradual transition away from being the “world’s factory.”

Conclusion

China’s resilience in the current energy crisis is not accidental—it is the result of long-term planning, diversification, technological investment, and structural economic shifts, allowing it to remain comparatively stable while others face immediate disruptions.

India-Zambia Critical Minerals Talks

India's negotiations with **Zambia over critical minerals mining rights** have stalled due to a lack of assurances from Lusaka (Capital of Zambia) on securing mining rights, even as India has already completed an initial geological exploration of the allocated area.

Background

- India was allocated **9,000 sq km** in Zambia for mineral exploration.
- Focus minerals: **Cobalt** and **Copper**.

- Indian geologists conducted surveys and collected mineral samples. The programme was planned for three years, after which private sector participation was expected.

Reason for Stalemate

- Zambia has not provided clarity or guarantees on future mining rights. This uncertainty has stalled further progress.
- India is attempting to **restart discussions**, but the outcome remains unclear.

Cobalt & Copper - Why Are These Minerals Critical?

- Cobalt is a key component in batteries for electric vehicles (EVs) and mobile phones, making it central to India's clean energy and digital economy ambitions.
- Copper is indispensable for power generation, electronics, and construction — sectors at the heart of India's infrastructure push.
- India is almost **entirely dependent on cobalt imports**, with cobalt oxide shipments rising 20% in 2024-25 to 693 metric tons.
- On copper, India's vulnerability has grown sharply since the **2018 closure of Vedanta's Sterlite Copper smelter in Tamil Nadu** — copper imports have since risen to 1.2 million metric tons in FY2024-25, up 4% from the previous year.



India Rebutts USTR Probe

- India has responded to **Section 301 investigations by the United States** on “excess capacity” and “forced labour,” defending its trade practices amid the possibility of renewed high tariffs.
- In March 2026, the USTR launched Section 301 investigations against India and several other nations, targeting "structural excess capacity" in manufacturing and alleged failures to curb forced labor in supply chains.

Broader Context

Trade Policy Implications

- Section 301 reflects the use of unilateral trade tools to pressure partners.
- Challenges the principle of comparative advantage in global trade.

India–U.S. Economic Dynamics

- Relationship marked by both **strategic cooperation and trade friction**.

Structural Nature of Trade Deficits

- Highlights that trade deficits arise from **macro factors** rather than just trade practices.
 - US Dollar's role as the primary global reserve currency, which allows the US to sustain chronic deficits by borrowing easily and consuming more than it produces.

India's Response on Excess Capacity

- **Trade Surplus Is Not Unfair Practice** - India argues that **bilateral trade imbalances are natural outcomes** of global trade dynamics.
- **Role of the U.S. Dollar** - The dollar's status as a **global reserve currency** enables the U.S. to sustain trade deficits. Thus, the surplus reflects **systemic global factors**, not Indian policy.
- **Export Structure Argument** - India's exports are largely **domestic-demand driven** (low export-to-GDP ratio of ~12%). India accounts for only a **small share of U.S. imports (3.1%)**, weakening claims of overcapacity.

India's Response on Forced Labour

- India highlighted that it has ratified both the **Forced Labour Convention, 1930 and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957** under the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which mandate the prohibition of forced labour in all forms.
- This positions India's labour laws as internationally compliant and the investigation as lacking a credible legal foundation.

Conclusion

- India's response underscores its position that global trade imbalances are structurally driven and that its policies comply with international norms, even as trade tensions with the U.S. persist.

{For more details on **Section 301 Investigation into India** refer *The Recitals – March 2026*}

India Expands OCI Eligibility in Sri Lanka to Sixth Generation

During a two-day visit to Sri Lanka, Vice-President C. P. Radhakrishnan announced expansion of **OCI (Overseas Citizen of India)** eligibility to the **6th generation** of the Indian diaspora.

Expansion of OCI Eligibility: Key Highlights

- **Policy Change** - Eligibility extended from 4th to 6th generation in Sri Lanka.
- **Implementation** - Based on documents issued by Sri Lankan authorities, simplifying the process.
- **Impact** - Expands coverage of the Indian diaspora in Sri Lanka. Deepens long-term people-to-people connections.
- **Development Cooperation and Assistance Discussed**
 - **Indian Support to Sri Lanka** - Emphasis on ongoing projects, including: \$450 million Cyclone Ditwah aid package
 - **India as a “First Responder”** - Sri Lanka acknowledged India’s role in: 2022 economic crisis assistance; Disaster relief and humanitarian support.

What is OCI Card?

- **Definition:** OCI scheme provides **long-term residency and travel privileges** to **foreign citizens of Indian origin**.
- **Introduced:** In 2005 through amendments to the Citizenship Act, 1955.
- **Nature:** It is **not dual citizenship**, but a form of permanent residency with special privileges.

Key Features of OCI Scheme

- **Lifelong visa:** Multiple-entry, lifelong visa to visit India without repeated applications.
- **No registration requirement:** Exempt from police registration for long stays.
- **Parity with NRIs:** Enjoys benefits in education, economic, and financial sectors similar to Non-Resident Indians (NRIs)
- **Restrictions:**
 - No voting rights or political participation.
 - Cannot hold constitutional posts.
 - Cannot purchase agricultural land.

Govt. Notified 14 More Seaports for e-Visa Entry

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has **designated 14 additional seaports as immigration check posts (ICPs)** for foreign nationals holding e-visas.
- **Newly Notified Seaports**
 - **Gujarat (7 ports):** Alang, Bedi Bandar, Bhavnagar, Porbandar, Hazira, Pipavav, Mandvi
 - **Tamil Nadu:** Cuddalore, Nagapattinam, Tuticorin
 - **Andhra Pradesh:** Kakinada, Krishnapatnam
 - **Odisha:** Paradip, Dhamra
- **Overall ICP Network**
 - Total 114 Immigration Check Posts (ICPs) across air, sea, land, rail, and river routes.
 - 37 ICPs at seaports currently.
 - E-visa entry permitted through: 32 airports; 33 seaports

E-Visa System: Features and Coverage

- **Eligibility** - Available to citizens of 207 countries. Exclusions: China, Pakistan, Yemen, Iran

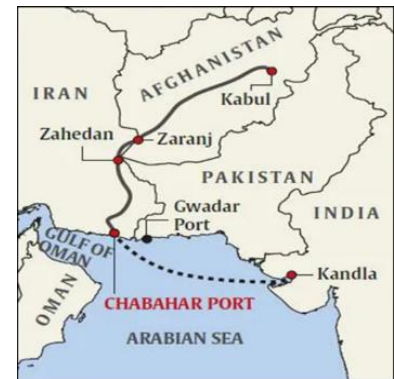
- **Categories** - Tourist, Business, Medical, Medical Attendant, Student, Family, Transit, Miscellaneous and Production Investment
- **Validity** - Ranges from 1 month to 5 years
 - E-visa is not visa-on-arrival; it requires prior online approval.

U.S. Sanctions Waiver on Chabahar Port Ends

- India's most ambitious connectivity project in its extended neighbourhood — the **Chabahar Port in Iran** — faces a potential dead end after the US sanctions waiver on the project **expired on April 26, 2026**, with no signs of renewal.
- This comes amid the ongoing **US-Iran war**, the **US naval blockade of Iranian ports**, and Iran's claimed control over the **Strait of Hormuz** — all of which have severely complicated India's strategic calculus in the region.

What is Chabahar Port?

- Located in **southeastern Iran on the Gulf of Oman**, Chabahar port comprises two terminals — **Shahid Kalantari** and **Shahid Beheshti**.
- India has been involved in developing the **Shahid Beheshti terminal**.
- The port has been the centrepiece of India's hopes of building a **trade and transit corridor** with landlocked Afghanistan and Central Asia for over two decades.



Strategic Importance for India

- **Bypassing Pakistan**
 - Chabahar allows India to circumvent Pakistan using a maritime route, then road and rail transit through Iran to Afghanistan and Central Asia.
- **Countering Gwadar**
 - In November 2016, Pakistan inaugurated the China-funded deep-sea port of Gwadar at the mouth of the Gulf of Oman, ~140 km east of Chabahar.
 - India has long feared that China's influence at Gwadar could be used to challenge India economically or militarily through maritime operations.
 - Chabahar gives India a strategic presence that outflanks Gwadar and mitigates these risks.
- **INSTC — The Broader Connectivity Vision**
 - Chabahar is the southern node of the **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** — a 7,200 km network of railroads, highways, and maritime routes connecting Russia and India through Iran.

History of India's Chabahar Engagement

- India and Iran first agreed to develop the port in 2003, but waves of US sanctions on Iran halted progress.
- Talks revived after Washington eased sanctions under the 2015 Iran Nuclear Deal (JCPOA- Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action).
- In 2016, PM Modi visited Tehran, announced a plan to build and operate Chabahar, and pledged to invest \$500 million.
- The port became minimally operational before Trump withdrew from JCPOA in 2018 and reimposed sanctions on Iran.
- India subsequently secured a sanctions exemption from Trump's first administration to continue developing Chabahar — primarily because Afghanistan (then under a US-backed government) needed Indian aid shipped through the port.

SUMMITS AND ORGANISATIONS

Asia Zero Emission Community Meeting

- Amid disruptions in the **Strait of Hormuz**, India and Asian partners met under the (Asia Zero Emission Community) **AZEC Plus** framework to address energy supply risks and strengthen regional resilience.
 - The Asia Zero Emission Community (AZEC) is a **Japan-led** initiative launched in 2023 to promote clean energy transition, decarbonisation, and energy security across Asia.
 - It focuses on collaboration among Asian countries to reduce carbon emissions while ensuring economic growth and stable energy access.
- This meeting was convened by the Japanese PM Takaichi Sanae.
- **Context:** disruptions in energy flows through the **Strait of Hormuz**

India's Stand on Maritime Security

- India EAM condemned attacks on merchant shipping as “completely unacceptable.”
- He reaffirmed India's commitment to safe and unimpeded maritime transit.
- He highlighted that global growth depends on stable energy supply chains.

Launch of POWERR Asia Initiative

- The meeting launched a new framework: **Partnership on Wide Energy and Resources Resilience** (POWERR Asia).
- Key features:
 - Emergency financing for crude oil and petroleum procurement
 - Strengthening regional supply chains
 - Building strategic reserves and storage infrastructure
 - Diversifying energy sources (including biofuels)
 - Securing critical minerals
- It is backed by \$10 billion financial support.

