

**SEPTEMBER
2025**

Editor's Cut

- SC on Amended Waqf Act
- Draft Civil Drone (Promotion & Regulation) Bill, 2025
- Immigration & Foreigners Rules, 2025
- Gag Order in Adani Case
- Personality Rights
- Should Commercial Speech on Digital Platforms Be Regulated?
- Trump's 20-Point Gaza Peace Plan
- Nepal's Gen Z protests
- Visit of PM of Singapore to India
- India-EU Strategic Roadmap
- 25TH SCO Summit in Tianjin

INDEX

EDITOR'S CUT _____ 3 - 20

- SC on Amended Waqf Act
- Draft Civil Drone (Promotion & Regulation) Bill, 2025
- Immigration & Foreigners Rules, 2025
- Gag Order in Adani Case
- Personality Rights
- Should Commercial Speech on Digital Platforms Be Regulated?
- Trump's 20-Point Gaza Peace Plan
- Nepal's Gen Z protests
- Visit of PM of Singapore to India
- India-EU Strategic Roadmap
- 25TH SCO Summit in Tianjin ~ ~

MAPS: PLACES IN NEWS _____ 21 - 27

SOCIAL ISSUES _____ 28 - 33

- NCRB Report 2023
- SC Ruling on Anand Marriage Act Rekindles Old Debate
- Himachal Pradesh Becomes Fully Literate State
- Geotagging Buildings in Census
- Sample Registration Survey Statistical Report 2023

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE _____ 34 - 54

- Immigration & Foreigners Orders, 2025
- C P Radhakrishnan- 15th Vice-President of India
- SC Order on Regulatory Assets
- Adi Sanskriti
- Supreme Court Flags Issue of Non-Working CCTVs in Police Stations
- Angikaar 2025
- Jammu & Kashmir Rajya Sabha Polls Hang Fire
- Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI)
- हिंदी दिवस (Hindi Diwas)
- Applicability of Foreign Court Divorce Order to Indian Marriages
- Centre Directs 65% Of NREGS Funds to Water Conservation in Critical Rural Blocks
- Case Pendency Crisis Deepens in Supreme Court
- SC upholds Telangana's 4-year Domicile Rules for Medical College Admissions
- Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, 2003 (COTPA)
- SC on Anticipatory Bail in Caste Crime
- FCRA License of Wangchuk's Organization Revoked
- Capacity Building and Human Resource Development

- Doctrine of Contributory Negligence
- Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC)
- Doctrine Of Escheat
- SC Ruling on Teaching Eligibility Test
- SC Allows Aadhaar as Proof of Identity for Bihar SIR, Not as Citizenship Proof
- Supreme Court Judgment on Beggars' Homes

ECONOMY _____ 55 - 68

- Multi-Lane Free Flow tolling system
- BHARATI Initiative
- National Maritime Heritage Complex
- Engineering Export Promotion Council India
- Sex Sorted Semen facility
- National Makhana Board
- India-ILO MoU on Occupational Classification
- Blue Ports
- Bima Sugam
- Public Financial Asset Management Program
- Pink Tax
- Industrial Park Rating System 3.0
- Maitri 2.0
- AI for Viksit Bharat and Frontier Tech Repository
- Clearing Corporation of India
- Cabinet approves maritime package
- 5 years of Blue Revolution
- UPI in Qatar
- Global Innovation Index 2025
- Scheme to Promote Critical Mineral Recycling
- Large Ships Granted Infrastructure Status
- CAG Report On State Debt
- Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal
- GST 2.0 Reforms

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS _____ 69 - 77

- France Recognises Palestine
- Israel's Attack on Doha
- UN Snapback Sanctions on Iran
- Saudi Arabia-Pakistan Defence Pact
- Declining Investor Sentiment Towards India
- India Announces Economic Package For Mauritius
- China Declares Scarborough Shoal a Nature Reserve
- H-1B Visa Fee Hike
- Ethiopia Inaugurates Africa's Largest Hydropower Dam
- UK To Make a Digital ID Mandatory For Work
- India on the U.S. Blacklist on Fentanyl

INDEX

- China to Forgo Special & Differential Treatment at the WTO
- China's New K Visa
- Landslide in Sudan's Darfur
- India Rushes Relief Aid to Quake-Hit Afghanistan
- India-Bhutan Cross-Border Rail Links
- India - Morocco Defence Cooperation
- Oju (Subansiri) Hydroelectric Project
- Sawalkote (Chenab) Hydel Project
- Fast Track Immigration — Trusted Traveller Programme (FTI-TTP)

SUMMITS AND ORGANISATIONS _____ 78 - 82

- BRICS Virtual Summit on Trump Tariffs
- World Food India 2025
- 11th CPA India Region Conference
- UNGA Debate: India Urges Major UN Reforms
- India Secures Second Deep-Sea Mineral Exploration Contract in Indian Ocean
- UN Backs New York Declaration as Roadmap for Two-State Solution
- Global South Urges UN Reform

DEFENSE AND SECURITY _____ 83 - 88

- India Successfully Tests Agni-P Missile from Rail-Based Launcher
- Combined Commanders' Conference (CCC) 2025: Transforming for the Future
- Army Strengthens Air Defence with New Radars
- National Conference of Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) Conference 2025
- Defence Procurement Manual (DPM) 2025 Unveiled
- Sonam Wangchuk Held Under NSA
- All-Women Sailing Expedition Flagged Off
- Indigenous Patrol Vessel Adanya Commissioned
- Microsoft Azure Used as a Mass-Surveillance Tool
- New Chiefs of ITBP and CISF Appointed
- Exercises

ENVIRONMENT AND GEOGRAPHY _____ 89 - 97

- Revised Methodology for Calculating Green Credit for Tree Plantation
- Two New Ramsar Sites in India
- National Policy on Geothermal Energy 2025
- India's First Bamboo-Based Ethanol Plant
- Environment Audit Rules, 2025
- 'Swachh Vayu Survekshan' (Clean Air Survey) 2025
- The Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve (CDBR)

- UNESCO and Seven New Natural Heritage Sites in India
- Environmental Accounting on Forest 2025
- Species in News

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY _____ 98 - 106

- Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy
- International Earth Sciences Olympiad
- WHO Model Lists of Essential Medicines
- Methandienone Long-Term Metabolite
- P-47 Protein
- HealthAI Global Regulatory Network
- Solar Orbiter Mission
- Graphite Spyware
- PRATUSH Telescope
- Mira Stars
- Clopidogrel
- Vikram 3201
- Isobutanol
- Sarcoidosis
- Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB)
- Ion Chromatography
- Nightmare Bacteria
- Aflatoxin
- NE-SPARKS Programme
- International Electrotechnical Commission
- Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis
- AstroSat
- Syphilis
- Gaia Telescope 3D Map
- AONEUM-04
- SpaceX's Starship Completes Critical Test Flight

CULTURE _____ 107 - 109

- 350th Martyrdom day of Guru Tegh Bahadur
- Rosh Hashanah
- Self-Respect Movement
- Langkhun Festival
- National Archives of India
- Dadabhai Naoroji

AWARDS/ PERSONALITIES IN NEWS _____ 110 - 111

- Dadasaheb Phalke Award
- Kalaimamani Awards
- National Geoscience Awards 2024
- SCOPE Eminence Awards

SC on Amended Waqf Act

The Supreme Court (SC) declined to stay the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025 entirely but staying crucial provisions as it found prima facie arbitrary.

Case Background

- **Original Law:** Waqf Act, 1995 governs Muslim religious endowments.
- **Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025:** Aimed to enhance Waqf property management by improving transparency, governance, coordination with local authorities, regulate misuse and prevent encroachments.
- **Challenge in SC:** filed by political leaders, activists, and civic groups alleging **discrimination against Muslims**. They claimed violation of **Article 26** (right to manage religious affairs) and infringement of community autonomy in managing Waqf properties.

SC's Key Ruling on Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025

It emphasized that laws cannot deprive citizens of property without due process (Article 300A) and it stayed unilateral executive powers that violated separation of powers which included:

- **Five-year practice requirement (Section 3(r)):** The 2025 act required a waqf creator to be practicing Islam for five years.
 - **Court's stance:** Stayed the provision due to absence of a mechanism to verify religious practice. It remains suspended until rules are framed- setting a precedent that the state can regulate religious dedications only with transparent procedures.
- **Collector's power over Waqf vs. Govt land (Section 3C and subsections (3) & (4)):** The 2025 act empowered district collectors/designated officers to decide if a property claimed as waqf was actually government land, alter records, and remove waqf status even before inquiry completion.
 - **Court's stance:** Declared proviso to Section 3C(2) and subsections (3) & (4) *totally unconstitutional*. Held that only tribunals/courts can decide property titles. Directed that waqf properties cannot be dispossessed, records altered, or third-party rights created until final adjudication. Also barred *Mutawallis (Custodians)* from alienating disputed properties during inquiry to balance public interest.
- **Non-Muslim members in Waqf bodies:** The act allowed large non-Muslim representation (up to 12 in the 22-member Central Council and 7 in 11-member State Boards).
 - **Court's stance:** Did not stay the provision but capped members at 4 (Central) and 3 (State). Advised that Chief Executive Officers of waqf board should preferably be Muslims to balance inclusivity with community autonomy.

Judicial Reasoning behind the Verdict:

- ◆ **Presumption of constitutionality of laws:** striking down an act is rarest of rare.
- ◆ **Court sought balance between:**
 - Religious autonomy & minority rights.
 - State regulation & public property protection.
- ◆ **Interim stay ensures** status quo until tribunals/courts decide disputes.

Significance of the Verdict:

- ◆ **Religious Freedom vs. State Oversight:** State may regulate Waqf but cannot impose arbitrary conditions without clear procedures.
- ◆ **Minority Rights:** Controlled non-Muslim inclusion in **Waqf bodies** to avoid domination
- ◆ **Right to Property (Article 300A):** It reinforced that even as a legal right, property can only be taken with due process and fair hearing, making arbitrary deprivation unconstitutional & preventing misuse of govt lands.
- ◆ **Doctrine of Separation of Powers:** It asserted that property disputes must be decided by judicial/quasi-judicial bodies, not executive officers- thereby protecting the **Basic Structure**.
- ◆ **Checks on Executive Overreach:** Prevented unilateral dispossession by revenue officials, ensuring governance operates within constitutional limits.
- ◆ **Transparency & Accountability:** It validated the government's aim of **transparency and accountability** by curbing misuse of waqf claims (e.g., "waqf by user") while protecting existing registered waqfs.
- ◆ **Policy Direction:** Encourages the legislature to design clearer, rule-based mechanisms rather than vague or open-ended provisions that risk arbitrariness.

- **Waqf by User:** The act deleted this provision that allowed properties to be declared waqf solely on the basis of long religious use without documents.
 - **Court's stance:** Upheld the deletion due to misuse but clarified it applies only prospectively, protecting all waqf-by-user properties registered before April 8, 2025.
- **Exclusion of Certain Properties:** The act prohibited waqf claims over protected monuments and tribal lands.
 - **Court's stance:** The Court upheld provisions barring waqf on protected monuments and tribal lands, noting that religious practices at monuments remain allowed under existing laws (*Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958*), and stressing the constitutional duty to safeguard vulnerable tribal communities.
- **Section 104 Revival (Non-Muslim Donations):** The act deleted Section 104, which earlier allowed non-Muslims to donate property to waqfs.
 - **Court's stance:** Indirectly revived its spirit by allowing non-Muslims to create or support *trusts* for the same religious/charitable purposes.



Draft Civil Drone (Promotion and Regulation) Bill, 2025

The Civil Aviation Ministry released the Draft Civil Drone (Promotion and Regulation) Bill, 2025, seeking public feedback.