BRICS Foreign Ministers Meet

- India, holding the BRICS Chair in 2026, issued a Chair's Summary (instead of a Joint Statement) after the BRICS Deputy Foreign Ministers & Special Envoys on Middle East & North Africa (MENA) met in New Delhi.
 - A Joint Statement is a declaration agreed to by all members of a multilateral grouping — it represents genuine consensus.
 - A Chair's Summary, on the other hand, is a declaration issued only by the host and chair of the grouping — it summarises discussions but has not been agreed to by all members.
- The inability to forge a consensus joint statement reflects deep divisions within BRICS over the US-Israel war on Iran — putting India in a significant diplomatic bind as the grouping's chair & upcoming summit host.

Why Consensus Was Elusive — The Diplomatic Pickle

- The BRICS grouping currently comprises **11 members** — the original five (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) plus Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Indonesia.
- The ongoing US-Iran war has created an impossible triangulation within BRICS:
 - Iran is a BRICS member that has been under sustained US-Israeli military attack.

- Saudi Arabia and the UAE — also BRICS members — host US military bases and personnel, and have themselves been targeted by Iranian missiles and drones.
- The fact that countries on directly opposing sides of the conflict are all BRICS members has made it structurally impossible for India to forge a common position.
- **Iran's Request — and India's Diplomatic Dilemma**
 - In early March 2026, Iran reached out to India — as BRICS Chair — to issue a statement on behalf of BRICS condemning the US and Israeli strikes on Iran.
 - This placed India in a direct diplomatic dilemma. India has consistently maintained a **position of not taking sides** in the ongoing conflict — balancing its relationships with the US, Israel, Iran, Russia, and the Gulf states simultaneously.
 - Issuing such a statement would have aligned India with Iran and against the US — a significant departure from India's strategic autonomy doctrine.

Broader Significance

- This episode illustrates several important themes simultaneously. India's handling of the BRICS Chair during a major geopolitical conflict is a **stress test of its strategic autonomy** — the ability to maintain independent relationships with multiple conflicting powers.
- The BRICS grouping itself is facing a **credibility challenge**, raising questions about the **coherence and effectiveness of an enlarged BRICS**.
- For India specifically, balancing its role as **BRICS Chair** (which requires facilitating consensus) against its **foreign policy doctrine of non-alignment** in active conflicts is a delicate and ongoing exercise in multilateral diplomacy.

BRICS 2026 Presidency

- India will host the BRICS Summit 2026, assuming the leadership of the BRICS grouping for the year.
- The BRICS 2026 Theme is “Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation, and Sustainability”.

SCO Defence Minister Meeting

- The 2026 Defence Ministers’ Meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation was held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, with a focus on regional security, counter-terrorism, and defence cooperation.
- **India’s Key Position: Zero Tolerance Against Terrorism**
 - Defence Minister Rajnath Singh called for a unified and uncompromising approach against terrorism. Urged action against countries that shelter or support terrorists.
 - Emphasised collective efforts to combat terrorism, separatism, and extremism.
- **Significance of the Meeting**
 - Held under Kyrgyzstan’s chairmanship.
 - Marked the 25th anniversary of SCO, highlighting its growing relevance.
 - Reflected the need for coordinated responses in an increasingly unpredictable global security environment.

4TH India-Africa Forum Summit

- External Affairs Minister Jaishankar launched the theme, logo, and website for the fourth India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS-IV), to be held in May 2026, in New Delhi.

- Themed "**IA SPIRIT: India Africa Strategic Partnership for Innovation, Resilience, and Inclusive Transformation**," it emphasizes that India-Africa ties provide stability amid global turbulence.
- **Key Pillars:** Cooperation covers digital technology, energy, agriculture, healthcare, and education.

IOS SAGAR Mission

- Amid escalating **West Asia conflict** and disruptions in the **Strait of Hormuz**, the Indian Navy flagged off **INS Sunayna** as part of the **Indian Ocean Ship (IOS) SAGAR initiative**, reinforcing regional maritime security and cooperation.
- **Concept and Uniqueness**
 - To operationalise its MAHASAGAR vision, the Indian Navy renamed the **Saryu-class patrol vessel INS Sunayna** as **Indian Ocean Ship (IOS) SAGAR**.

- ♣ **MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions)** is India's updated global maritime doctrine, unveiled by PM Modi in 2025.

- ♣ It builds upon the earlier SAGAR initiative by expanding its scope beyond the Indian Ocean to a wider global framework, with a particular focus on engaging the Global South to promote maritime security, economic collaboration, and sustainable, inclusive development.

IOS SAGAR 2025 (First Edition)

It saw the ship visit **Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania), Nacala (Mozambique), Port Louis (Mauritius), Port Victoria (Seychelles), and Malé (Maldives)**, operating with a crew of 44 from **nine countries** — Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, and Tanzania.

IOS SAGAR 2026 (Second Edition)

It has expanded significantly with personnel from 16 nations, covering the South-Eastern Indian Ocean Region with port calls at Colombo, Phuket, Jakarta (Indonesia), Singapore, Chittagong (Bangladesh), Yangon (Myanmar), and Malé.



Indian Navy's Broader Regional Outreach

- ▶ Beyond IOS SAGAR, the Indian Navy has been expanding its regional maritime footprint through several flagship initiatives.
- ▶ India assumed **chairmanship of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)** at the 9th Conclave of Chiefs in Visakhapatnam during the International Fleet Review.
- ▶ Additionally, the Indian Navy took command of **Command Task Force 154**, a key multinational training task force under the **Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)** — a 47-nation naval partnership headquartered in Bahrain.
- ▶ Other flagship outreach programmes include **Maritime Heads for Active Security and Growth for All in the Region** and the **Africa India Key Maritime Engagement (AIKEYME)**, reflecting India's multi-directional maritime diplomacy.



- What makes IOS SAGAR uniquely different from conventional bilateral or multilateral naval exercises is that instead of training with separate ships, **personnel from multiple nations serve together as a single crew** on the same vessel — living and working together, building genuine interoperability and trust.

BSF's Reptile Barrier for India - Bangladesh Border Security

- The **Border Security Force (BSF)** has directed field units to explore the feasibility of deploying **reptiles like snakes and crocodiles** in riverine border areas to curb infiltration and criminal activities along the India-Bangladesh border.
- The directive was issued after a high-level meeting in Delhi, linked to inputs from the **Union Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- Field units have been asked to examine **operational feasibility only** — not implement the idea immediately.

Operational Challenges and Concerns

• Conflict with Local Communities

- Conservationists warn that introduced reptiles will **not remain confined** to designated border stretches.
- They will inevitably disperse across both sides, posing serious threats to already marginalised border communities, potentially triggering significant **human-wildlife conflict**.

• Ecological Imbalance

- The targeted regions — such as the **Sundarbans** — already host saltwater crocodiles, cobras, Russell's vipers, and kraits.
- Artificially inflating reptile populations risks **disrupting the existing ecological balance**, which could prove counterproductive in the long run.

• Ineffectiveness as a Deterrent

- Experts note that habitual border crossers are **already aware of reptile presence** and take precautions accordingly.
- The proposal may offer little practical deterrence. Ironically, criminals could even exploit translocated animals as an additional food source.

• Risks to the Animals Themselves

- Translocation of wild animals is described as a "tricky proposition."
- Crocodiles, being **territorial by nature**, face significantly reduced survival odds when moved to unfamiliar territory, raising serious **animal welfare concerns**.

INDIA-BANGLADESH BORDER — AN OVERVIEW

▶ Geographic Profile

- The border stretches ~4,096.7 km — the longest land border India shares with any neighbour.
- It passes through **five states**: West Bengal (2,217 km), Tripura (856 km), Meghalaya (443 km), Mizoram (318 km), and Assam (262 km).
- The border is characterised by a complex mix of riverine stretches, forests, wetlands, and densely populated areas, making it one of the most difficult borders to manage in the world.

▶ Institutional and Legal Framework

- The BSF is the primary agency responsible for guarding the Indian side.
- The Land Boundary Agreement (LBA), 2015 resolved the long-standing enclaves dispute — 111 Indian enclaves in Bangladesh and 51 Bangladeshi enclaves in India were exchanged.
- The Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS) is being deployed for technology-based surveillance.

▶ Key Challenges

- **Illegal Immigration** — Porous border, shared language/ethnicity, and economic factors drive large-scale undocumented migration into West Bengal and Assam.
- **Fencing Gaps** — Of 3,326.14 km sanctioned for fencing, only 2,954.56 km has been fenced. Around 371 km remains unfenced, especially riverine and wetland stretches where rivers shift course over time.
- **Smuggling and Trafficking** — Active smuggling of cattle, narcotics, gold, Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN), and consumer goods. Human trafficking of women and children is also a major concern.
- **Infiltration and Insurgency** — Concerns about infiltration of insurgent elements, particularly in the northeastern states.

▶ Technological Interventions

- **CIBMS** — Integrates sensors, cameras, radars, and communication systems for real-time surveillance.
 - **BOLD-QIT** (Border Electronically Dominated QRT Interception Technique) under CIBMS— Smart fencing using laser sensors and infrared cameras deployed in Assam.
- **UAVs/Drones** — Used increasingly for aerial surveillance of difficult terrain.
- **Floodlights and CCTV** networks along vulnerable stretches.



Film Piracy in India

Tamil film **Jana Nayagan**, starring Vijay and directed by H. Vinoth, was recently leaked online in its entirety in **high quality** even before its theatrical release — which itself is stuck due to issues with censor certification.

Enforcement — A Persistent Challenge

- It is uncommon for film piracy cases to be **investigated and pursued with vigour** in India.
- India is consistently listed as a **"notorious market"** by US authorities for its weak anti-piracy response.
- Courts have tended to focus more on **distributors** than individual infringers. However, anyone sharing a forward link can also face punishment depending on their behaviour.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A MOVIE IS LEAKED?

- High-quality leaks ordinarily occur when films appear on **OTT streaming platforms**, where pirates defeat **Digital Rights Management (DRM)** protections to extract near-original quality video files.
- Completely wiping a leaked film from the internet is extremely challenging due to sites constantly **changing domain names and distribution through private Telegram groups and torrent protocols.**
- **However, several countermeasures exist:**
 - **Anti-piracy firms** like AiPlex work with filmmakers to send copyright takedown notices to social media platforms and torrent sites, which generally act quickly on such alerts.
 - **Dynamic Injunctions** — filmmakers approach High Courts with constantly updated lists of non-compliant URLs for blocking. These are particularly effective tools.
 - **John Doe Orders** — can be passed by courts even before a leak occurs, in anticipation of a film becoming available on piracy platforms.