Key Provisions of the Bill

- **Authorities for Enforcement:** The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA-under Ministry of Civil Aviation) is the regulatory authority to oversee safety, enforce obligations, and supervise standards.
 - DGCA officers or authorized personnel can inspect, detain, or confiscate drones, electronic records, or documents linked to violations.
- The **Central Government** may delegate DGCA's powers or frame additional rules through notifications.

About Draft Civil Drone (Promotion and Regulation) Bill, 2025



It is a comprehensive law proposed by the Ministry of Civil Aviation to regulate and promote the use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) in India. It replaces the Drone Rules, 2021 and subsequent amendments, shifting from a purely facilitative framework to a stricter regulatory regime.

- The **Drone Rules, 2021** created a liberalized framework to boost India's drone sector by reducing approvals, lowering fees, and introducing the **Digital Sky platform** for easy registration and permissions. They allowed free operations in green zones, exempted small drones from licensing, and aimed to make India a global drone hub by 2030.

Applicability of the bill	Exemptions
• Citizens and entities in India involved in designing, manufacturing, operating, selling, or maintaining drones. • Drones registered in India, regardless of where they operate. • Foreign nationals operating drones within Indian territory.	• Armed forces (Army, Navy, Air Force, CAPFs). • UAS above 500 kg, which will be governed by the Bharatiya Vayuyan Adhiniyam, 2024.

Objectives of the Bill

- **Promotion of Drone Industry:** Encourage growth in civilian drone applications like logistics, agriculture, healthcare, disaster relief, and surveillance.
- **Regulation & Safety:** Ensure air safety, security, and accountability through registration, certification, and strict enforcement.
- **Prevention of Misuse** of drones for illegal activities, smuggling, espionage, or terrorism.
- **Compensation Mechanism:** Provide insurance and compensation for accidents involving drones.
- **Harmonization with Global Standards:** Align India's drone laws with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and international best practices.
- **ICAO is a United Nations (UN) agency created under the Chicago Convention (1944).** It sets the core principles for international air transport and helps **193 member states** ensure safe, secure, and efficient use of shared skies.

- **Registration and Certification:** No drone can be owned or operated without a **Unique Identification Number (UIN)** issued by the DGCA.
 - Further, every drone must have a **Type Certificate** issued by DGCA before it can be manufactured, sold, or transferred.
 - Drone pilots must be trained and certified by government-authorized organizations and hold a valid Remote Pilot Certificate issued by the DGCA or another empowered authority.
- **Safety and Security Features:** All drones are required to be equipped with mandatory safety features such as geo-fencing and collision-avoidance systems and mandatory security features like anti-hacking safeguards and conspicuity functions. Tampering with or disabling these features is strictly prohibited under the Bill.
 - ✓ Conspicuity functions in drones are technical features that make the drone visible and identifiable in the airspace to authorities and other aircraft.
- **Airspace Management:** India's airspace will be divided into red, yellow, and green zones. Drones can fly freely in green zones but will require prior permission for yellow and red zones.
 - Violations, such as operating in restricted zones without approval, can attract up to 3 years' imprisonment or a fine of ₹1 lakh.
 - To regulate drone movement, the Airports Authority of India (AAI) has been tasked with developing Unmanned Aircraft System Traffic Management systems.

- **Green Zone:** Open airspace where drones can operate freely as prescribed by the government.
 - **Yellow Zone:** Restricted airspace where drone operations need prior permission from the government/authorities (Air Traffic Control (ATC) clearance needed).
 - **Red Zone:** Prohibited airspace where drones cannot operate without express approval of the Central Government.
- **Prohibitions and Misuse Prevention:** It prohibits the use of drones to carry arms, explosives, dangerous goods, or any items banned by law, unless specifically authorized. It also bans the use of drones as weapons or for committing crimes.
 - Any violation of these restrictions will be treated as a cognizable and non-compoundable offence, punishable with imprisonment of up to three years and fines.
- **Regulation of UAS Import and Export:** The import of UAS is regulated by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) or an authorized body, and the Central Government may prohibit import or export of any UAS if necessary.
- **Insurance and Compensation:** Third-party insurance is compulsory for all drone operations. In case of accidents, the owner or insurer will be liable to pay compensation of ₹2.5 lakh for death and ₹1 lakh for grievous injury. Such claims will be handled by the **Motor Accident Claims Tribunals**.
- **Accident Liability and Claims:** In case of accidents, drone owners or insurers are liable to compensate victims. Claims must be filed within six months of the incident and can be made by injured persons, property owners, or legal heirs of deceased victims.
 - The law makes it easier for victims by removing the need to prove fault or negligence. Even after the death of a victim, the right to claim compensation survives for their legal heirs.
- **Powers, Procedures, and Enforcement of the Claims Tribunal:** It can conduct inquiries, make awards, and direct payment within 30 days. It has the powers of a Civil Court and can also award interest or special costs in cases of fraud or misrepresentation. Appeals lie with the High Court, subject to conditions. Civil Courts have no jurisdiction in these matters, and recovery of compensation can be enforced as land revenue. States may frame rules to operationalize these provisions.

- **Penalties and Enforcement:** Wilful disobedience, obstruction, false reporting, or withholding information: fines up to ₹1 lakh, imprisonment up to 1 year depending on the offence.
 - Drones, documents, or records can be detained temporarily (up to 7 days) or longer with court approval.
 - Certificates or approvals may be restricted, suspended, or cancelled; opportunity to be heard must be provided.
- **Appeals and Compounding:** It provides a multi-level appeals process (First Appellate Officer → Second Appellate Officer → Central Government) against orders issued by the DGCA or the Ministry, ensuring due process for stakeholders. At the same time, certain minor violations may be compounded, meaning they can be settled directly by authorized officers without lengthy court proceedings.
- **Emergency and Security Powers:** The government has been granted wide emergency powers under the Bill to cancel or suspend certificates, ban drone operations, or seize drones if deemed necessary for sovereignty, public safety, or national security. Drones can also be requisitioned and brought under government control for public service in special situations.
- **Miscellaneous Provisions:** The Bill requires detailed records of manufacturing, ownership, operation, and maintenance of drones to be maintained and produced when demanded by authorities.
 - The government may appoint examiners of evidence in drone-related cases to provide expert opinions in courts.
 - The law also clarifies that it will operate in addition to other laws like the Official Secrets Act, Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), and Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS). Finally, once this Bill is enacted, the Drone Rules of 2021 and their amendments will stand repealed.

Significance of the Bill	Criticism of the Bill
• Balancing Growth and Security: Strengthens regulation to prevent misuse of drones for crimes, smuggling, or terrorism while still promoting industry growth. • Public Safety & Accountability: Makes insurance and fixed compensation mandatory, ensuring victims of accidents are protected. • Technological Standardization: Enforces safety (geo-fencing, collision avoidance) and security (anti-hacking, conspicuity) features, aligning with global ICAO norms. • Structured Airspace Management: Introduces red, yellow, and green zones with UAS Traffic Management for safer drone operations. • Economic Potential: Provides a stable regulatory framework for India's drone market, expected to grow to \$11 billion by 2030.	• Stricter than 2021 Rules: Reverses the liberalization of Drone Rules, 2021, adding criminal penalties and stricter compliance. • Industry Concerns: May burden startups and small operators with high compliance costs, slowing innovation. • Over-Criminalization: Jail terms of up to 3 years for violations may be seen as excessive, especially for minor or hobbyist use. • Enforcement Challenges: Monitoring large numbers of small drones across vast areas may be impractical. • Overlap with Other Laws: Possible duplication of offences under BNS, BNSS, and Official Secrets Act, creating legal confusion.



Immigration & Foreigners Rules, 2025

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) recently notified the Immigration and Foreigners Rules, 2025.

Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025- Enacted in April, 2025, it replaces older laws- Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920; Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939; Foreigners Act, 1946; Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act, 2000 to provide **one consolidated law** for immigration and foreigners' regulation.

What are the Immigration and Foreigners Rules, 2025?

Issued under the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025, these rules consolidate and replace earlier rules like the Passport (Entry into India) Rules, 1950, Registration of Foreigners Rules, 1992, and Immigration (Carrier's Liability) Rules, 2007.

Key Provisions

- **Scope & Definitions:** It introduces terms like biometrics information (photo, fingerprints, iris scan), residential address, and registration certificate and provides the legal foundation for modern digital immigration management.
- **Immigration Governance:** Immigration officers have been given wider powers for monitoring immigration posts, preventing fraud, maintaining databases, and assisting travelers.
 - The Bureau of Immigration (BoI) is tasked with handling visa and registration services, managing IT systems, and coordinating with state authorities, while the Commissioner of Immigration oversees the overall administration, finance, vigilance, and supervision of immigration-related functions.

Set up in 1971, BoI is headed by the Commissioner of Immigration. It manages immigration services at check posts, visa and registration formalities of foreigners through **Foreigners Regional Registration Offices (FRROs)** and **Chief Immigration Officers (ChIOs)**. Its vision is to facilitate legitimate travellers while ensuring national security, and its mission is to enforce laws with integrity and professionalism.

- **Travel & Visa Documentation:** The rules lay down conditions for the validity of passports, other travel documents, and visas. They authorize the Ministry of External Affairs (through missions and consulates) as well as the BoI to issue, cancel, or curtail visas. Certain categories, such as nationals of SAARC countries or groups specifically notified by the government, are granted exemptions from these requirements.
- **Registration of Foreigners:** Foreigners staying in India for more than 180 days, or intending to do so, must mandatorily register within 14 days of arrival through the **Indian Visa SuSwagatam app** or the online portal (indianfrro.gov.in).
 - Certain categories such as minors below 12 years, Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders, and short-term visitors are exempt.

- Registered foreigners are required to electronically report any changes in address, prolonged absences, or departure from India.

- Upon registration, a **Registration Certificate** is issued, which specifies the duration of authorized stay and the areas where residence is permitted.

- **Institutional Reporting Duties:** Universities and other educational institutions are required to report the admission, academic progress, and departure of foreign students.

Implications of the 2025 Rules

Positive Implications	Negative Implications
• Modernization and Efficiency: Use of biometrics and digitized processes ensure faster, accurate, and streamlined immigration management. Centralized IT systems improve record-keeping and coordination among various immigration and enforcement authorities. • Enhanced National Security: Wider powers to immigration officers and civil authorities help prevent illegal migration, fraud, and misuse of visas. Carrier's liability requirements strengthen border monitoring and early detection of threats. • Facilitation of Legitimate Travel: Clear visa, registration, and exemption rules simplify entry for travelers. FRROs and BoI ensure a structured process for foreigners' registration and stay management. • Institutional Oversight: Mandatory reporting by educational institutions, hotels, hospitals ensure authorities are aware of foreigners' movements, supporting safety and regulatory compliance.	• Privacy Concerns: Extensive collection of biometric data and continuous monitoring of address, travel, and activities may raise concerns over data security and misuse. • Compliance Burden: Institutions (universities, hotels, hospitals) face increased administrative workload for mandatory reporting and can be operationally challenging. • Potential for Overreach: Wide powers for immigration officers and civil authorities may be misused for targeting individuals or businesses without sufficient oversight and may impact legitimate businesses. • Exclusionary Risk: Strict registration and reporting rules may deter tourists or temporary visitors due to perceived bureaucratic hurdles. Non-compliance penalties may lead to fines or legal complications even for minor procedural lapses. • Digital Dependence: Reliance on online portals and apps (like SuSwagatam) could be a hurdle for travelers unfamiliar with technology or in areas with poor internet connectivity.

- Hotels, guest houses, homestays, and hostels must record and electronically transmit details of foreign guests within 24 hours of their arrival;
- Hospitals or nursing homes are mandated to report the admission, births, and deaths of foreigners within seven days.
- **Identity and Residence Provisions:** Any name change by a foreigner requires prior approval from the Registration Officer through an online application.
 - Civil authorities are empowered to regulate or close premises frequently visited by foreigners if these locations are associated with crime, illegal migration, or other undesirable activities.
 - Additionally, sending restricted or prohibited items, such as arms, liquor, or explosives, to foreigners is strictly prohibited.
- **Carrier's Liability:** Airlines and ships are required to submit passenger and crew manifests, Advance Passenger Information (API), and Passenger Name Record (PNR) data at multiple intervals (72 hours, 24 hours, 8 hours, and at departure).
 - In addition, carriers must file general declarations prior to departure. Non-compliance with these obligations can attract penalties, though carriers are allowed to appeal through an online portal.
- **Technology and Biometrics Framework:** It mandates the use of biometrics, including photo, fingerprints, and iris scans, for all relevant processes. All procedures are digitized through standardized online forms and integrated into a centralized, IT-enabled immigration and registration system to ensure efficiency, accuracy, and streamlined data management.



Gag Order in Adani Case

Recently, a Delhi court set aside the **ex parte gag order** that had barred several journalists from publishing allegedly defamatory content against **Adani Enterprises Limited (AEL)**.

Gag Order: It is a court directive that restrains individuals or the media from publishing or speaking about certain information. Common in defamation or sensitive cases, it is controversial in India as it may conflict with **Article 19(1)(a)- freedom of speech and expression**.

Ex-parte Gag Order: It is passed without hearing the other side. Though meant for urgent relief, in free speech cases it is problematic as it silences speech without judicial scrutiny and denies the right to defend (e.g., truth or fair comment).

Supreme Court Guidelines on Defamation Injunctions

- **The Bonnard Standard (1891, Bonnard vs Perryman):** An injunction in defamation cases can be granted only if the defendant will not be able to justify the publication. Courts must not grant injunctions merely because defamation is suspected.
 - **Underlying Rationale:** Truth and fair comment on matters of public interest are defences in defamation hence, hearing the journalist/defendant is essential.

Background of the Case

- **September 6, 2025 Order by Rohini Court, Delhi:** It issued a blanket ex parte gag order restraining nine journalists, activists, and digital platforms from publishing "unverified, unsubstantiated and ex facie defamatory" content against AEL. The order:
 - Directed intermediaries (YouTube, Meta, etc.) to remove allegedly defamatory content within 36 hours.
 - Allowed AEL to identify additional links/posts to be removed without judicial scrutiny and prohibited future publication of any "defamatory" content- amounting to prior restraint.
- **Government Action:** Acting on this order, the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (I&B) issued takedown notices, leading to removal of 138 YouTube links, 83 Instagram posts and content from platforms and independent journalists.
- **Appeals:** Multiple journalists challenged the order before the District Court, arguing violation of free speech and Principle of Natural Justice (PNJ).
- **Relief by District Court:** The court quashed the September 6 order for four journalists and held that-
 - Senior Civil Judge failed to make any finding on whether the content was defamatory.
 - Defendants should have been heard before passing an order with irreversible consequences.
 - If later found non-defamatory, restoring removed content would be infeasible.
 - Whether the articles are true or defamatory is a matter for trial, not for interim stage.

- **SC's Bloomberg Ruling (2024):** Delhi court had ordered Bloomberg to take down an article on Zee Entertainment. SC overturned the order, laying down key principles:
 - Pre-trial injunctions must be extremely rare.
 - To justify, plaintiff must show that not granting the injunction would cause greater injustice.
 - Ex parte injunctions permissible only in exceptional circumstances.
 - Orders restraining speech must be based on content that is malicious or palpably false.
 - Premature injunctions risk stifling public debate and violate the public's right to know.

Related Precedents

- **Romesh Thappar v. State of Madras (1950) and Brij Bhushan v. State of Delhi (1950):** SC declared prior restraint unconstitutional, except in narrow cases. Courts have consistently stressed that restrictions on speech must be narrowly tailored.

✓ Prior restraint means preventing speech before publication, unlike punishment after publication.

- **Shreya Singhal v. Union of India (2015):** Struck down Section 66A of IT Act for enabling vague, arbitrary online censorship.

- **Subramanian Swamy v. Union of India (2016):** Upheld criminal defamation as a "reasonable restriction" but reiterated that restrictions must pass reasonableness test.

Issues with the Gag Order	Broader Concerns
• Absence of Judicial Scrutiny: Court did not examine whether the cited content was actually defamatory. • Delegation of Judicial Function to Plaintiff: Allowed AEL to identify further URLs for removal giving it excessive power to curate public information about itself. • Violation of Natural Justice: Defendants were not given a hearing before being restrained. Ex parte injunction granted months after publication undermining the claim of "urgency." • Prior Restraint: Blanket prohibition on publishing "unverified" content is unconstitutional. Journalists prevented from exercising lawful defences (truth, fair comment). • Chilling Effect on Journalism: Sweeping orders discourage investigative reporting against powerful corporates. Government's aggressive enforcement reminiscent of pre-censorship regimes.	• Judicial Overreach vs Corporate Power: Courts must prevent misuse of defamation law as a tool for strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs). Large corporates suing individual journalists creates a power asymmetry. • Government's Role in Enforcement: I&B Ministry's proactive takedown orders raised fears of executive censorship. • Signals to media: certain corporations/individuals are "untouchable." • Corporate Control of Media: Many conglomerates have direct or indirect control over media houses. Prior restraint undermines editorial independence and weakens accountability. • Chilling Effect on Democracy: Suppressing dissenting or investigative reporting erodes public's right to know. Weakens the watchdog role of the press.

Key Takeaways from the Case:

- **Balancing Rights:** Defamation protects reputation (Article 21- dignity) vs Free Speech (Article 19(1)(a)). Courts must balance these carefully without undermining democratic debate.
- **High Threshold for Injunctions:** Bonnard Standard + SC Bloomberg ruling prove that pre-trial, ex parte injunctions are *exceptions*, not the rule.
- **Principle of Natural Justice:** "No one should be condemned unheard" - essential in free speech cases.
- **Democratic Implications:** Gag orders, if abused, weaken **press freedom, accountability, and democratic discourse**.



Personality Rights

The Delhi High Court (HC) protected Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Abhishek Bachchan, and Karan Johar against misuse of their names, images, and personas, affirming legal safeguards for "personality rights" in the digital age.

What are Personality Rights

Personality rights (also known as publicity rights) are the rights of an individual to control and protect the commercial and personal use of their identity, including name, image, likeness, voice, signature, gestures and other identifiable attributes. They protect both **dignity and autonomy**(privacy) and **commercial interests** (unauthorized exploitation).

Extent of Personality Rights vs Free Expression

- **Conflict:** Expansive personality rights can potentially curtail **freedom of speech and expression** under **Article 19(1)(a)**, which includes criticism, parody, satire, and creative uses of public figures.

- **Judicial Balance:** Courts have repeatedly held that **free expression must be balanced**.

- **Key Judgments:**

- *DM Entertainment Pvt. Ltd. v. Baby Gift House (2010)*: Injunction granted against commercial misuse of Daler Mehndi's likeness, but **caricatures, lampooning, and parodies** were protected; excessive publicity rights could chill free speech.
- *Digital Collectibles PTE Ltd. v. Galactus Funware Technology Pvt. Ltd. (2023)*: Court reaffirmed that **publicly known celebrity images used for satire, parody, art, scholarship, news, etc. do not infringe publicity rights**, even if licenses exist.

- **Principle:** Personality rights cannot override creative and public-interest expression; material in the public domain can be freely used for legitimate commentary or satire.

Components of Personality Rights:

Right of Publicity: Protects against **unauthorized commercial use** of one's name, image, or likeness. Violations fall under the tort of passing off (protects the goodwill and reputation of a business or individual from misrepresentation by others).

Statutory support: Trademarks Act, 1999; Copyright Act, 1957; **Information Technology Act, 2000:** Sections 66C (identity theft) and 66D (cheating by personation using computer resources)

Right to Privacy: Protects against misuse, distortion, or public display of one's persona without consent. Grounded in Article 21 of the Constitution



Both protect **autonomy over one's public identity**.

How Indian Law Protects Personality Rights?

No codified statute exists (unlike some jurisdictions - e.g., the U.S. with state-specific right of publicity laws); courts rely on **Constitutional law** (Right to Privacy, Article 21); common law principles, **Tort of Passing Off** for commercial misuse; and Intellectual property principles from **trademarks** and **copyrights**.

Courts assess:

- **Commercial harm:** loss of revenue or endorsements
- **Reputational harm:** misleading the public or misuse in digital media

Related Judicial Precedents

- **ICC Development (International) Ltd. vs. Arvee Enterprises, 2003 (Delhi HC):** Any attempt to deprive an individual of their publicity rights violates **Articles 19 and 21** of the Constitution.
- **Arun Jaitley vs. Network Solutions Private Limited and Ors, 2011 (Delhi HC):** An individual's popularity or fame on the internet is **equally protected** as in the real world; online misuse violates personality rights.
- **Rajinikanth v. Varsha Productions, 2015 (Madras HC):** Unauthorized use of a celebrity's name, image, or style **without consent** constitutes a violation of personality rights.
- The Supreme Court's landmark judgment in *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) v. Union of India (2017)* affirmed privacy as a fundamental right.
- **Anil Kapoor v. Simply Life India:** Unauthorized commercial use of a celebrity's image or endorsement amounts to **passing off**; the celebrity can seek injunctions. A landmark ruling where the Delhi HC protected Kapoor's name, voice, image, and catchphrases (e.g., "Jhakaas") from AI-generated deepfakes and commercial misuse, emphasizing digital threats.
- **Amitabh Bachchan v. Rajat Nagi & Ors. (2022):** Interim protection against misuse of Bachchan's voice and image in lotteries and apps.
- **Aishwarya Rai Bachchan v. Aishwaryaworld.com (Delhi HC, 2023):** Courts restrained platforms from using her name, likeness, voice, or AI-generated deepfakes without consent; emphasized protection of **dignity, autonomy, and commercial interests**.

Emerging Challenges Faced by Celebrities

- **Digital Misuse:** Unauthorized use of images, voices, and likeness in AI-generated deepfakes, chatbots, memes, and online content.

Significance of Personality Rights

- **Protection of Dignity and Privacy:** Safeguards an individual's **autonomy, identity, and personal image** from misuse, distortion, or public display without consent.

• Commercial Exploitation: Use of in merchandise or advertisements without consent, causing financial loss. • Reputational Harm: Fake endorsements, doctored images, or misleading content • Gendered Exploitation: Women celebrities face sexualized or objectified misuse of their images more frequently. • Legal Gaps: Lack of codified personality rights law in India; current protections rely on constitutional interpretation and IP laws. • Cyber-crimes: Revenge content, identity theft, and online harassment • Cross-Border Enforcement and Platform Liability: Global platforms host infringing content, complicating takedowns due to jurisdictional issues and weak international treaties.	• Commercial Protection • Gender Sensitivity • Preservation of Reputation and Goodwill: Protects carefully built public image or personal brand from being misrepresented or diluted. • Regulation in the Digital Era: Addresses challenges of AI-generated content, deepfakes, and online impersonation, which can cause rapid reputational or financial harm. • Legal and Social Balance: Balances free speech with personal rights, allowing parody or criticism but preventing commercial or harmful misuse. • Ethical Significance: Ethically, personality rights embody Kantian imperatives of treating individuals as ends, not means—upholding autonomy, consent, and non-maleficence against exploitative commodification.
---	---



Should Commercial Speech on Digital Platforms Be Regulated?