LEGAL FRAMEWORK AGAINST FILM PIRACY

- **Copyright Act, 1957**
 - **Section 63 and Section 63A** provide for fines of up to ₹2 lakh and **three years of imprisonment** for infringement of intellectual property including movies, TV shows, books, and other creative works.
 - **Repeat offenders** can receive the enhanced penalties for each subsequent violation.
- **Cinematograph Act, 1952 (Amended 2023)**
 - Provides for a significantly larger fine — **5% of the audited gross budget** of the film.
 - The Jana Nayagan case may attract harsher judicial scrutiny because the leak occurred **before theatrical release**, damaging both theatrical value and home video rights valuation



India's Defence Exports Hit Record High in FY 2025–26

- Ministry of Defence announced that India's defence exports reached a record **₹38,424 crore** in FY 2025–26, reflecting strong growth in indigenous defence manufacturing.
- **Sharp Increase Over Previous Year**
 - Exports rose by ₹14,802 crore (62.66%) from ₹23,622 crore (FY 2024–25)
 - Nearly threefold growth in the last five years
- **Sector-wise Contribution**
 - DPSUs: 54.84% (₹21,071 crore)
 - Private Sector: 45.16% (₹17,353 crore)
- **DPSUs Lead the Surge**
 - Exports increased by **151%**
- **Private Sector Growth**
 - Moderate growth of **14%**
 - Continued strong participation in defence exports
- **Wider Export Reach**
 - Defence exports to **80+ countries**
 - Number of exporters increased from **128 to 145 (13.3% rise)**
- India is emerging as a reliable supplier of defence systems and sub-systems globally.

INS Aridhaman — India's Sea-Based Nuclear Deterrence

- India has inducted its **third nuclear-powered** ballistic missile submarine (**SSBN**- Ship, Submersible, Ballistic, Nuclear) **INS Aridhaman**, along with stealth frigate **INS Taragiri**, at Visakhapatnam.
- Following the same pattern of quiet induction as **INS Arihant** (2016) and **INS Arighaat** (2024), there has been no formal commissioning announcement.
- India now has three operational SSBNs — a major milestone in its strategic defence capability.

What is an SSBN and Why Does It Matter?

- An SSBN is the most survivable and stealthy component of a nation's nuclear arsenal.
- India follows a "**No First Use**" (NFU) nuclear doctrine, meaning nuclear weapons are intended only for deterrence and retaliation.
- SSBNs are therefore critical because even if an adversary destroys India's land and air-based nuclear assets in a first strike, SSBNs operating silently at sea can launch a retaliatory nuclear attack — ensuring a credible second-strike capability.

KEY FEATURES OF INS ARIDHAMAN (ARIHANT CLASS)

- Displaces 7,000 tonnes — larger than its predecessors.
- Equipped with eight vertical launch tubes — nearly double that of INS Arihant and INS Arighaat.
- Powered by an upgraded nuclear reactor, enabling it to remain submerged for months without surfacing, significantly improving stealth and survivability.
- Can deploy two categories of Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs):
 - K-15 (Sagarika) SLBMs — range of over 700 km
 - K-4 SLBMs — range of around 3,500 km
- This combination enables strikes at varying distances, significantly expanding India's retaliatory reach.



INDIA'S NUCLEAR TRIAD — CONSOLIDATED

- INS Aridhaman's induction further consolidates **India's nuclear triad** — the capability to launch nuclear weapons from land, air, and sea.
 - **Land** - Agni series ballistic missiles
 - **Air** - Rafale, Su-30MKI, Mirage 2000
 - **Sea** - INS Arihant, INS Arighaat, INS Aridhaman
- India joins a select group of nations — US, Russia, China, and France — possessing this capability.



Origins of India's Nuclear Submarine Programme

- India's nuclear submarine programme began over three decades ago, involving collaboration between DRDO, private industry, and Russia.
- **INS Arihant — First Milestone**
 - Launched in 2009, commissioned in 2016 — India's first SSBN.
 - In 2018, completed India's first deterrence patrol, operationalising the nuclear triad.
 - In October 2022, successfully launched an SLBM in the Bay of Bengal with high accuracy.
- **INS Arighaat — Technological Advancement**
 - Inducted in 2024, displacing 6,000 tonnes.

INS TARAGIRI COMMISSIONED

- INS Taragiri, the fourth ship of Project 17A class, was commissioned into the Indian Navy, at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.
- It has been assigned to the Eastern Fleet on India's eastern seaboard.



ABOUT INS TARAGIRI

- **Design and Construction**
 - Displacement: ~6,670 tonnes.
 - Designed by: Warship Design Bureau (WDB) — India's premier naval design organisation.
 - Built by: Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), with support from over 200 MSMEs.
 - Indigenous content: exceeds **75%**, reflecting the maturity of India's domestic defence industrial ecosystem.
- **Stealth Capabilities**
 - Utilises advanced stealth technology to achieve a significantly reduced Radar Cross-Section (RCS). Reduced radar signature provides a lethal edge in contested environments.
- **Combat Capabilities**
 - INS Taragiri carries a world-class combat suite suited for **multi-role operations** across surface, aerial, and sub-surface domains:
 - Supersonic Surface-to-Surface Missiles (SSM) — for offensive strike capability.
 - Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missiles (MRSAM) — for aerial defence.
 - Advanced indigenous Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) suite — for sub-surface threat detection and neutralisation.

- More technologically advanced than Arihant — incorporating improved design, engineering, and manufacturing.
- Both Arihant and Arighaat are powered by **83 MW pressurised light-water nuclear reactors**.
- **Future Submarine Plans**
 - **Nuclear-Powered Attack Submarines (SSN- Ship, Submersible, Nuclear)** — Two SSNs will be built indigenously. Additionally, one SSN will be leased from Russia by 2027-28 to bridge immediate capability gaps.
 - **Fourth SSBN** — Already under construction. Expected to be larger and capable of carrying more K-4 missiles, further strengthening sea-based deterrence.
 - **Project-75I** — India is close to finalising a deal with Germany's ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems, which will collaborate with Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL) to build six advanced conventional submarines with Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) technology in India.
 - **Scorpene-class submarines** — Acquisition of three additional Scorpene-class submarines remains uncertain.

Atlas Drone Swarm System

- The Atlas drone swarm system, developed by China, is a mobile, truck-mounted battlefield network capable of launching and controlling **dozens of drones through a single operator**.
- It integrates reconnaissance, communication, deception, and attack capabilities into one compact, easily deployable unit.
- **Key Features and Capabilities**
 - **Mass Launch and Rapid Deployment**
 - ♣ Can launch up to 96 drones in under 300 seconds
 - ♣ Launch interval: less than 3 seconds per drone
 - **Integrated System Architecture**
 - ♣ The system consists of three units:
 - Swarm-2 combat vehicle (launches 48 drones)
 - Command vehicle (controls up to 96 drones)
 - Support vehicle

UN Lauds Indian Peacekeepers in South Sudan

- The United Nations has praised Indian peacekeepers for reopening a **key supply route in South Sudan**, highlighting their role in humanitarian assistance and regional stability.
- Indian peacekeepers under United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) reopened a vital section of the Malakal–Renk supply route, which had been closed due to floods.
- The restored route enables:
 - Faster delivery of humanitarian assistance
 - Better connectivity for local communities
- Indian engineering units played a **critical role in infrastructure restoration**, reinforcing the importance of peacekeeping missions in crisis zones.
- India is the **largest troop contributor** to UNMISS, with **1,779 personnel** deployed as of January 2026.

- Since 1948, India has contributed over 300,000 troops to over 53 missions. More than 184 Indian peacekeepers have made the ultimate sacrifice in service of global peace.

Reclassification of LWE-Affected Districts in India

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has revised the categorisation of Left-Wing Extremism (LWE)-affected districts, reflecting changing ground realities and decline in violence.
- The earlier “most affected” category has been replaced with:
 - LWE Affected Districts (2 districts)
 - Districts of Concern (1 district)
 - Legacy & Thrust Districts (35 districts)
- **Key Districts Identified**
 - LWE Affected: Bijapur (Chhattisgarh), West Singhbhum (Jharkhand)
 - District of Concern: Kanker (Chhattisgarh)
 - Remaining districts spread across 9 states
- **Significant Decline in LWE Spread:** From 200+ districts (2005) to just 2 districts (2026)

Vikram VT 21

- The Vikram VT 21 is an advanced armoured platform developed by **Defence Research and Development Organisation** to replace the ageing BMP-2 fleet.
- Designed as a Futuristic **Infantry Combat Vehicle**, it offers enhanced armour protection, high mobility, and integrated weapon systems, including a 30 mm crewless turret and Nag missiles.
- Available in **wheeled and tracked variants**, it supports modern network-centric warfare and diverse combat roles.
 - Wheeled variant: Runs on tyres, offering higher speed, easier maintenance, and suitability for urban, semi-urban, and road conditions.
 - Tracked variant: Moves on continuous tracks like tanks, providing better grip, stability, and performance on rough, uneven, and off-road terrain.
- With increasing indigenous content, it represents a major step towards a self-reliant and technologically advanced Indian Army.

Naval Commanders’ Conference 2026

- The first edition of the biannual Naval Commanders’ Conference 2026 concluded in New Delhi, focusing on operational readiness, emerging threats, and future force development.
- A key highlight of the conference was the release of the **Indian Navy Maritime Security Strategy (INMSS-2026)** which outlines:
 - Maritime priorities for the next decade
 - Integration of disruptive technologies
 - Focus on organisational reforms and future warfare trends
- This strategy aligns with Defence Forces Vision 2047 and Indian Navy Vision 2047.
- The conference reflects India’s push towards a technology-driven, coordinated, and future-ready maritime strategy, addressing evolving geopolitical challenges and strengthening its role in regional security.

DIVEX 2026

- The INS Nireekshak participated in the **fourth edition** of the **India–Sri Lanka Diving Exercise (DIVEX 2026)**, held in Colombo.
- The exercise brings together diving teams from both navies to conduct specialised underwater training, aiming to improve interoperability, coordination, and sharing of best practices.
- As part of humanitarian outreach, the vessel also delivered BHISM medical units under the Aarogya Maitri programme, enhancing emergency response capabilities.

Germany Scraps its Green Heating Law

The much-criticized Green Heating law (the Building Energy Act, 2023) was scrapped by Germany

About the Building Energy Act, 2023

- Required most newly installed heating systems to use at least 65% renewable energy
- Aimed to phase out oil and gas heating systems gradually, pushing households towards cleaner energies like heat pumps
- Mandatory consultation before installing new heating systems
- Part of Germany commitment to achieve **climate neutrality by 2045**

Why was the Law Scrapped?