The Supreme Court (SC) recently noted that social media influencers **commercialize free speech**, which can **offend vulnerable groups** and directed the **government to draft guidelines** for online content.

- ✓ The court was hearing a case against social media comedians, including Samay Raina, for “abusing freedom of speech and expression” by making insensitive jokes about persons with disabilities (PWD).

Core Issue Involved

- Social media influencers often commercialize free speech through online shows, podcasts, or comedy content.
- While monetized speech is part of the digital ecosystem, certain content has offended sentiments of vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, women, children, senior citizens, and minorities.
- The question arises: **Should commercial speech on digital platforms be regulated, and how to balance freedom of expression with societal sensitivity?**

SC Key Findings and Recommendations

- **Responsibility of Creators:** Commercialization of speech does **not exempt influencers** from accountability for societal impact.
- **Limits of Humour and Satire:** Humour and satire are legitimate, but **levity must not offend community sensibilities**.
- **Guidelines and Consequences:** Regulations must **specify proportional consequences** to prevent evasion of liability.
- **Free Speech vs Hurtful Speech:** A **clear distinction** must be drawn between these.
- **Stakeholder Consultation:** Union government should **frame regulations in consultation** with relevant stakeholders, including the **National Broadcasters and Digital Association**.

- **Overlap of Commercial and Prohibited Speech:** Monetized content that harms social harmony may fall under both commercial and prohibited speech categories.

Key Regulations Governing Social Media Usage in India

- **Information Technology Act, 2000:** Sections on intermediary liability, content takedown, and online grievance redressal.

- **Section 69A, IT Act:** Power to block online content for public order, sovereignty, and security.

- **IT Rules 2021:** Platforms must ensure user safety, remove unlawful content, and promote awareness on privacy, copyright, defamation, and national security.

- **2023 Amendment:** Requires removal of false/misleading government-related content; enforcement stayed by the Supreme Court over misuse concerns.

- **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023:** Penal provisions for online abuse or offensive content.

Key Judicial Pronouncements

- **Tata Press v. MTNL (1995):** Commercial speech has constitutional protection under Article 19(1)(a).
- **Sakal Papers v. Union of India (1962):** Government cannot restrict dissemination of information solely due to profit motive.
- **Subramanian Swamy v. Union of India (2016):** Recognized defamation as a legitimate restriction to protect individual dignity.

Key Challenges in Regulating Social Media

- **Ambiguity in “Dignity”:** Vague concept may lead to constitutional overreach.

Extra Mile: Karnataka High Court on Social Media Regulation



The Karnataka High Court (HC) recently rejected social media platform X's (formerly Twitter) plea against the Central Government's Sahyog Portal- a digital mechanism to issue content takedown notices.

- ❑ **Sahyog Portal** launched by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) allows central agencies, state police, and nodal officers to issue blocking/takedown orders directly. By **April 2025**, 65 intermediaries onboarded (Google, YouTube, Amazon, Microsoft, etc.), 130 takedown notices issued (Oct 2024–Apr 2025).

Case Background

- ❑ **Case:** X filed a lawsuit against the Union Government (March 2025) challenging the use of Section 79(3)(b), IT Act, 2000 for blocking orders via the Sahyog portal.
- ❑ **X's Arguments:**
 - ✓ Sahyog Portal = “Censorship Portal.”
 - ✓ Creates unlawful parallel censorship regime.
 - ✓ Protection sought for employees from coercive action.
- ❑ **Govt's Stand:** Sahyog portal is a tool to streamline content takedowns, combat cybercrime, and ensure accountability.

Karnataka HC Observations (Three Red Lines)

- ❑ **Need for Regulation:** Information flow has always been regulated from letters to modern apps. Social Media is equal to “Modern amphitheater of ideas”. It cannot be anarchic. Regulation is crucial for offences against women & dignity of citizens. Every sovereign nation regulates platforms (example: USA).
- ❑ **Law of the Land:** Social media companies must comply with Indian laws. They cannot treat India as a “playground” while obeying similar laws in the USA. Liberty comes with responsibility and accountability. Importing American judicial thought into Indian context is impermissible.
- ❑ **Shreya Singhal Judgment Not Applicable:** X claimed that Sahyog violates Shreya Singhal judgement (2015) which limited censorship to court/Section 69A orders.
 - ✓ **Court's View:** Shreya Singhal dealt with 2011 IT Rules, now outdated. 2021 IT Rules are “fresh in conception” and need a new interpretative frame. Past precedents cannot govern new regulatory regime.

Significance of the Judgment	Concerns Raised
• Strengthened Government Powers: Validates the Sahyog portal as a lawful tool to combat cybercrime, misinformation, and online harms. • Intermediary Liability: Non-compliance with Sahyog notices can lead to loss of safe-harbour protection under Section 79, making platforms legally liable. • Platform Accountability: Pushes India towards greater digital governance, ensuring that social media companies are answerable for content hosted. • Cybersecurity & Public Safety: Provides mechanisms to address cyber offences, particularly those affecting women's dignity. • Law & Constitution: Reinforces India's sovereign right to regulate speech, balancing Article 19(1)(a) (freedom of speech) with reasonable restrictions. • Policy Evolution: Demonstrates how courts adapt legal interpretation to technological change, moving beyond Shreya Singhal (2015).	• Risk of Overreach: Expands executive powers in takedown orders without robust judicial oversight. • Transparency Issues: Lack of clarity in safeguards, accountability, and review mechanisms for blocking orders. • Impact on Free Speech: Overregulation may chill dissent and critical voices. • Business Concerns: Global tech companies may view compliance burdens as excessive, affecting innovation and investment.

- **Chilling Effect:** Excessive regulation may **suppress satire, comedy, journalism, and critical discourse**.
- **Commercialization vs Free Speech:** Monetization does **not automatically justify regulation**.
- **Polyvocal Judicial Opinions:** Divergent court views may **create confusion on precedents**.
- **Opaque Takedown Mechanisms:** Section 69A procedures often **lack transparency**, affecting fairness in enforcement.

Way Forward:

- Frame regulations with **clear scope, proportional consequences, and transparent procedures**.
- **Wide stakeholder consultation:** creators, civil society, and public.
- Ensure **natural justice in content takedown and grievance redressal**.
- Focus on **sensitization and awareness** rather than blanket censorship.
- Maintain **constitutional balance** between Article 19(1)(a) freedom and Article 19(2) restrictions.



Trump's 20-Point Gaza Peace Plan

- US President Donald Trump unveiled a **20-point “Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict”**, marking one of the most ambitious peace initiatives as the war nears its second anniversary.
- While it outlines measures with significant implications for the **Middle East, Trump’s political standing, and India’s interests**, its future remains uncertain as **Hamas has not yet accepted the proposal**.

Broad Contours of Trump’s Gaza Peace Plan

- Trump’s **20-point “Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict”** lays out ambitious measures to end hostilities, ensure security, and rebuild Gaza.
- **Hamas Disarmament and Safe Passage**
 - The plan’s most critical element requires **Hamas to surrender and disarm**.
 - Members committing to peaceful coexistence will be granted amnesty, while those unwilling can leave Gaza with safe passage to countries like Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, or Iran.
- **International Stabilization Force (ISF)**
 - A temporary ISF, backed by the US and Arab partners, will be deployed in Gaza.
 - Its role includes training vetted Palestinian police, stopping arms inflow, and facilitating aid and goods movement.
 - **Israel has pledged not to annex Gaza** and will gradually withdraw its forces as the ISF establishes control, though it plans to retain a security buffer zone until stability is ensured.
- **Governance and Transitional Authority**
 - Gaza will be run by a technocratic, apolitical Palestinian committee, with oversight from an **international Board of Peace led by Trump**, alongside other leaders, including former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair.
 - This arrangement aims to provide neutral governance and oversee reconstruction, though Blair’s inclusion has drawn skepticism given his controversial Iraq War legacy.
- **Humanitarian Aid and Reconstruction**
 - The plan permits the resumption of large-scale humanitarian aid, including rehabilitation of water, electricity, sewage, and healthcare systems.

- Aid distribution will be overseen by the UN, Red Crescent, and international agencies, ensuring transparent and interference-free relief for Gaza's population.
- **Hostage-Prisoner Exchange**
 - Within 72 hours of Israel's acceptance, all hostages — alive and deceased — must be returned.
 - In exchange, Israel will release 250 prisoners serving life terms and 1,700 Gazans detained since October 7, 2023, including all women and children.
 - For every Israeli hostage whose remains are released, Israel will release the remains of 15 dead Gazans.
 - With 48 hostages still held by Hamas, this remains a sensitive issue fueling public protests in Israel.
- **Regional and Global Guarantees**
 - The plan ensures compliance through guarantees from regional partners. Eight nations — Qatar, Jordan, UAE, Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt — have welcomed the proposal.
 - Major powers like China and Russia have also expressed support, indicating broad international backing.

India's Stand on Trump's Gaza Peace Plan

- PM Modi welcomed Trump's 20-point Gaza peace plan, calling it a "**viable pathway**" to long-term peace, security, and development for Palestinians, Israelis, and the wider West Asian region.
- India views **West Asia as part of its extended neighbourhood**, with deep ties to Israel, Iran, and Saudi Arabia.
- PM Modi's endorsement, despite ongoing India-US frictions, is seen as a positive diplomatic gesture, acknowledging Trump's role as peacemaker and aligning India with efforts to stabilise the region for its strategic and economic interests.
- **Strategic Concerns for India: Pakistan's Role**
 - A worrying element for New Delhi is the visible involvement of Pakistan in the peace process.
 - Trump publicly thanked leaders from Jordan, UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, noting Pakistan's Prime Minister and field marshal were engaged from the beginning.
 - This revived US-Pakistan engagement could complicate India's regional strategy and tilt diplomatic equations in ways unfavourable to New Delhi.



Nepal's Gen Z protests

- Unprecedented protests erupted across Nepal, after the government banned major social media platforms.
- What began as peaceful demonstrations by thousands of youth soon turned violent, with many dead and injured. Protesters stormed Parliament and targeted politicians' homes, prompting curfews in Kathmandu and other cities.
- As the Gen Z-led agitation intensified for a second day, Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli resigned.
- After his resignation, former chief justice Sushila Karki was sworn in as Nepal's interim Prime Minister.
 - Sushila Karki is Nepal's first woman Chief Justice, serving from July 2016 to June 2017.
 - She is renowned for her **zero-tolerance policy against corruption**, which brought her widespread respect as well as criticism.

Protesters on Nepal's Streets and the Reasons Behind Their Anger

- The protesters are primarily **Generation Z youth** — those born between 1997 and 2012.
- Teens and young adults, frustrated with politics and governance, have taken to the streets in large numbers.

- **Corruption and Nepotism**

- o Gen Z has expressed deep anger at **Nepal's entrenched corruption** and the impunity enjoyed by politicians since the republic's formation in 2008.
- o The extravagant lifestyles of politicians' children, mocked as "**Nepo Babies**" and "**Nepo Kids**," became a flashpoint of resentment online.

- **Immediate Trigger: Social Media Ban**

- o The government's decision to ban 26 major social media platforms, including Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, X, and YouTube, cut off Gen Z's primary platform for expression and solidarity.
 - Authorities accused these platforms of failing to register with Nepali regulators and of being misused for hate speech, misinformation and fraud.
 - TikTok was the only major platform to comply and remains accessible.

- o This aggravated their frustration.

- **Protests and Violence**

- o The discontent culminated in mass protests. While the protesters had no detailed charter, they demanded lifting of the social media ban, which was fulfilled.
- o More broadly, they sought an **end to corruption, social inequality, and lack of job opportunities**.