- Strong public backlash due to **high costs of switching to systems** like heat pumps
- Economic conditions such as inflation, energy crisis after Ukraine war made people more resistant to costly transitions
- Concerns about **limited availability of fuels like Biomethane**

Delhi's New Air Pollution Mitigation Plan, 2026

Considering the persisting air pollution and its severe implications for health, Delhi Government has recently unveiled its new Air Pollution Mitigation Plan, 2026.

Key Features of the New Plan

- It targets major pollution sectors such as transport, road dust, construction activities, waste management, etc. aiming for a multisector approach
- Introduces 'No PUC-No Fuel' policy, denying fuel to non-compliant vehicles supported by camera based digital tracking systems
- Only BS-VI, CNG or Electric vehicles can enter Delhi from November, 2026
- Removal of major landfill sites
- Large scale EV adoption through 32000 EV charging points over 4 years and a new EV Policy, 2026 which will focus on two-wheelers, commercial vehicles and the transition of govt. fleets to cleaner fuels.
- The AI-based **Construction & Demolition (C&D) Waste Portal 2.0** for real time monitoring.
- The air quality monitoring network is being expanded alongside the creation of a centralized Green War Room and an Integrated Command & Control Centre.
- Ward-level "Vayu Rakshak" teams will be deployed, while the 311 platform will be upgraded to enhance citizen reporting.
- Target of planting 7 million trees, shrubs, and bamboo in 2026-27, with a long-term goal of over 10 million plantations.

Why was it required?

- Persistently high average PM_{2.5} levels above 100 µg/m³.
- Vehicular emissions are a major contributor (18-24%) with nearly 8.8 million vehicles in the city, responsible for the NO_x emissions (~80%) and secondary pollutants like Ozone.

Dwindling Population of Camel in Rajasthan

Rajasthan had ~7.5 lakh camels in 2004, which declined to 3.26 lakh in 2015, the year when camel protection law was enacted. Within 4 years, the number further dropped to 2.13 lakh, and by 2021 it fell to ~1.5 lakh

Reasons-

- Mechanisation of agriculture
- Legal slaughter prohibition
- Rajasthan Camel (Prohibition of Slaughter and Regulation of Temporary Migration or Export) Act, 2015, which crashed market prices by curbing sales

Camel Species in India-

1. Dromedary Camel-

- i. Also called Arabian camel, most common species in India
- ii. One hump
- iii. Breeds include Bikaneri, Jaisalmeri, Kacchi (Kutchi), Mewari, Sindhi, etc.
- iv. Kharai Camels (Endangered- IUCN Red List) are a distinct breed found in the coastal areas of Kutch, suited to mangrove ecosystem, with the ability to swim upto 3km in the sea. They are traditionally reared by the Rabari community

2. Bactrian Camel

- i. **Critically endangered** status as per IUCN Red List, participated in **77th Republic Day Parade**
- ii. In India, only found in **Ladakh**
- iii. **Two humps**, original habitat belongs to **Central Asia in the high altitude cold deserts**

Vanishing lakes of J&K

The latest report of Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) on Conservation and management of lakes for the period up to March 2022 has revealed that 518 out of 697 lakes in J&K have either disappeared or shrunk.

Total lake area in the UT has declined by 2,851.26 hectares compared to the base year of 1967. The reference year for this assessment was 2014 for the Kashmir division and 2020 for the Jammu division.

Causes of the Decline

- Anthropogenic pressures such as construction work, resulting in land use change. Other contributing factors include deforestation, climate change, and altered catchment dynamics.
- The report noted that administrative control of lakes in the region is spread across five departments—Forest, Revenue, Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development, and Tourism—leading to fragmented management.
- High altitude lakes in protected areas are free from anthropogenic pressures but face problems of siltation
- Failure of the administration in checking encroachments
- No conservation and management programmes for these lakes except for Dal, Wular, Hokersar, Manasbal, Surinsar, and Mansar. Only ~1% of the J&K CAPEX budget between 2017 and 2022 was allocated to these six lakes.
 - Malfunctioning sewage treatment plants (STPs), ineffective de-weeding mechanisms, and inadequate monitoring and surveillance.

Impact on the State

- High risk of extinction of the lakes currently receding

- Shrinkage of lake area is one of the causes for massive floods in the state (e.g. The September 2014 floods in J&K) as lakes are natural balancing reservoirs and defence for the flood regulating system
- Water security and irrigation for the agriculture sector
- Damage to the ecosystems (disruption of carbon, nutrient, and water cycles) leading to impact on the migratory species of birds and endemic flora and fauna

Ritual Offerings and Microbial Activity in Rivers

Recently, at the culmination of a 21-day religious ceremony in Sehore district of Madhya Pradesh, 11000 litres of milk was poured into the Narmada River as a mark of faith. The event had been criticized considering potential impacts on ecology.

Impact of Ritual Offering on Aquatic Ecosystems

- Environment studies show dairy effluents can have biological oxygen demand (BOD) far exceeding domestic sewage
- Offerings like flowers, milk, etc. have high carbon and nutrient content, which promote rapid microbial growth by increasing BOD
- Bacteria decompose organic matter and consume dissolved oxygen, leading to hypoxic (low oxygen) conditions
- There is significant shift in alpha and beta diversity besides risk of eutrophication and algal blooms
 - Alpha diversity describes the species diversity within a community at a small scale or local scale, generally the size of one ecosystem.
 - Beta diversity describes the species diversity between two communities/ecosystems. It is at a larger scale, and compares the species diversity between two separate entities that are often divided by a clear geographical barrier like a river or a mountain ridge
- Pathogens like *Staphylococcus*, *Pseudomonas*, *Acinetobacter*, etc. found in rivers after mass gatherings

Status of River Pollution in India

- The CPCB's (Central Pollution Control Board) 2025 assessment identified 296 polluted river stretches across 271 rivers exceeding safe limits for bathing (BOD >3mg/l).
- CPCB has also observed that the Yamuna in Delhi records BOD levels as high as 83 mg/l.

Environmental Laws regarding ritual offerings

- No single law explicitly regulates offerings such as milk, flowers, or mass bathing.
- Regulation on idol immersion by CPCB's 2020 Idol Immersion guidelines, mandating artificial tanks and regulated zones for immersion. It mandates eco-friendly practices, strictly prohibiting Plaster of Paris (PoP), single-use plastics, and toxic dyes.
- The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 and Article 21 of the Constitution guarantee clean environment.
- NGT has applied principles like 'polluter pays'.

Shekha Jheel Bird Sanctuary

With the announce of Shekha Jheel Bird Sanctuary as a Ramsar Wetland site, Uttar Pradesh now having a total to 12 Ramsar Wetland sites in the state.

- Total Ramsar Sites in India now stands at 99

About Shekha Jheel Wetland

- **Location-** Situated at a distance of ~17km from Aligarh, it is a freshwater lake and bird sanctuary.
- Connected to the **Upper Ganga Canal System**
- **Importance-** It is part of the **Central Asian Flyway**.

Surging Glaciers

A recent study reported by *ScienceDaily* highlights a dangerous phenomenon ‘**surging glaciers**’, which behave very differently from normal glaciers and pose serious risks to human settlements.

What are Surging Glaciers?

- Unlike typical glaciers that move slowly, surging glaciers undergo **sudden, rapid acceleration**, pushing large volumes of ice forward in a short time.
- These events occur intermittently, separated by long periods of relative stability.
- Scientists have identified **over 3,100 surging glaciers globally**. Small fraction of the total number of glaciers but high share in influence on the global glacier area
- They are concentrated in:
 - Arctic and sub-Arctic regions
 - High Mountain Asia Region (including the Karakoram and Pamirs)
 - Parts of the Andes Mountains

State of India's Bats Report (2024-25)

Released by NGOs **Bat Conservation International** and **Nature Conservation Foundation**, State of India's Bats Report 2024-25 is the *first comprehensive national assessment of bats*.

Key Findings of the Report

- India has high bat diversity and endemism-
 - **135 bat species** in India, including **16 species endemic** to India
 - Their habitat ranges from Western Ghats to the Northeast India, Himalayas, Andaman Nicobar Islands and the Indo Gangetic Plains
 - **West Bengal has the highest diversity with 68 species** while Punjab and Haryana have the lowest diversity with only 6 species of Bats found
- Threatened species: IUCN Red List includes **seven bat species in the threatened category**. These seven species are among the 135 bat species found in India.
 - **Critically Endangered Bat Species-** The Kolar Leaf-nosed Bat found in a single cave in Kolar district, Karnataka)
- Habitat and Roosting
 - They roost in caves, trees and man-made structures such as historical monuments and buildings in urban areas, showing resilience to urban environment
 - E.g. **Robbers Cave** in Maharashtra has one of the largest bat colonies
- Ecological Importance
 - They contribute to **pollination of plants**, especially night-blooming species, and help in **seed dispersal**, which supports forest regeneration.

- They also provide natural **pest control** by consuming insects that damage crops. In addition, their droppings enrich the soil with nutrients.

Threats and challenges to conservation: Apart from habitat loss due to urbanization, deforestation, agriculture, hunting and climate change, bat conservation is difficult due to data deficiency and bureaucratic gaps

41st Report on Ground Water Management and Regulation

The Public Accounts Committee of the Parliament expressed concerns about India accounting for 25% of global groundwater withdrawals, becoming the **largest ground water extractor globally**, as per the 41st Report on Ground Water Management and Regulation

Key Findings of the Report

- Ground water supports **80% of drinking water needs** and **64% of irrigations needs** in India
- Volume of water extracted- 245 billion cubic metres (BCM) annually
- Over extraction-
 - Four states- **Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan have more than 100% extraction** (withdrawal exceeds recharge)
 - **267 districts** show extraction levels between 64%-385% showing unsustainable groundwater use
- There was a rise in the trend of extraction, where the extraction increased from **58% in 2004** to **63% in 2017**, but successful government response has led to a decline to **59.26% in 2023**.
- There are early signs of recovery, but they are not sufficient

Committee Recommendations

- Stronger coordination between Centre and States
- It suggests an immediate curb on excessive extraction

Colombia's Plan to Cull Hippos

The Colombian Government has come under criticism for planning to euthanise 80 of its 200+ hippos that have descended from the four original hippos imported from Africa in 1980s.