India's Concerns Over Nepal's Crisis



- ▣ India closely watched Nepal's turmoil with concern, mindful of its sensitive political alignments in the country.
- ▣ Having once lost goodwill with the monarchy and Nepali Congress, New Delhi now faces a delicate balancing act.
- ▣ It stressed that the violence was "heart-rending" and reaffirming that Nepal's stability, peace, and prosperity remain of utmost importance to India.

Analysis: Nepal's Crisis Beyond Oli's Resignation

- ▣ The recent violence in Kathmandu, where protesters torched Parliament, ministerial homes, and media offices, reflects deep structural failures in Nepal's democratic experiment. PM Oli's resignation has not stemmed the unrest, which now questions the country's political future.
- ▣ **Systemic Revolt: From Social Media Ban to Nationwide Rage**
 - ➔ Protests began against the government's ban on social media but quickly transformed into a broader indictment of corruption, nepotism, and inequality.
 - ➔ Security forces' killing of youth ignited nationwide outrage, galvanising Gen Z against decades of political dysfunction, unemployment, and institutional decay.
 - ➔ Unlike past democratic movements, **these protests lack leadership or clear objectives, instead expressing nihilistic anger against all state institutions.**
- ▣ **Dangerous Precedents in Nepal's Democracy**
 - ➔ Despite two people's movements, a new constitution, and republican institutions, Nepal's governance remains **dominated by elite power-sharing and patronage networks**.
 - ➔ This disillusionment has created space for anti-system forces, including pro-monarchy and Hindutva groups.
 - ➔ The amorphous Gen Z protests, without clear democratic alternatives, risk being co-opted by such forces.
- ▣ **Regional Parallels and Outsider Appeal**
 - ➔ Nepal's turmoil mirrors **unrest in South Asia**, from Bangladesh's student-led uprisings to Sri Lanka's Aragalaya.
 - ➔ The popularity of outsider figures like jailed Rabi Lamichhane and Kathmandu Mayor Balendra Shah shows youth distrust of mainstream politics.
 - ➔ However, Shah's call for Parliament's dissolution raises fears of anti-institutional rhetoric undermining democratic renewal.

The Road Ahead: Reform or Ruin

- ▣ The Gen Z protests have exposed **Nepal's political bankruptcy and systemic failures**.
- ▣ Yet, their drift toward violence and institutional destruction threatens democracy itself.
- ▣ For meaningful change, Nepal's leaders must channel this energy into building credible alternatives, policy frameworks, and constructive institutions.
- ▣ Without this, the movement risks destabilising an already fragile state without delivering sustainable solutions.

Visit of PM of Singapore to India

Singapore's Prime Minister Lawrence Wong visited India. The visit coincided with the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations, celebrating deep ties in political, economic, cultural, and security domains.

Key Outcomes

• Institutional Mechanism

- The leaders agreed to institutionalise the India–Singapore Ministerial Roundtable (**ISMR**) as the annual mechanism to monitor **CSP** progress, ensuring sustained momentum in the partnership.
 - The inaugural meeting of the ISMR took place in September 2022 in New Delhi.
 - The 3rd round of ISMR was held in New Delhi in August 2025.

• Strengthening Bilateral Relations

- Leaders recalled the decision to elevate ties to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (**CSP**).
- They adopted a forward-looking roadmap across eight priority areas: economy, skills development, digitalisation, sustainability, connectivity, healthcare & medicine, people-to-people exchanges, and defence & security.

• Economic Cooperation: Both sides agreed to:

- deepen trade under CECA (Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement),
- advance semiconductor industry collaboration,
- develop next-gen industrial parks,



India–Singapore Bilateral Relations: A Comprehensive Overview

A. Trade and Economic Cooperation

Trade Growth:

- ➔ Bilateral trade rose from **USD 6.7 billion (2004–05)** to **USD 34.3 billion (2024–25)**.
- ➔ Singapore is India's **6th largest trade partner** with a 2.96% share.
- ➔ FY 2024–25: Our Imports – USD 21.29 billion; Our Exports – USD 12.98 billion; Trade deficit – USD 8.31 billion.

Investments:

- ➔ Singapore was the **largest FDI source in FY 2024–25**, contributing USD 14.94 billion.
- ➔ Cumulative FDI (2000–2025): **USD 174.88 billion (24% of India's total FDI inflows)**.

B. Skill Development

Skill Centres:

- ➔ Six centres established (Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Udaipur, Guwahati, Bhubaneswar, Hyderabad).
- ➔ Two projects ongoing in **Bhopal and Gandhinagar**.
- ➔ **MoU on Education & Skills**: Signed during PM Modi's 2024 visit to Singapore.

C. Fintech and Digital Connectivity

- ➔ **UPI–PayNow linkage**: first cross-border P2P payment system with any country.
- ➔ **RuPay card acceptance** enabled in Singapore.
- ➔ **Other Initiatives**:
 - **ONDC–Proxtera** connectivity.
 - **GIFT Connect**: NSE–SGX partnership for unified liquidity pool for NIFTY products.
 - **TradeTrust framework**: for interoperable electronic Bills of Lading (eBLs).

D. Defence and Security Cooperation

- ➔ **Framework Agreements**: Defence Cooperation Agreement (2003); Enhanced Agreement for Defence Cooperation (2015).
- ➔ **Joint Exercises**:
 - **Army**: Exercise Agni Warrior (2024 in India).
 - **Navy**: Exercise SIMBEX (32nd edition in 2025, Singapore).
 - **Air Force**: Joint Military Training (12th edition, India, Oct–Dec 2024).
 - **Tri-lateral**: SITMEX (India–Singapore–Thailand, hosted by India in 2024).
 - **Bold Kurukshetra**: 4th edition held in India (Aug 2025).
 - Singapore co-hosted ASEAN–India Maritime Exercise (2023).

E. Science & Technology Cooperation

Space Collaboration:

- ➔ ISRO launched multiple Singaporean satellites (2011, 2014, 2015, 2023).

Cyber & Emerging Tech:

- ➔ Cyber Policy Dialogue launched (Oct 2024).
- ➔ MoU on Digital Technologies signed in 2024.

F. Indian Community in Singapore

- ➔ **Demographics**: Indians constitute **9% of Singapore's 4.04 million residents** (2020 census).
- ➔ **Sectors**: Significant presence in IT, finance, construction, marine, and education.
- ➔ **Education & Languages**: Tamil (official language); Hindi, Gujarati, Urdu, Bengali, Punjabi also taught in schools.
- ➔ **Thiruvalluvar Cultural Centre**: Announced in September 2024 to boost cultural ties.

- boost capital market linkages (NSE-IFSC-SGX GIFT Connect), and
- enhance space sector ties.
- Inauguration of **Bharat Mumbai Container Terminal Phase-2** at JNPA, developed by Singapore's PSA International, boosting India's container handling capacity.
- **Skills Development**
 - A National Centre of Excellence on Advanced Manufacturing will be set up in Chennai.
 - Cooperation will expand in vocational training, higher education, reskilling, internships, and faculty exchanges.
 - Nursing talent development will continue under India–Singapore programmes.
- **Digital and Technology Cooperation**
 - Expansion of UPI–PayNow digital payment linkage, with 13 new Indian banks joining.
 - Joint work on AI and quantum computing, including AI-ready datasets and applications in agriculture, healthcare, and education.
 - Collaboration under the Joint Working Group on Digital Technologies to promote inclusive and sustainable growth.
 - New agreement in the space sector to enhance cooperation in research and technology.
- **Sustainability**
 - India and Singapore will enhance cooperation in green hydrogen, ammonia trade, urban water management, civil nuclear energy, food security, and climate frameworks under the Paris Agreement.
- **Connectivity**
 - Plans include an **India–Singapore Green and Digital Shipping Corridor**, partnerships in aviation and MRO (*Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul*) sectors, airport development collaboration, expanded air services, and promotion of sustainable aviation fuels.
- **Healthcare and Medicine**
 - The nations will deepen cooperation in public health, disease surveillance, nutrition, digital health, industrial R&D and joint research in medical technologies.
- **Defence and Security**
 - Defence cooperation will grow through joint exercises, technology collaborations (AI, quantum, unmanned vessels), maritime security, submarine rescue, and counter-terrorism efforts.
 - Singapore acknowledged India's role in the **Malacca Straits Patrol**.



India-EU Strategic Roadmap

The European Union has unveiled a new comprehensive **EU-India Strategic Roadmap** to boost cooperation in trade, technology, defence, connectivity, and climate action.

Background

- As the U.S. under President Trump disrupts long-standing global alignments, Europe is presenting itself as a stable and reliable partner for India.
- This shift is underscored by the upcoming India–EU leaders' summit scheduled for February 2026, which will build upon European Commission President **Ursula von der Leyen's** earlier visit to India.

- The recently released strategic framework signals Europe’s intent to position itself as **India’s “all-weather”** friend and a counterbalance to the uncertainties in U.S. foreign policy.

Five Pillars of the New India–EU Strategic Agenda

1. **Prosperity and Sustainability** – covering trade, investment, resilient supply chains, and sustainable development.
2. **Technology and Innovation** – focusing on critical technologies, digital infrastructure, and joint research.
3. **Connectivity and Global Issues** – strengthening cooperation in third countries and global governance.
4. **Security and Defence** – emphasising new agreements, regional stability, and countering traditional and hybrid threats.
5. **Enablers Across Pillars** – promoting skills mobility, mutual understanding, business linkages, research collaboration, and stronger institutional frameworks for EU–India relations.

1. Prosperity and Sustainability: Strengthening India–EU Economic and Trade Ties

- The **EU is India’s largest trading partner**, while India is the EU’s biggest partner in the Global South.
- In 2024, **bilateral trade in goods reached €120 billion** — a 90% rise over the past decade — with services adding another €60 billion.
- Nearly 6,000 European companies operate in India, directly employing 3 million people and indirectly supporting millions more.
- EU foreign direct investment has surged to €140 billion in 2023, nearly doubling in five years.
- Despite these gains, **India accounts for less than 2.5% of the EU’s trade**, and Indian investment in the EU stands at only €10 billion.
- To expand ties, both sides are pushing to finalise a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) by 2025 to cut tariff and non-tariff barriers.

2. India–EU Collaboration on Emerging Technologies

- India and the EU are leveraging complementary strengths to drive innovation.
- The EU offers world-class research, regulation, and green-digital expertise, while India contributes a skilled workforce, vast datasets, a thriving startup ecosystem, and frugal innovation.
- Planned initiatives include **EU-India Innovation Hubs** for key technologies and an **EU-India Startup Partnership** with the European Innovation Council (EIC) and Start-up India.
- Additionally, the Euratom-India agreement will boost collaboration in peaceful nuclear energy, including reactor safety, waste management, nuclear security, and fusion research.

3. India–EU Connectivity and Strategic Corridors

- The EU’s **Global Gateway initiative** (€300 billion) and India’s **MAHASAGAR** programme provide strong platforms for joint connectivity efforts.
- Their 2021 Connectivity Partnership has laid the foundation for cooperation in energy, transport, and digital infrastructure.
- A flagship project is the **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)**, which integrates maritime, rail, digital, energy, and clean hydrogen networks to revive historic Eurasian trade routes.
- Within this, the **EU-Africa-India Digital Corridor** is advancing through the 11,700 km Blue Raman submarine cable system, linking Europe and India via the Mediterranean, Middle East, and East Africa.
 - This will ensure ultrafast, secure, and resilient data connectivity.
- Additionally, India and the EU are developing **Green Shipping Corridors** to promote sustainable maritime trade and reduce reliance on carbon-intensive transport routes, further boosting commercial and strategic opportunities.