Rising Hippo Problem in Colombia

- Origin of the Hippos in Colombia-
 - Hippos are **not native to the continent of South America**
 - Colombian hippos originated from the four hippos imported by Pablo Escobar from Africa for his private zoo
 - The hippos escaped the enclosure after his death in 1993 and began reproducing in the wild
 - Grown to **200+ individuals**, making Colombia the only country outside Africa with a wild hippo population
- Threats
 - Declared an alien invasive species in 2022 by the Colombian Government
 - They are an ecological threat- disrupt the local ecosystems and biodiversity, compete with the native species and alter aquatic systems

Way Forward

- Earlier methods of sterilization and relocation have proved to be expensive, logistically difficult and ineffective at scale.

- More ethical solutions for the future include habitat containment and zoning, translocation to wildlife reserves outside Colombia and use of immuno-contraceptives and surgical sterilization for fertility control.

Santa Marta Conference on Transition Away from Fossil Fuels

The **First Conference on Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels** was held in Santa Marta, Colombia, from, co-hosted by Colombia and the Netherlands. Announced at COP30 in Belém (2025)

Context

The dissatisfaction some countries have from the UNFCCC mechanism and Paris Agreement as they largely focus on Emissions reduction and not on the root cause- fossil fuel production.

- Rising global urgency considering the geopolitical conflicts in West Asia and the interlinked threat to energy security

About the Santa Maria Conference

- It is a 'Coalition of the Willing' with participation from over 56 countries including developing and developed nations. It takes a plurilateral and not a universal approach
- It is outside the UNFCCC framework, avoiding consensus paralysis
- It was built on the **Colombo Roadmap**, which refers to the evolving global strategy framework emerging after COP30 (Belem, Brazil, 2025)
 - It calls for national transition roadmaps and focuses on **energy transition planning, financing mechanism, equity and just transition**
 - It highlights potential economic gains of up to **\$23bn annually by 2050**
- It has launched a science-based panel to provide fast and policy-relevant advice to governments on accelerating the transition away from fossil fuels
 - The Science Panel for the Global Energy Transition (SPGET) will set 1.5°C-aligned milestones and offer policy advice on energy transition
- Major limitation of the Conference lies in the absence of major emitters such as India, China, USA, who prefer the phase down instead of the phase out approach

Kerala's SARPA Platform for Snakebite Care



To fight the rise of snakebite cases, Kerala's Forest Department has now come up with an app- SARPA (Snake Awareness, Rescue and Protection App). It seeks to manage snake-human interactions.

About the App

- It connects the users with trained snake rescuers (800+ responders) for quick response to snake sightings
- It is integrated with 84 hospitals. It provides features like sightings, identifying snake species, integrating medical professionals for guiding first responders and locating the nearest equipped hospital
- It also focusses on awareness campaigns on prevention and first aid for snakebites

Need for the initiative

- Kerala reports a high number of snakebite incidents, with an average of 110 deaths annually (2015-2020)
- Presence of multiple venomous species, including the 'Big Four' (Cobra, Krait, Russell's Viper, Saw Scaled Viper)

<p>Sabai Grass (Babui grass)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sabai grass is a perennial, tufted grass species native to South and Southeast Asia. • Found widely in: <table border="1" data-bbox="695 262 1502 359"> <tr> <td>Odisha</td> <td>Jharkhand</td> <td>West Bengal</td> <td>Chhattisgarh</td> </tr> </table> • Traditionally used by tribal communities for rope-making, handicrafts, and cottage industries and has emerged as a significant means of rural development and employment generation in Eastern India • Useful in soil conservation, erosion prevention and degraded land reclamation 	Odisha	Jharkhand	West Bengal	Chhattisgarh
Odisha	Jharkhand	West Bengal	Chhattisgarh		
<p>Fishing Cat</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat- Wetland ecosystems of Eastern India- Sundarbans, Odisha (Chilika Lake) • Conservation Status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ IUCN Red List- Endangered ○ Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972- Schedule I ○ CITES- Appendix II • Ecological Role <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Top Predator in the wetland ecosystem, excellent swimmer ○ Indicator species for wetland ecosystems 				
<p>Chiru/ Tibetan Antelope</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chiru/ Tibetan Antelope is a unique high-altitude (4000-5500m) antelope adapted to extreme Himalayan conditions • Known for Shahtoosh Wool (also called ring wool), Chiru are found exclusively in Tibet and Ladakh in India • Unlike other wool varieties, Shahtoosh Wool can only be obtained by killing the Chiru • They are critical for the alpine ecosystems in Ladakh and Tibet as they are prey for the Vulnerable Snow leopard • Conservation Status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ IUCN Red List- Near Threatened ○ Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972- Schedule I ○ CITES- Appendix I 				

VitalID

A software-based authentication system- VitalID has been developed that can read unique skull vibration patterns.

What is VitalID?

It is a **biometric authentication system (software based)** that uses internal body vibrations from breathing and heartbeat. These vibrations travel through the neck to the skull and are captured by motion sensors in **Extended Reality (XR)** headsets, creating a **unique signature** for each individual.

Key Feature: Continuous, passive, hardware-free authentication.

Accuracy: ~95% identification, ~98% intrusion rejection

Use: Secure login in **Extended Reality (XR: VR, AR, MR)** environment.

Significance: Enhances **data security** and enables **seamless, password-free access**. Relevant for future **Digital Public Infrastructure & immersive tech**.

BioE3 Policy

The Union Minister of Science & Technology and Earth Sciences recently informed Rajya Sabha about the BioE3 Policy.

What is BioE3 Policy?

The BioE3 (**Biotechnology for Economy, Environment and Employment**) Policy, introduced in 2024 is a strategic framework to foster a new scientific revolution in **high-performance biomanufacturing** driven by **regenerative principles**. It creates a convergence of biotechnology, engineering, and digitalization to build a sustainable, circular bioeconomy and achieve a 'Net Zero' carbon economy.

Implementing Agency

Ministry of Science and Technology, **Department of Biotechnology (DBT)** jointly with **BIRAC** (Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council).

Key Features

- **Structured Around Six Thematic Sectors:** of national importance (*given in fig.*)
- **Implements Three-Tier Strategic Framework:** starting with the **Discovery Research Network** to establish innovative biosynthetic platforms and proof-of-concepts. This is followed by **Bridging the Gap** initiatives that focus on scaling up established proof-of-concepts from lab to market. Finally, the **BioEnablers Ecosystem** provides the critical infrastructure required to accelerate this transition through shared facilities.
- **The "मूलांकुर" BioEnablers Ecosystem:** This infrastructure includes-
 - **Bio-AI Hubs** that provide data-driven, programmatic research support for the biomanufacturing initiative.
 - **Biofoundries**, which foster innovation through the **Design-Build-Test-Learn (DBTL) cycle**, replacing manual processes with high-throughput bio-automation.
 - **Biomanufacturing Hubs** act as pilot-scale facilities that allow startups and SMEs to scale their innovations without prohibitive upfront capital costs.



- **Institutional and Regional Mechanisms:** Implemented through **Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)**, Mission Mode projects with 10% budget earmarked for NER, and supported by State BioE3 Cells (e.g., Assam, Sikkim) for region-specific ecosystem development.

Significance	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic: Positions India as a global biomanufacturing hub, boosts startups & MSMEs. • Environmental: Supports circular bioeconomy, CCU, low-carbon production. • Technological: Advances cutting-edge areas like synthetic biology, Bio-AI. • Social: Enhances food security, healthcare innovation, rural livelihoods. • Strategic: Aligns with Net Zero, LiFE, Viksit Bharat 2047 vision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure Gaps: High capital cost for biofoundries and scale-up facilities. • Regulatory Complexity: Biosafety, approvals, and standardization issues. • Skill Deficit: Need for trained workforce in interdisciplinary biotech. • Innovation-to-Market Gap: Weak industry-academia linkages. • Regional Disparities: Uneven biotech ecosystem across states. • Ethical & Biosafety Concerns: Genetic engineering, synthetic biology risks.

Health Innovation Acceleration Hackathon

IndiaAI, an Independent Business Division (IBD) under the Digital India Corporation (DIC) of MeitY, recently launched CDSCO-IndiaAI Health Innovation Acceleration Hackathon in collaboration with the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO).

Objective

Develop AI-based solutions to streamline drug/medical regulatory workflows.

Application Process

Application to be applied through AIKosh portal.

Stages

- **Stage 1:** Anonymization + AI summarization + automation (missing fields, severity tagging, report generation).
- **Stage 2:** Train on CDSCO data + integrate with SUGAM/MD Online.
 - *SUGAM: System for Unmanned Gateways Approval of Manufacturers.*
 - *MD: Online System for Medical Devices*

Incentives: Winner: ₹10L + contract up to ₹50L; Other prizes: ₹7L, ₹3L, ₹5L (women team).

Fast Breeder Nuclear Reactors

The indigenously designed and built **Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR)** at Kalpakkam in Tamil Nadu successfully attained its first criticality. With this achievement, India has officially entered the second stage of its three-stage nuclear power programme. Once fully operational, India will become only the second country in the world after Russia to operate a commercial fast breeder reactor.

Criticality is the stage when a nuclear reactor achieves a **self-sustaining, stable fission chain reaction** i.e. neutrons produced by fission equal those lost through absorption and leakage in a stable power output. It marks the shift from **construction to operation** and is the **first step toward power generation**.

About India's Three-Stage Nuclear Programme

It was the brainchild of Dr. Homi Jehangir Bhabha (architect of India's nuclear programme) to use **limited uranium and abundant thorium by building a closed fuel cycle** for long-term energy security:

Stages	Reactor Type	Fuel Used	Output
Stage I	Pressurized Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs)	Natural Uranium (U-238)	Plutonium- primary input for the next stage (P-239)
Stage II	Fast Breeder Reactors (FBRs)	Plutonium from Stage I	Generate more fuel than they consume and breed fissionable Uranium-233 (U-233) from thorium (T-232), laying the groundwork for Stage III. ✓ PFBR at Kalpakkam marks India's entry into this stage.
Stage III	Thorium-Based Reactors	U-233	Large Scale Power

Each stage feeds into the next, making India's nuclear programme one of the most forward-looking energy strategies in the world.

About PFBR

This technology was developed by the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR), an R&D centre under the Department of Atomic Energy. Its key features include-

- **Fuel and Design:** It uses Uranium-Plutonium Mixed Oxide (MOX) fuel made from reprocessed spent fuel of PHWRs, closing the loop on Stage 1.
- **Breeds More Than It Burns:** Produces **more fuel than it uses**.
- **Bridge to Stage 3:** Through transmutation, Thorium-232 can be converted into U-233 to power India's third stage of nuclear energy based on thorium.
- **Closed Fuel Cycle:** The spent fuel generated by the PFBR will be reprocessed and recycled back into the reactor reducing waste and paving the way for large-scale use of India's abundant thorium reserves in Stage 3.

Challenges Involved with FBRs

- **Complex technology:** Fast neutron and breeding processes make design and control difficult. For instance, India's PFBR took **>20 years** to reach criticality.
- **Sodium coolant risks:** Liquid sodium as coolant improves efficiency but reacts violently with air/water, requiring leak-proof systems and strict safety protocols. Japan's Monju Nuclear Power Plant suffered a sodium leak and fire in 1995, leading to long shutdowns and decommissioning.
- **High cost & delays:** Long development timelines and technological uncertainties lead to frequent cost overruns and project delays.
- **Economic viability:** High capital and operational costs make FBRs less competitive compared to other energy sources. Eg: Superphénix in France- once world's largest breeder reactor was shut down due to technical issues and high operating costs.
- **Fuel cycle complexity:** Needs advanced reprocessing and fuel fabrication infrastructure, adding to technical and regulatory challenges.
- **Governance issues:** Limited transparency and dispersed accountability can lead to inefficiencies in execution and monitoring.

Current Nuclear Power Landscape

- **Capacity:** ~8.78 GW; generated ~56,681 Million Units (2024-25)
- **Share:** ~3% of India's electricity (stable contribution)
- **Expansion:** Expected to **triple to ~22.38 GW by 2031-32**.

- **Global ties:** India has signed Inter-Governmental Agreements (IGAs) on Civil Nuclear Cooperation for peaceful purposes with **18 countries**.
- **Long-Term Mission: 100 GW nuclear capacity by 2047** (Nuclear Energy Mission). Supports **Net Zero 2070** goal.

Government Efforts to Scale Nuclear Power

- **Financial Commitment:** The Nuclear Energy Mission allocates **Rs 20,000 crore** towards the design, development, and deployment of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), boosting indigenous nuclear technology.
- **SMR Target:** At least five indigenously designed **SMRs are to be operational by 2033**.
- **BARC Initiatives:** The Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) is leading the development of next-generation reactor designs, with 200 MWe Bharat Small Modular Reactor (BSMR-200), the 55 MWe SMR-55, and a High-Temperature Gas-Cooled Reactor of up to 5 MWth (Megawatt thermal) designed for hydrogen generation.
- **SHANTI Act, 2025: The Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Act, 2025** consolidates and modernizes India's nuclear legal framework, enables limited private participation in the nuclear sector under regulatory oversight.

Claude Mythos

Artificial intelligence company Anthropic recently unveiled a preview of its most powerful model- an advanced system called Claude Mythos.

What is Claude Mythos

It is a next-gen AI model with advanced reasoning + coding capability designed to autonomously analyze large codebases and detect vulnerabilities.

Key Capability

- Identifies security flaws across Operating Systems, browsers, enterprise software.
- ~10× faster than traditional tools; found even decades-old bugs.

Access

Limited via **“Project Glasswing”** to trusted firms, infra operators, cybersecurity bodies due to dual-use risk as the same tool can **defend systems** or **enable cyberattacks**.

✓ Project Glasswing, brings together major technology firms and critical infrastructure organizations to test an advanced, unreleased AI model designed to identify and help address software vulnerabilities at scale.

Artemis II

After a historic journey around the Moon, the four astronauts onboard **NASA’s Artemis II mission** returned to Earth recently.

About Artemis II

Artemis II is the first crewed mission of NASA’s Artemis programme, marking humanity’s return to the Moon’s vicinity after the Apollo Moon landings. It is a **crewed lunar flyby mission** designed as a precursor to future Moon landings and long-term human presence.

Artemis Programme

- **Launch:** Initiated in **2017** by NASA
- **Legacy:** Builds on Apollo Moon landings.
- **Mission Timeline:**
 - **Artemis I (2022):** Uncrewed test of SLS (Space Launch System) rocket and Orion spacecraft

- **Artemis II (2026):** First crewed lunar flyby mission
- **Artemis III (~2027):** Testing rendezvous and Docking in Low Earth Orbit.
- **Artemis IV (2028):** Crewed Surface Landing.
- **Artemis V (Late 2028):** Building Lunar Base.
- **Long-term Goal:** Enable permanent Moon base and act as a stepping stone for Mars missions
- **Approach:** International collaboration via Artemis Accords + private sector participation.
 - ✓ The **Artemis Accords** are **non-binding international agreements** led by the United States to establish norms for **peaceful and cooperative space exploration**. Signed initially in **2020 by 8 countries**, they have expanded to **64 signatories (2026)**, reflecting growing global participation in lunar and deep-space activities.

Artemis II Mission Profile

- **Spacecraft:** Orion spacecraft
- **Crew:** Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, Christina Koch, Jeremy Hansen- First humans to travel beyond low-Earth orbit in over 5 decades.
- **Duration:** ~10 days
- **In-Situ Resource Utilization (ISRU)** such as water ice

Key Technological Features

- **Free-return trajectory:** Gravity-assisted loop around Moon to ensure safe return using Moon’s gravity (fuel-efficient, fail-safe design)
- **High-speed re-entry capability:**
 - **Re-entry speed** ~11-12 km/s (higher than International Space Station missions)
 - **Advanced heat shield & parachute-based deceleration**

Comparison with Apollo Programme (1961-72)

Aspect	Apollo	Artemis II
Objective	Short-term landing	Long-term presence
Approach	Exploration	Infrastructure & sustainability
Ecosystem	US-led	Global + private players

Parallel Initiatives in Lunar Exploration

- **International Lunar Research Station (ILRS):** Joint initiative by China and Russia (announced **2021**), aiming to establish a **permanent robotic and later crewed lunar base by the 2030s**, positioned as an alternative to the Artemis framework.
- **Commercial Lunar Payload Services (CLPS):** Launched by NASA in **2018**, this programme partners with private companies to deliver scientific payloads to the Moon, with **multiple missions planned through 2026-2028** to build early lunar infrastructure.
- **China’s Chang’e Programme:** Ongoing since **2007**, with recent milestones including sample return missions (2020, 2024) and upcoming **Chang’e-7 (2026)** targeting the lunar south pole; supports China’s goal of a **crewed Moon landing by ~2030**.
- **Private Sector Lunar Missions:**
 - **SpaceX (Starship lunar lander) and Blue Origin (Blue Moon)**- key partners in Artemis
 - **Astrobotic (Griffin Mission, 2026) and Firefly Aerospace (Blue Ghost missions, 2025-26)** working on commercial lunar deliveries (CLPS).

- **Japan & European Space Agency:** Participating in joint lunar missions and infrastructure development.

Where Does India Stand?

India, through ISRO, is emerging as a key player in the lunar race, demonstrated by the success of **Chandrayaan-3 (2023)** near the Moon’s south pole. With planned **crewed Moon mission by ~2040**, India is steadily building capabilities. As a signatory to the Artemis Accords, it balances international collaboration with strategic autonomy, aiming to become a long-term stakeholder in lunar exploration.

The Artemis 2 crewmembers captured a spectacular view of Earthset through their Orion spacecraft.

Earthset is the phenomenon where **Earth appears to “set” below the horizon when viewed from the Moon or a spacecraft near it-** the opposite of an *Earthrise*.

Blue Origin Launches Third New Glenn Rocket

Blue Origin (a spaceflight services company founded in 2000 by Jeff Bezos) launched its third New Glenn mission (NG-3), marking its first reuse of a previously flown booster (from NG-2).

About NG-3: Blue Origin’s NG-3 was its **third flight and first reuse of a previously flown booster (from NG-2)**, powered by seven BE-4 methalox engines. The mission carried the BlueBird-7 (direct-to-cellphone) satellite but missed the **intended orbit**.

Significance of the Mission: Marks progress toward **reusable heavy-lift launches** (key to competing with SpaceX) while highlighting **remaining reliability challenges** affecting future missions.

International Conference on Spacecraft Mission Operations- SMOPS-2026

The second edition of the International Conference on “Spacecraft Mission Operations: SMOPS-2026,” themed “Innovative Operations for Smart and Sustainable Space Mission Management- Next Generation,” was held in Bengaluru.

Organized By: ISRO, the Astronautical Society of India (ASI) and the International Academy of Astronautics (IAA).

Objective:

- Advance **next-generation spacecraft mission operations** (smart, sustainable, automated).
- Foster **global collaboration** among space agencies, industry & academia.
- Address **operational + policy challenges** in evolving space ecosystem.

Key Themes	Significance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AI/ML & automation in mission operations. • Human spaceflight & interplanetary missions. • Large constellations & ground systems. • Space domain awareness & cybersecurity. • Mission design, strategy & New Space economy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift towards autonomous, AI-based mission operations • Tackles space congestion & mega-constellation challenges • Enhances India’s role via ISRO in global space governance. • Boosts innovation, startups, & international cooperation. • Global participation (e.g., NASA, ESA, JAXA) → promotes knowledge sharing & strategic cooperation.

PACE Satellite

NASA’s PACE (Plankton, Aerosol, Cloud, ocean Ecosystem) satellite can now detect nitrogen dioxide pollution at a fine enough scale to isolate emissions from individual factories and highway corridors.

About PACE

• **Launch:** 2024 | **Type:** Earth-observing **orbiter** | **Target:** Earth (Ocean-Atmosphere system).

Objective: To study **ocean health** + **climate system interactions**

and track **phytoplankton dynamics** (marine ecosystem health), **aerosols (dust, smoke, pollutants)** and **cloud formation processes**.

Key Functions

- Measures **ocean colour** → identifies phytoplankton types & blooms.
- Monitors **airborne particles** → impact on air quality & radiation balance.
- Studies **aerosol-cloud interactions** → role in global warming/cooling.
- Climate Change Insight: Improves understanding of ocean-atmosphere coupling.

Hubble Tension

Hubble Tension refers to the persistent disagreement in the measured value of the **Hubble Constant (H_0)**, which indicates how fast the universe is expanding. Despite using highly precise methods, scientists obtain different values for H_0 , implying that the universe appears to expand at different rates depending on the measurement technique.

Methods to Calculate H_0

Cosmic Distance Ladder (Local Method): It estimates H_0 by measuring distances to nearby objects like Cepheid stars and Type Ia supernovae, and comparing them with their recession speeds, giving H_0 value of ~ 73 km/s/Mpc.

Cosmic Microwave Background (Early Universe Method): It uses radiation from the Big Bang and cosmological models to infer today's expansion rate, yielding a lower value of ~ 67 km/s/Mpc.

Why does the Hubble Tension matter for cosmology and studying the universe?