4. Deepening India–EU Security and Defence Cooperation

- Strategic Dialogue on Foreign and Security Policy (2025), with thematic discussions on maritime security, cybersecurity, counterterrorism, and non-proliferation.
- A formal **EU-India Security and Defence Partnership** is under consideration.
- Both sides are negotiating a **Security of Information Agreement** to enable classified information sharing.
- On the industrial front, increased collaboration between Indian and EU defence industries aims to strengthen supply chain security, boost innovation, and expand production capabilities.
- Plans include establishing an **EU-India Defence Industry Forum** to connect businesses, share best practices, and explore cooperation opportunities.

5. Strengthening India–EU People-to-People Ties

- India and the EU are deepening social and cultural links. In 2023, 825,000 Indians lived in the EU, forming the largest group receiving Blue Cards and intra-corporate transfer permits.
- Travel has become easier, with nearly **one million Schengen visas** issued in 2024, many as multiple-entry.
- Educational exchanges are expanding through initiatives like the **Union of Skills and Erasmus**, making Europe more attractive for Indian students amid U.S. restrictions under Trump.

25th SCO Summit in Tianjin

- PM Modi attended the **25th SCO Summit** in Tianjin, China, where discussions focused on global governance reform, counter-terrorism, peace and security, economic cooperation, and sustainable development.
- Established in 2001 by founding members China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) now has 10 member states, two observer states and 15 dialogue partners from Asia, Europe and Africa.
 - Laos was granted the 15th partner status during 2025 summit.
- In 2017, at Astana, India and Pakistan officially joined SCO as full members.

Key Documents Signed at the 2025 SCO Summit in Tianjin

- At the 25th Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO in Tianjin, 20 significant documents were signed, shaping the future agenda of the grouping.
- **Strategic Declarations and Resolutions**
 - **Tianjin Declaration** adopted as the central political outcome.
 - **A Development Strategy for 2026–2035** was approved, outlining long-term priorities and direction for the SCO's growth in the next decade.
 - **Cooperation Programme (2026–2030)** to counter extremist ideology within SCO space.
 - Roadmap for **SCO Energy Cooperation** until 2030.
 - SCO granted **observer status** within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).
 - **Cholpon Ata (Kyrgyz Republic)** declared SCO tourist and cultural capital for 2025–2026.
- **Institutional Strengthening**
 - Four new SCO centers were inaugurated with dedicated roles:
 - Countering security threats and challenges.

SCO Tianjin Declaration: Pahalgam Attack Mentioned

- The declaration explicitly condemned the April 2025 Pahalgam terror attack in India
- Other incidents, such as the Jaffer Express hijacking (March) and Khuzdar school bus bombing (May) in Pakistan, were also condemned.
- **Departure from Defence Ministers' Meet**
 - At the SCO Defence Ministers' meeting in Qingdao (June 2025), Pahalgam was omitted from the draft statement due to Pakistan's opposition.
 - India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh refused to sign the statement then, insisting terrorism concerns must be included.
 - Three months later, the leaders' summit corrected this omission, explicitly mentioning Pahalgam and cross-border terrorism.
- **Changing India-China Dynamics**
 - Relations between India and China showed signs of thaw, with PM Modi's first China visit in seven years to meet President Xi Jinping.
 - The Tianjin declaration is seen as a signal of Beijing's willingness to strengthen ties with New Delhi amid US tariff pressures.
 - Despite the shift, the declaration did not name Pakistan for sponsoring terrorism.
 - For India, the mention of Pahalgam is progress, but trust-building with Beijing requires much more.

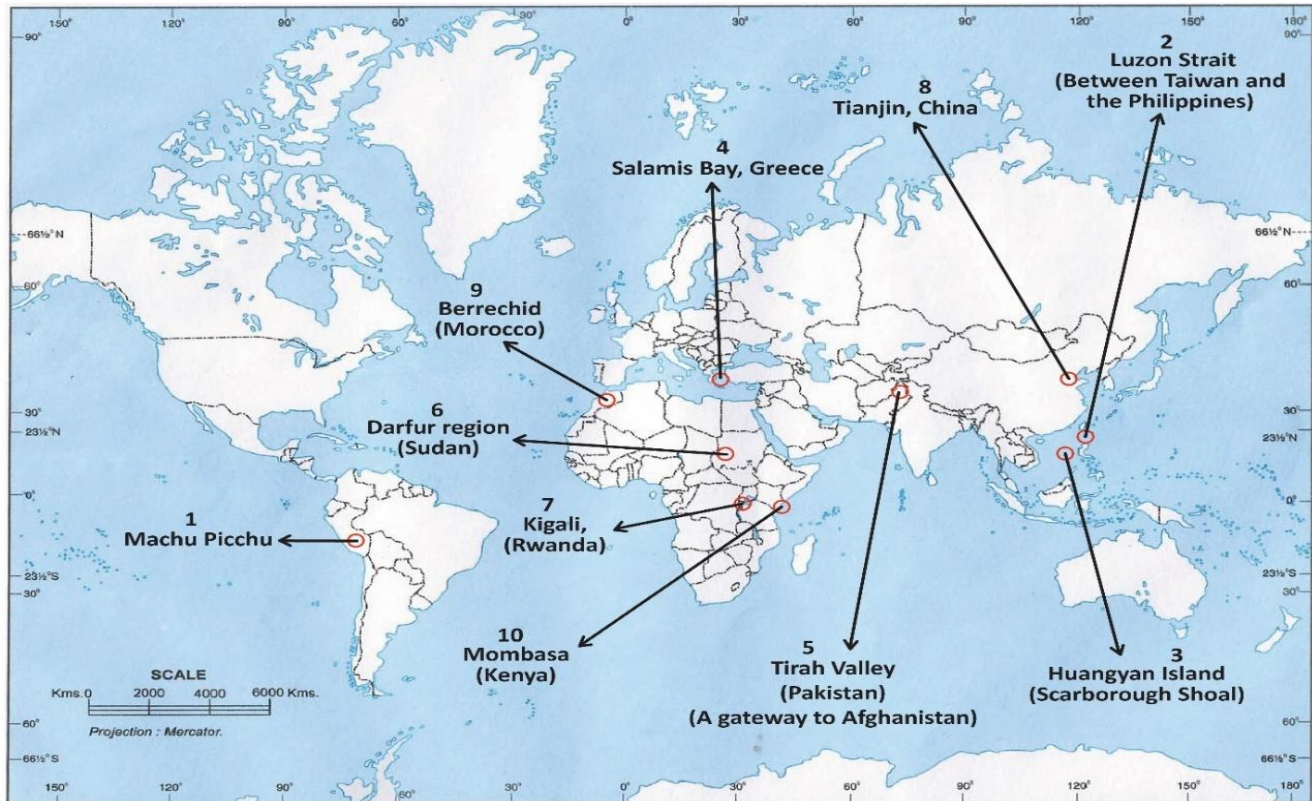
India's Position at 2025 SCO Summit in Tianjin

- In his address, PM Modi outlined **India's SCO vision under three pillars – Security, Connectivity and Opportunity**.
- He stressed that peace and stability are essential for prosperity and called for **firm, coordinated action against terrorism, radicalisation, and terror financing**, while rejecting double standards.
- On **connectivity**, he reaffirmed India's strong backing for projects like the **Chabahar Port** and the **International North-South Transport Corridor**, and highlighted opportunities in **startups, innovation, youth empowerment, and cultural exchange**.
- He also proposed establishing a **Civilizational Dialogue Forum** under SCO to deepen people-to-people ties.
- Supporting SCO's **reform agenda**, PM Modi welcomed new initiatives to counter organised crime, drug trafficking, and cyber threats.
- He urged a similar approach for reforming global institutions, including the **United Nations**, to make them more representative and effective.

- Tackling transnational organized crime.
- Enhancing information and cybersecurity.
- Strengthening anti-drug cooperation.
- Decision taken to establish an SCO Development Bank, aimed at boosting infrastructure development, economic progress, and social cooperation among member states.
- **Expanded Cooperation Platforms**
 - The summit announced initiatives to create new SCO platforms and centers in the fields of:
 - Energy and sustainable growth.
 - Green industry and climate-friendly practices.
 - Digital economy and cybersecurity.
 - Artificial intelligence, tech innovation, and higher education.
 - Vocational and technical education for workforce development.
- **Structural Reforms and Expansion**
 - Major breakthrough in structural reforms: **observer states and dialogue partners were merged into a single category of SCO Partners.**
 - Expanding the SCO into a **27-nation family** (10 members and 17 partners).

MAPS: PLACES IN NEWS

International Places in News

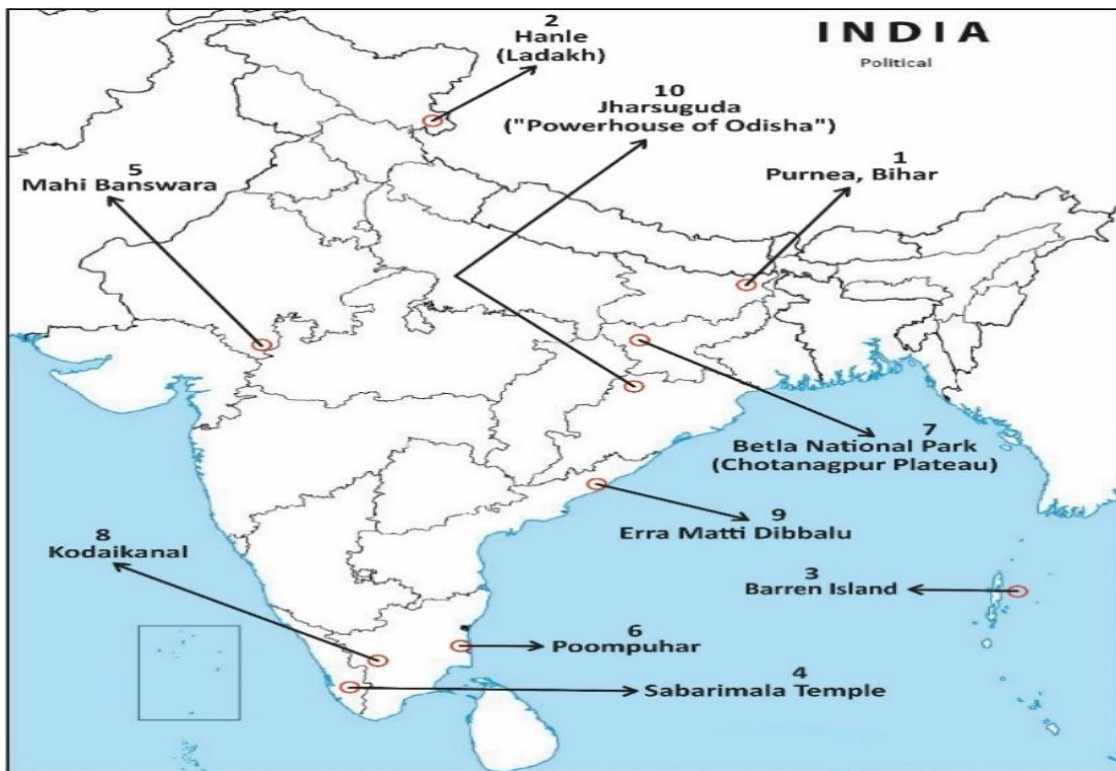


1	Machu Picchu	Peru has evacuated around 1600 tourists from a train station that serves the citadel of Machu Picchu. Location: In the <u>Andes Mountains, southern Peru</u>, near the Urubamba River. Type: 15th-century <u>Inca citadel built of stone</u>, featuring terraces, temples, and urban structures. Architecture & Engineering: Stone structures built with ashlar masonry (carefully cut stones fitting without use of mortar). - Declared a <u>UNESCO World Heritage Site</u> in 1983. One of the New Seven Wonders of the World.
2	Luzon Strait (Between Taiwan and the Philippines)	The Philippines has halted work and classes as <u>Super Typhoon Ragasa</u> barrels toward northern Luzon Strait with winds up to 250 km/h. Location: Connects the South China Sea (west) with the Philippine Sea / Pacific Ocean (east). - Contains numerous islands such as Batanes and Babuyan group forming the northern extension of the Philippine archipelago. Tectonics & Typhoons: Lies on the Philippine Plate boundary; prone to earthquakes and typhoons.
3	Huangyan Island	China announced the creation of a national nature reserve on Huangyan Island (Scarborough Shoal) in the South China Sea.

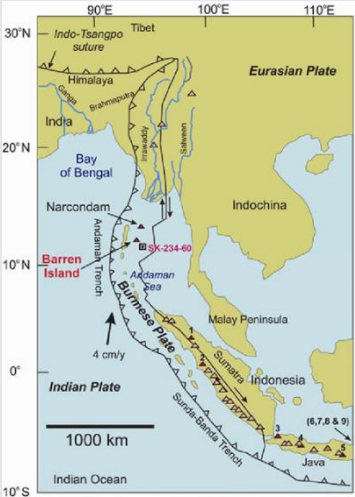
	(Scarborough Shoal)	• Geographical Features: A triangular-shaped shoal (reef). Mostly submerged at high tide, with small rocks exposed. • Territorial Claims: China refers to it as Huangyan Dao, Philippines calls it Panatag Shoal / Scarborough Shoal. Part of South China Sea disputes, within the Nine-Dash Line claimed by China.
4	Salamis Bay, Greece	INS Trikan, a stealth frigate of the Indian Navy, reached Salamis Bay, Greece • Location: Western coast of Salamis Island, near Athens, Greece. Part of the <u>Saronic Gulf in the Aegean Sea</u>. • Historical Significance: Famous for the Battle of Salamis (480 BCE), a decisive naval battle where the Greeks defeated the Persians • Geography & Features: Natural harbor <u>suitable for naval operations</u>.
5	Tirah Valley (Pakistan) (A gateway to Afghanistan)	At least 23 people were killed in a blast in Pakistan Tirah Valley (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province). • Location: Situated in Khyber District. Lies in the <i>Spin Ghar (Safed Koh) mountain range</i>, near the Pak-Afghan border. • Geography & Features: Mountainous valley with rugged terrain and deep gorges. Served as a natural corridor between Afghanistan and the Peshawar Valley.
6	Darfur region (Sudan)	A massive landslide in Sudan's Darfur region has flattened an entire mountain village in the Marra mountains. • Location: Western region of Sudan, bordering Chad, Central African Republic, and Libya. • Geography & Climate: <i>Semi-arid to arid region</i> with savannahs, grasslands, and desert zones. • Site of Darfur conflict (2003–present): armed rebellion by Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA) and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) against the Sudanese government.
7	Kigali, (Rwanda)	Kigali hosted the 2025 <u>UCI Road World Championships</u>, marking the first time the major road cycling competition was held in Africa. • Location: Situated on Rwanda's central plateau, near the Virunga Mountains. • "Cleanest city in Africa" via zero-tolerance waste policies; promotes gender equality (64% women in parliament) and refugee hosting. • Kigali Amendment (2016) to Montreal Protocol on HFCs highlights climate leadership.
8	Tianjin, China	25th meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit was held in Tianjin, China. • Location: At the Hai River's mouth into the Bohai Gulf (Yellow Sea), bordering Beijing and Hebei. • Major Port & Gateway: Tianjin Port is ranked among the world's top 10 busiest port and the largest in Northern China, serving as the main maritime gateway for Beijing.
9	Berrechid (Morocco)	India's first overseas defence manufacturing facility was inaugurated in Berrechid, Morocco.

		• Location: On the <i>fertile Chaouia Plain in western Morocco</i>; drained by Oum Er-Rbia River tributaries; part of the Casablanca-Settat economic corridor.
10	Mombasa (Kenya)	Indian Navy's first training squadron called at Mombasa, to strengthen maritime ties with Kenya (part of the "MAHASAGAR" initiative) • Location: Mombasa is a major port city on Kenya's coast, Indian Ocean. It includes Mombasa Island and adjacent mainland. It is the second-largest city in Kenya. • Geography & Climate: Tropical coastal climate; beaches; historically a hub for trade (fishing, shipping, etc.). • City's <i>Old Town and iconic Fort Jesus</i> is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

National Places in News

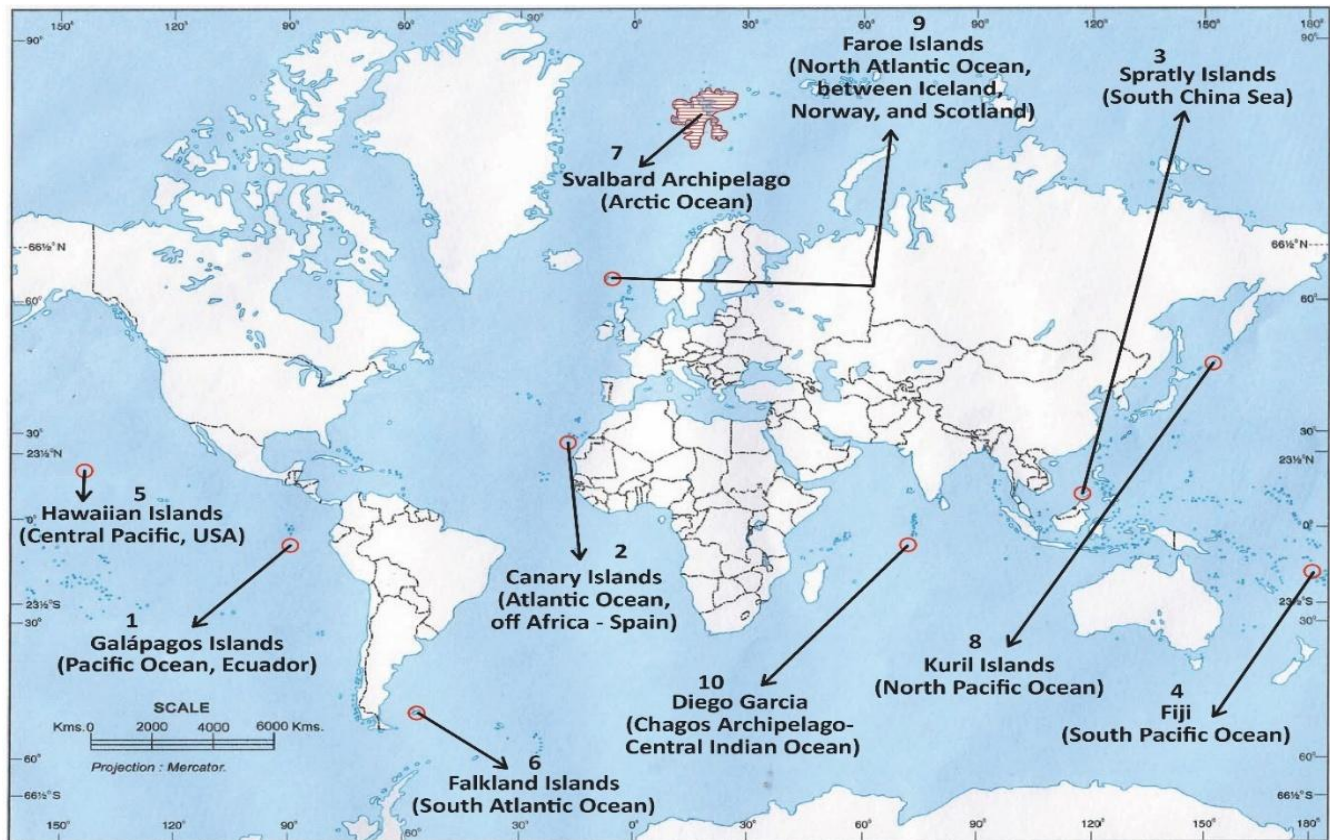


1	Purnea, Bihar	PM Modi inaugurated the <i>National Makhana Board in Purnea</i>, Bihar as part of the Union Budget 2025 initiative. • Purnea was established by the East India Company <i>in the year 1770</i>. • Geography & Climate: The district is formed of <i>alluvial soils</i>; is very fertile. Rivers from the Himalayas (like the Kosi, Mahananda, Suwara Kali, K.oli, Panar) traverse the district.
2	Hanle (Ladakh)	Landscape of Hanle, the jet-black skies reveal starry skies that lure travellers. • Location: Remote village in Leh district, in the Changthang region of Ladakh. • Astronomical Observatory: Indian Astronomical Observatory (IAO) is located here. It's one of the highest observatories in the world. • MACE Telescope: The Major Atmospheric Cerenkov Experiment Telescope (MACE) is built at Hanle. It is among the <i>highest altitude gamma-ray telescopes</i>.

		• Dark Sky Reserve: Hanle has been officially notified as <i>India's first Dark Sky Reserve</i>.
3	Barren Island	On 13th September and 20th September 2025, the Barren Island Volcano (<i>India's and South Asia's only active volcano</i>) erupted twice. ✓ Prior to the 20th September eruption, a magnitude 4.2 earthquake was recorded near the Indian Plate–Burma (Myanmar) Microplate boundary. ✓ First recorded eruption: 1787 followed by activity in 1789, 1795, 1803-04, and 1852 ✓ Major eruption: 1991 after 204 years of dormancy (Volcanic Explosivity Index – VEI 2). ✓ Last eruption before 2025: 2022 Geological Features of Barren Island • A stratovolcano (layered volcano) Composed mainly of basalt and andesite rocks. • Lies on the West Andaman Fault Line, a tectonic boundary where the Indian Plate subducts beneath the Sunda Plate. • Part of the subduction zone of the Indo-Burmese Arc, which is linked to frequent earthquakes and volcanic activity in Southeast Asia. 
4	Sabarimala Temple	The Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) has announced Global Ayyappa Sangamam for development of the Sabarimala temple. • Location and Significance: A major Hindu pilgrimage site in the <i>Periyar Tiger Reserve</i>, Pathanamthitta district, Kerala • The temple is known for its <i>18 sacred steps (Pathinettampadi)</i>, covered in gold, leading to the sanctum. • Uniqueness: Symbol of austerity and inclusivity — <i>pilgrims of all faiths</i> are welcomed. A mosque dedicated to Vavar, Ayyappa's companion, is nearby.
5	Mahi Banswara	PM Modi laid the foundation of the <i>Mahi Banswara Rajasthan Atomic Power Project at Napla</i> near the Mahi Dam. • Location & Background: Banswara district in southern Rajasthan, also called "City of Hundred Islands" because of numerous islands in the Mahi River. ✓ Lies in the <i>tribal belt of Rajasthan–Madhya Pradesh–Gujarat tri-junction</i>. • In Rajasthan, Mahi is the <i>only river that flows southward</i> and is perennial, unlike many seasonal rivers.
6	Poompuhar	Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology launches underwater explorations at ancient port city Poompuhar • Location: A historic town on the east coast of Tamil Nadu, <i>near the mouth of the Kaveri River</i>. • Ancient Name: Known as <i>Kaveripattinam or Puhar in Sangam literature</i>. • Historical Significance: It was a major port city and capital of the Chola dynasty during the early centuries CE.
		Betla National Park in Jharkhand becomes <i>India's first to host an AI-enabled nature centre</i> with virtual reality (VR), Augmented reality (AR) holograms.