It highlights a fundamental inconsistency, as two precise methods yield conflicting results, challenging the standard **Λ CDM model**. This affects estimates of the universe's age, the nature of dark energy, and structure formation, and suggests either hidden systematic errors or the need for new physics, such as evolving dark energy, new particles, or modified gravity.

✓ The **Λ CDM model** is the standard model of cosmology that explains the structure and evolution of the universe, where **Λ (dark energy)** drives accelerated expansion and **CDM (cold dark matter)** forms the gravitational structure of the universe; it describes a cosmos dominated by dark energy ($\sim 70\%$), dark matter ($\sim 25\%$), and ordinary matter ($\sim 5\%$).

Extra Mile: Indian Scientists Find New Way To Measure Distances in Deep Space

Indian astronomers including from IIT-Kanpur, have developed a refined method to measure cosmic distances using pulsars by combining **dispersion measure (DM)** and **signal scattering (scintillation)**, improving accuracy over traditional DM-only estimates. This approach better maps interstellar plasma and locates pulsars more precisely, with potential applications even beyond the Milky Way.

Methanol Bunkering

Kandla Port in Gujarat has advanced its methanol bunkering capabilities, positioning itself as a key player in India's transition towards sustainable **maritime** operations.

Methanol bunkering is the process of supplying methanol as a marine fuel.

About Methanol (CH_3OH)

- **Properties:** Simplest alcohol; clear, volatile liquid; Water-soluble, biodegradable, clean-burning.
- **Production:**
 - **Conventional Method:** From natural gas through chemical processing. Increasingly, greener methods are being adopted

- **Green Methods:** using biomass such as agricultural waste, municipal solid waste (MSW), and sewage, as well as renewable electricity combined with captured CO₂, reducing emissions and supporting sustainability.
- **Uses:** Industrial feedstock (plastics, paints, chemicals); Fuel: transport (marine/auto), power generation, cooking/heating.

Significance of Methanol Bunkering for India:

- **Decarbonization of Shipping:** Adoption of low-carbon fuels like methanol helps cut greenhouse gas emissions, aligning with global net-zero targets by 2050.
- **Strategic Maritime Positioning:** Strengthens India's role in global green shipping corridors.
- **Infrastructure Advantage:** Leveraging existing facilities at Deendayal Port Authority (Kandla Port) enables faster transition with lower costs.

Sulphur

The West Asia conflict is not just an oil crisis; it is a **raw-material shock**. Supply chain disruptions are affecting Indian manufacturers and agriculture, largely due to dependencies on key elements like **Sulphur**, which impacts over 17 chemical value chains (especially fertilizers).

About Sulphur (S):

- **Nature:** Non-metallic, yellow crystalline solid- 13th most abundant element in the Earth's crust.
- **Reactivity:** Highly reactive; combines with almost all elements **except** Gold, Platinum, and Noble Gases.
- **Extraction:** Primarily recovered as a co-product from oil and natural gas production.
- **Geographical Distribution in India:**
 - **Top Producers (2022-23):** Odisha (25%) > Kerala (20%) > Haryana (17%) > Gujarat (16%).
 - **Native Deposits (Key Locations):**
 - **Jammu & Kashmir:** Puga Valley, Leh (9-24% grade).
 - **Andaman & Nicobar Islands:** Barren Island.
 - **Uttarakhand:** Hot springs in Chamoli, Rudraprayag, Uttarkashi.
 - **Andhra Pradesh:** Coastal Krishna and East Godavari.

Note: Domestic production is mostly limited to by-product recoveries from petroleum refineries and fertilizer plants.

Industrial Applications	Agricultural Significance: "The 4th Essential Nutrient"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sulphuric Acid (H₂SO₄): Its production and consumption act as a primary indicator of a nation's industrial development. Used heavily in phosphatic fertilizers, ore processing (Cu, Ni, Co), and oil refining. ● Sulphur Lamps: Highly efficient, electrodeless full-spectrum lighting using sulphur plasma. ● Manufacturing: Used in rubber vulcanization (strengthens rubber), eco-friendly concrete binders (replaces Portland cement), and paper bleaching (sulphites). ● Chemicals: Used in fungicides, detergents, pharmaceutical products, and as "fixing agents" (sodium/ammonium thio-sulphate) in silver-based photography. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nutrition: Sulphur is crucial alongside N-P-K (Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Potassium) for crop yield and nutritional quality. ● Oilseeds & Pulses: Increases protein and oil content. ● Cereals (Wheat): Improves milling and baking characteristics. ● Commercial Crops: Enhances the marketability of copra (dry coconut) and the leaf quality of tobacco. ● Livestock: Raises the nutritive value of forage crops (grasses/legumes).

National Quantum Mission

Under the National Quantum Mission, India has demonstrated a 1,000-km quantum communication network within two years- halfway to its 2,000-km target- using indigenous technology by QNu Labs (a startup supported under the mission and focused on quantum-safe cybersecurity solutions), marking one of the world's longest Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) deployments.

About National Quantum Mission (NQM)

- **Approved:** 2023 | Duration: 2023–31 | Outlay: ₹6003.65 crore
- **Aim:** NQM is one of the nine initiatives under the Prime Minister's Science Technology Innovation Advisory Council (PMSTIAC) with the aim to position India as a **global quantum leader** by advancing quantum communication, computing, and sensing, with transformative impact across telecom, defence, finance, and healthcare.
- **Core Objectives**
 - Quantum computers: 50-1000 qubits (8 yrs)
 - Secure communication: Satellite + 2000 km QKD networks
 - Advanced tech: Quantum sensors, atomic clocks, materials
- **Key Focus Areas (4 T-Hubs):** (given in fig.)
- **Implementation Model (Hub-Spoke-Spike):**
 - Hubs (IISc, IITs) act as central nodes coordinating research and funding.
 - Spokes are collaborative projects across institutions, while Spikes are individual research groups.
 - This ensures **nationwide collaboration, resource sharing, and faster innovation.**
 - Government has expanded support to **17 quantum startups**, strengthening capabilities across computing, communication, sensing, and materials.

What is Quantum Computing?

Quantum computers use special units called qubits to store and process information. Unlike regular computers, where bits can only be 0 or 1, qubits can be both 0 and 1 at the same time. This ability to be in multiple states at once makes quantum computers different and potentially much more powerful than traditional ones.



Significance of NQM

- Strengthens **ultra-secure communication** for defence, finance, and critical infrastructure.
- Shows **rapid, indigenous progress in deep-tech**, boosting global competitiveness.
- Builds a **scalable quantum ecosystem** via startup push and R&D funding.

Extra Mile: Initiatives Under NQM

- **Quantum-Safe Ecosystem Framework:** Concept roadmap to secure India's digital infrastructure against quantum threats.
- **DRDO** Developing quantum-resilient security schemes and quantum-safe cryptographic algorithms.
- **SETS (Society for Electronic Transactions and Security), under PSA (Principal Scientific Adviser):** Advancing **Post-Quantum Cryptography (PQC)** for FIDO (Fast IDentity Online) authentication and IoT (Internet of Things) security.
- **C-DoT (Centre for Development of Telematics), under DoT (Department of Telecommunications):** Developing **QKD (Quantum Key Distribution), PQC, and quantum-secure communication devices.**

YUVIKA

Lok Sabha was recently informed about the government's efforts of promoting scientific temper among youth, with YUVIKA playing a key role in inspiring school students toward careers in space science.

- ISRO runs **YUVIKA (Young Scientist Programme/ YUva Vigyani KAryakram)** for school students.
- **Objective:** Impart basic knowledge of space technology, space science, and applications.
- **Approach:** "Catch them young" by exposing students early to emerging space trends.
- **Goal:** Inspire students to pursue **STEM-based education and careers**, especially in space research.

Antariksh Venture Fund

India's dedicated venture capital fund for the space sector is progressing steadily, with investment in selected startups expected to begin from the first quarter of FY2027.

- It is India's **first dedicated space-tech investment fund**. A **SEBI-registered Category II Alternative Investment Fund (AIF)** aimed at promoting **Non-Governmental Entities (NGEs)** in the space sector.

Corpus: ₹1,005 crore; supports spacetech startups (Technology Readiness Level (TRL)-4+) aligned with Indian Space Policy 2023.

Key Investor: IN-SPACE (under Department of Space)

Fund Manager: SIDBI Venture Capital Limited.

Focus Areas: Satellite systems, launch vehicles, ground infrastructure, space-based applications and emerging **in-orbit services**.

e-SafeHER

C-DAC, Hyderabad (a scientific society under MeitY) and Reliance Foundation, recently launched e-SafeHER, a Cyber Security Awareness Training programme.

About eSafeHER:

- **e-SafeHER** is a cybersecurity awareness programme to train **1 million rural women** for safe digital participation.
- It operates under the MeitY's Information Security Education and Awareness (ISEA) **programme**, using **community-based training (via Self Help Groups/Cyber Sakhis)** with multilingual content, aiming to improve **cyber awareness, safe digital transactions, and digital inclusion**.

Memristors

Researchers from the University of Cambridge have reported a new kind of brain-inspired nanodevice, a hafnium-oxide memristor, that could dramatically cut artificial intelligence's (AI) energy bill by bringing memory and computation into the same component.

What is a Memristor

Unlike a standard resistor, a memristor's resistance changes based on the history of the current that has passed through it.

Key idea: Combines **memory + processing in one place**.

Working: Voltage changes resistance via ion movement; state is retained.

Use: Acts like a **synapse** in neuromorphic (brain-like) computing.

Benefit: **Huge energy savings** by reducing data movement.

Prajna System

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs recently received an indigenously developed AI-enabled satellite imaging system, 'Prajna'.

- **Developed By:** DRDO's Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (CAIR).
- **Purpose:** AI-enabled satellite imaging and analytics platform for security agencies.
- **Function:** Provides real-time surveillance, intelligence gathering, and situational awareness.
- **Uses:** Border management, counterterrorism, monitoring sensitive regions, anomaly detection.
- **Feature:** Uses AI to analyze large volumes of satellite data for faster decision-making.
- **Importance:** Boosts indigenous defence technology and inter-agency coordination.

South Atlantic Anomaly

The South Atlantic Anomaly (SAA) is now splitting into two zones, increasing risks for low-Earth-orbit satellites.

- It is a region over the South Atlantic Ocean between South America and southern Africa where Earth's magnetic field is unusually weak. It is often called the "**Bermuda Triangle of Space.**"

Importance: Weak magnetic shielding allows more high-energy solar and cosmic particles to reach low-Earth orbit and increases radiation exposure for satellites and spacecraft.	Impact: It can cause satellite glitches, data corruption, and hardware damage. Spacecraft like the Hubble Space Telescope temporarily shut down sensitive instruments while passing through the SAA.
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Monitoring and Mitigation Efforts: Space agencies are developing radiation-resistant technology, while ESA missions like Swarm are tracking changes so we can better protect future space missions.

Whole Exome Sequencing

Scientists at Sanford Burnham Prebys Institute used a genetic sequencing technique called whole exome sequencing to discover a new rare genetic disease called **RPN1-CDG**, caused by mutation in the **RPN1 gene** affecting glycosylation (sugar attachment to proteins).

What is Whole Exome Sequencing (WES)?

It is a genetic testing technique that sequences all **exons** (*protein-coding regions*) of all ~20,000 human genes. Exons form only ~1-2% of the genome but contain most disease-causing mutations.

Purpose: Detects genetic mutations linked to rare inherited disorders and diseases.

Importance: Faster and cheaper than whole genome sequencing. Widely used for diagnosing rare genetic diseases such as **Congenital Disorders of Glycosylation (CDG)**.

Jagadguru Basaveshwara

- The Prime Minister paid homage to Jagadguru Basaveshwara on the occasion of Basava Jayanthi.
- Basaveshwara, also known as **Bhaktibhandari** (literally, the treasurer of devotion) or Basavanna was a **12th-century statesman, philosopher, poet, Lingayat saint** and social reformer associated with the **Bhakti movement in South India**.
- He lived during the rule of the **Kalyani Chalukya and Kalachuri dynasties** and served as a minister under **King Bijjala II** in Karnataka.
- He played a crucial role in shaping a devotional movement centred on **personal worship of Lord Shiva**, emphasising direct spiritual experience over ritualistic practices mediated by priests.
- Basavanna spread social awareness through his poetry, popularly known as **Vachanaas**.
- He rejected caste hierarchy, gender discrimination, and superstitions, and advocated equality for all individuals irrespective of birth.
- He introduced the concept of wearing the **Ishtalinga**, a personal emblem of Shiva, which symbolised direct and individual devotion
- He introduced new public institutions such as the **Anubhava Mantapa** (the hall of spiritual experience), which welcomed men and women from all socio-economic backgrounds to discuss spiritual questions of life, in open.
- Basaveshwara is the first Kannadiga in whose honour a commemorative coin has been minted in recognition of his social reforms.

Vishwa Sutra

- **Vishwa Sutra** – Weaves of India for the World, was recently unveiled at the **61st Femina Miss India** at Bhubaneswar.
- The initiative was led by **Ministry of Textiles and National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT)**.
- The initiative brings together 30 distinct handloom weaves from across India, each representing a different state, and reinterprets them through inspirations drawn from 30 countries, reflecting diverse cultural elements and design sensibilities.
- The collection pairs Indian weaves with distinct cultural silhouettes—Odisha Ikat with Greek forms, Kanchipuram with Norwegian lines, Muga with Egyptian elements, Patola with Spanish influences, and Banarasi with UAE-inspired ensembles.
- The initiative is aligned with the vision of **Vocal for Local to Global** and the **SF framework — Farm to Fibre to Factory to Fashion to Foreign**.

Aoleang Festival

- The Konyak community celebrated its premier festival Aoleang in Kohima (Nagaland).
- The Aoleang Festival, also known as Aoleang Monyu, is a major traditional festival celebrated by the **Konyak Naga tribe**, particularly in the **Mon district**.
- It is celebrated annually in the **first week of April** (generally from 1st to 6th April).
- It marks the end of the old year and the beginning of a new year with the **onset of spring**. It is closely linked with the agricultural cycle, being observed after the completion of sowing activities and before the start of the new crop season.

- The festival extends over six days, each having specific rituals and cultural significance.
- The fourth day, known as **Lingnyu Nyih**, is considered the most important, when people wear elaborate traditional attire and ornaments, and participate in community dances, songs, and feasts.
- Animal sacrifices and offerings form part of the traditional belief system, reflecting the community's faith in divine forces for agricultural prosperity.

Chandra Shekhar

- The Prime Minister paid tributes to former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar on his birth anniversary. This year marks the beginning of Chandra Shekhar's 100th birth anniversary.
- Chandra Shekhar was the 8th Prime Minister of India, serving from November 1990 to June 1991.
- He is remembered as a socialist leader, parliamentarian, and mass mobiliser who played an important role in post-independence Indian politics.
- He was born in 1927 in Ibrahimpatti village in Ballia district of Uttar Pradesh and was influenced by socialist ideology from an early stage.
- He began his political career with the Praja Socialist Party and later joined the Indian National Congress.
- He was popularly known as a member of the **Young Turks**, a group of leaders who advocated internal reforms and opposed authoritarian tendencies. During the period of the Emergency (1975–77), he was imprisoned for opposing the government, which strengthened his image as a committed democrat.
- After the Emergency, he became associated with the Janata Party. He later founded the Samajwadi Janata Party (Rashtriya), reflecting his continued commitment to socialist principles.
- One of the most notable phases of his political life was the **Bharat Yatra** undertaken between 1983 and 1984, during which he travelled extensively across India to understand grassroots issues and connect with the masses.

Constitution in Sindhi Language

- The Vice-President of India recently released the latest version of the **Constitution of India in the Sindhi language, in both Devanagari and Persian scripts**. The release coincided with the observance of Sindhi Bhasha Diwas.
- Similar initiatives have been undertaken in recent years, in which translations have been made available in languages such as **Bodo, Dogri, Santhali, Tamil, Gujarati and Nepali**.

Sindhi Language

- The Sindhi language is an **Indo-Aryan language of the Indo-European family**, historically associated with the Sindh region of the northwestern Indian subcontinent.
- It has evolved from ancient Indo-Aryan linguistic traditions and has been **influenced by Prakrit, Apabhramsha, and later Persian and Arabic** due to historical interactions. Sindhi holds a distinctive position in India as it was included in the **Eighth Schedule of the Constitution**, through the **21st Constitutional Amendment in 1967**, despite not being linked to any specific state.
- The language is characterised by a rich phonetic system and is written in multiple scripts, primarily **Perso-Arabic and Devanagari**.

Samrat Samprati Museum

- The Prime Minister recently inaugurated the Samrat Samprati Sangrahalay, Jain Heritage Museum at Koba Tirth in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, on the occasion of Mahavir Jayanti.

- Located within the Mahavir Jain Aradhana Kendra campus, the museum is named after Samrat Samprati, a prominent figure in Jain tradition known for promoting non-violence and the spread of the faith.
- The facility has been developed as a repository of Jain heritage and features seven distinct wings, each focusing on different aspects of India's civilisational and spiritual traditions.

Samrat Samprati

- Samrat Samprati, also known as **Indrapalit, Sangat and Vigatashok** was a **Mauryan ruler** and the **grandson of Emperor Ashoka**.
- He is regarded in Jain traditions, particularly within the Shvetambara sect, as one of the **most important royal patrons of Jainism** and is often described as the **Jain counterpart to Ashoka**.
- He was the **son of Kunala** and is believed to have ruled in the third century BCE, during a period of uncertainty in Mauryan succession after Ashoka's death.
- His life is described in Jain scripture like **Sampratikatha, Parishistaparva, and Prabhavakcharita**.
- According to tradition, he either followed the Jain faith from birth or adopted it under the guidance of the **monk Suhastin**.

Piprahwa Relics

- The sacred **Piprahwa Relics** recently arrived in Leh on the occasion of Buddha Purnima.
- Over the years, the sacred Piprahwa relics have been exhibited in several countries, including Thailand, Mongolia, Vietnam, Russia, Singapore, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar, drawing global attention and devotion.
- Piprahwa relics refer to ancient sacred remains and associated objects **linked to Gautama Buddha**, discovered at Piprahwa, an archaeological site in **Siddharthnagar district, Uttar Pradesh**, near the Nepal border.
- The site is widely identified with **ancient Kapilavastu**, the **capital of the Shakya republic** and the early life setting of Gautama Buddha.
- The relics were discovered in 1898 by **William Claxton Peppe** during the excavation of a stupa.
- A **Brahmi inscription** on one of the caskets suggests that the relics were deposited by the Shakyas (Gautama Buddha's clan) strengthening their historical significance.
- Further excavations by the Archaeological Survey of India in the 1970s revealed additional relics and structural phases of the stupa, indicating that it had been enlarged over time, possibly during the Mauryan period.
- The Piprahwa relics are important not only for their religious significance but also for their archaeological and historical value.
- They provide insight into early Buddhist practices of relic worship and stupa construction, as well as the role of clan-based participation in preserving the remains of the Buddha.
- The relics have gained renewed global significance in recent years, especially after a collection of associated gems and offerings was repatriated to India in July 2025 from a British family, ending over a century of colonial possession.

AWARDS/ PERSONALITIES IN NEWS

Bharat Tribes Fest 2026

- **Bharat Tribes Fest 2026**, a flagship initiative of the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** organised in association with **TRIFED** was recently held in New Delhi.
- The festival served as a comprehensive platform for tribal artisans, self-help groups, Van Dhan Vikas Kendras, and entrepreneurs from across the country, facilitating direct market access and promoting sustainable livelihoods, while preserving rich cultural heritage.
- A key highlight of the festival was the launch of the **RISA brand**, marking a significant step towards positioning tribal craftsmanship in contemporary and global markets.
- The initiative reflects the government's commitment to promoting tribal enterprise through design innovation, sustainability, and enhanced market access.
- It also reaffirms the commitment to tribal empowerment, promotion of Vocal for Local, and inclusive economic development.

Breakthrough Prizes 2026

- The Breakthrough Prize Foundation announced its 2026 laureates, awarding six prizes of \$3 million each across life sciences, fundamental physics and mathematics.
- Also known as the **Oscars of Science**, the awards were **established in 2013** by Mark Zuckerberg and his wife Priscilla Chan, former Google chief Sergey Brin, Anne Wojcicki, and tech investors Yuri and Julia Milner.
- As part of its mission, the prize celebrates individual achievements and honours scientists as the heroes of society, aims to inspire the next generation of scientists, and pursues science for the benefit of all as a global, apolitical organization.
- In addition to the main prizes, the foundation announced a new prize called the Vera Rubin New Frontiers Prize, for women physicists within two years of their PhD.
- Fifteen early-career researchers also shared six New Horizons Prizes in physics and mathematics, and three women mathematicians received the Maryam Mirzakhani New Frontiers Prize.