7	Betla National Park (Chotanagpur Plateau)	• Established: Declared a National Park in 1986; originally part of the Palamau Tiger Reserve (1974) under Project Tiger. • Name Origin: <u>BETLA</u> (key fauna) = acronym for Bison, Elephant, Tiger, Leopard, Axis (deer). • Flora: <u>Tropical and dry deciduous forests</u>: Sal, Bamboo, Palash, Mahua trees dominate.
8	Kodaikanal	Dolmens in Kodaikanal, megalithic structures dating over 5,000 years, reportedly face destruction due to road construction and urban expansion. • Location: A famous hill station in the Dindigul district of Tamil Nadu, situated in the <i>Palani Hills of the Western Ghats</i>. • Natural Features: Kodaikanal Lake (man-made, star-shaped, boating hub); Coaker's Walk (viewpoint); Pillar Rocks, Green Valley View, Bryant Park (botanical garden); Silver Cascade Waterfall • Biodiversity: Surrounded by shola forests, grasslands, and eucalyptus plantations; Known for <u>Kurunji</u> flowers that bloom once every 12 years. • Famous for <u>Kodaikanal Solar Observatory</u> (established in 1899, for astrophysical studies).
9	Erra Matti Dibbalu	Erra Matti Dibbalu (Red Sand Dunes) near Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, have been added to the UNESCO Tentative List. • Type of formation: Coastal red sand dunes — <i>mixture of sand, silt, clay etc., with iron-rich minerals</i> that give the red colour. • Age: Formed around the <i>Last Glacial Maximum</i>, roughly 12,000 to 18,500 years ago (Late Quaternary). • Archaeological finds: Artefacts from <u>prehistoric humans</u> indicate early human settlement / usage. • Declared a <u>National Geo-heritage Monument</u> by the Geological Survey of India (GSI) in 2016.
10	Jharsuguda ("Powerhouse of Odisha")	PM Modi unveils ₹60000 crore projects in Odisha's Jharsuguda, focusing on telecommunications, railways, and higher education. • Location: Borders Chhattisgarh; drained by the Mahanadi River; rich in minerals like coal (Mahanadi Coalfields), fireclay, quartzite, and bauxite. • GAIL LNG pipeline: The <u>Mumbai-Nagpur-Jharsuguda LNG pipeline</u> is nearing completion in many segments.

Major Islands & Archipelagos around the World



1	Galápagos Islands (Pacific Ocean, Ecuador)	Volcanic archipelago (19 main islands, 100+ smaller islets) Biodiversity: UNESCO World Heritage Site (1978); known as a <u>“living laboratory of evolution.”</u> Endemic species: Galápagos giant tortoise, marine iguana, blue-footed booby, Darwin’s finches. Geological Significance: Volcanic origin; hotspot islands like Hawaii; still geologically active.
2	Canary Islands (Atlantic Ocean, off Africa - Spain)	Location: off the northwest coast of Africa (near Morocco & Western Sahara). Geological Origin: Volcanic archipelago (7 main islands); includes Mount Teide (Tenerife) – <u>Spain’s highest peak & 3rd largest volcano</u> on Earth. Biodiversity: Rich in endemic species (Canary pine, laurel forests); marine biodiversity due to location in <u>upwelling zone</u>.
3	Spratly Islands (South China Sea)	Location: critical maritime zone connecting Pacific & Indian Oceans. ✓ Spratly Islands: Scattered reefs, islets & atolls (~100); claimed by China, Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei. Geopolitical Significance: Flashpoint of tensions – part of China’s “Nine-Dash Line” claim; US supports “Freedom of Navigation Operations” (FONOPs).
4	Fiji (South Pacific Ocean)	Location: Archipelago of 300+ islands situated to the northeast of New Zealand & east of Australia. Geological Origin: Volcanic & coral islands; surrounded by reefs and lagoons.
5	Hawaiian Islands (Central Pacific, USA)	Location: 50th state of the USA (since 1959); <i>only U.S. state located outside North America.</i>

		• Geological Origin: Hotspot volcanism; includes <i>Mauna Loa</i> (largest volcano on Earth) & <i>Kilauea</i> (most active). • Strategic Importance: Hosts <u>Pearl Harbor Naval Base</u> (major U.S. Indo-Pacific command); vital for Pacific security.
6	Falkland Islands (South Atlantic Ocean)	• Location: ~500 km east of southern Argentina; near Patagonia coast. • Geography: ~778 islands; main islands: East Falkland & West Falkland; cold, windy climate; rich wildlife (penguins, seals). • Historical Significance: <u>Falklands War (1982)</u>: Argentina invaded; Britain re-captured after 74 days. Still a sovereignty dispute.
7	Svalbard Archipelago (Arctic Ocean)	• Location: north of mainland Norway; between Norway & the North Pole. (<u>Gateway to Arctic Ocean & Northern Sea Route</u> (NSR)) • Political Status: Under sovereignty of Norway but governed by the <u>Svalbard Treaty (1920)</u> – gives citizens of signatory nations equal rights to live, work & exploit resources. • Scientific Importance: <u>Svalbard Global Seed Vault</u> (doomsday vault) – stores backup of world's crop seeds for future food security.
8	Kuril Islands (North Pacific Ocean)	• Location: Stretches from Hokkaido (Japan) to Kamchatka Peninsula (Russia); volcanic island chain. • Political Status: Controlled by Russia; claimed by Japan (called Northern Territories in Japan). • Geography & Geology: 56 volcanic islands; part of Pacific <u>"Ring of Fire"</u>; earthquakes and tsunamis common; mountainous terrain. • Strategic Importance: Controls <u>access between Sea of Okhotsk and Pacific Ocean</u>; important naval & air military positioning.
9	Faroe Islands (North Atlantic Ocean, between Iceland, Norway, and Scotland)	• Geography & Climate: 18 volcanic islands; rugged terrain; <u>subpolar oceanic climate</u>; frequent storms and fog. • Political Status: Autonomous territory of Denmark; self-governing in most domestic matters; foreign affairs & defense handled by Denmark. • Strategic Importance: Important for <i>North Atlantic maritime routes</i>; potential military interest in NATO and Arctic operations.
10	Diego Garcia (Chagos Archipelago-Central Indian Ocean)	• Location: South of the Maldives • Geography & Climate: <u>Coral atoll; tropical climate; lagoon and reefs</u>; remote location. • Political Status: Part of the <i>British Indian Ocean Territory</i> (BIOT); sovereignty claimed by <i>Mauritius</i>. • Strategic Importance: <u>US military base</u> – key naval and air facility; crucial for Indian Ocean security, surveillance, and logistics.

NCRB Report 2023

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) has released its Crime in India 2023 report (after a two-year gap), highlighting a significant increase in cybercrime cases.

Key Findings of the Report

- **Overall crime statistics:**
 - The data reflects a **7.2% overall increase in recorded crimes**, reaching 6.24 million cases (crimes **every five seconds** on average in 2023).
 - **Traditional violent crimes** such as murder (↓2.8%) and rape (↓5.9%) have **declined**.
 - But **cybercrime, economic offences, and miscellaneous crimes** like obstruction on public way (Sec.283 IPC - ↑62%) and Motor Vehicle Act violations (↑103%) have **surged**.
- **Offences against vulnerable sections:**
 - **Crime against women:** Marginal rise of 0.7% (448,211 cases).
 - **Crimes against SCs:** ↑0.4% (57,789 cases).
 - **Crimes against children:** ↑9.2%.
 - **Crimes against STs:** ↑28.8%.

Cybercrime Trends:

- **Rising:** Cybercrime cases **rose 31.2% in 2023**, reaching 86,420 cases compared to 65,893 in 2022. **The cybercrime rate** increased from 4.8% in 2022 to 6.2% in 2023.
- **Consistent rise since 2018**
 - **Motives behind cybercrimes:** Data **reflects growing vulnerabilities in India's digital ecosystem**, with fraud, extortion, and sexual exploitation emerging as dominant motives behind such crimes.
 - **Fraud:** 68.9% of total cases (59,526 cases) – **the largest category**.
 - **Sexual exploitation:** 4.9% (4,199 cases).
 - **Extortion:** 3.8% (3,326 cases).

State-Wise Data on Cyber crime:

- **Karnataka:** Highest with 21,889 cases in 2023 (sharp rise from 8,136 in 2021 and 12,556 in 2022). Included 18,166 cases of cheating by personation and 1,007 obscene video transfers.
- **Telangana:** 18,236 cases in 2023 (up from 15,297 in 2022).
- **Uttar Pradesh:** 10,794 cases in 2023 (up from 10,117 in 2022).

Economic Offences (Broader Category):

- **Total cases in 2023:** 2,04,973 (6% increase from 1,93,385 in 2022).
- **Categories:**
 - Forgery, cheating and fraud (**FCF**) – 1,81,553 cases.
 - Criminal breach of trust – 22,759 cases.
 - Counterfeiting – 661 cases.

Analysis and Implications:

- **Crime patterns shifting:** From traditional violent crimes to economic and technology-driven crimes.

- **Shift in crime categorisation and tracking:** It is the **last annual report under the IPC**, as the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) came into force in July 2024.
- **Digital fraud:** It is the **biggest challenge** in India's cybercrime landscape. The concentration of cases in Karnataka, Telangana, and UP suggests **urbanisation, IT penetration, and digital adoption** are key drivers.
- **Economic offences' steady rise:** Highlights the need for **robust financial cybersecurity mechanisms**.

Way Ahead

- **Strengthening cybersecurity infrastructure** and digital literacy programs are crucial.
- **Equipping law enforcement agencies:** With advanced cyber forensic tools and training.
- **Enhanced public-private collaboration:** In monitoring, prevention, and quick response mechanisms.
- **Multi-stakeholder approach:** Covering government, judiciary, tech companies, and citizens—can mitigate risks and build a resilient digital ecosystem.

SC Ruling on Anand Marriage Act Rekindles Old Debate

The Supreme Court has ordered 17 states and 8UTs to frame rules within four months for registering Sikh marriages under the **Anand Marriage Act, 1909**. Until then, Anand Karaj marriages must be registered under existing marriage laws.

The ruling aims to ensure uniform legal recognition of Sikh marriages across India. However, critics argue that while the directive addresses procedural gaps, it does not fix deeper shortcomings in the Act itself, leaving broader issues unresolved.

Anand Marriage Act and Its 2012 Amendment

- Anand Karaj, meaning “blissful union,” is the Sikh marriage ceremony conducted before the Guru Granth Sahib.
- To solemnise the marriage, the couple walks around the Guru Granth Sahib four times, as hymns, known as laavan, are recited.
 - The four chosen verses, **composed by Guru Ram Das**, the fourth Sikh Guru, outline the spiritual journey of a married couple.
- To secure distinct legal recognition for this practice, the **Anand Marriage Act, 1909** was enacted, validating all marriages solemnised through Anand Karaj and distinguishing them from Hindu rituals.
- However, the original Act lacked provisions for registration.
- This gap was filled over a century later by the **Anand Marriage (Amendment) Act, 2012**, which inserted Section 6 mandating states to frame rules for registering such marriages.
- Once registered under this Act, couples no longer need to register under any other marriage law.

State Inaction and Supreme Court's Intervention

- Despite the **2012 Amendment** mandating registration rules for Anand Karaj marriages, most states and Union Territories failed to act, denying Sikh couples legal certificates essential for residence, maintenance, inheritance, and succession.
- Highlighting this inaction, petitions were filed in the Supreme Court in 2022, arguing that uneven access to rights disenfranchised the community.
- As a result, the Court directed all states and UTs to frame rules within four months, stressing that in a secular framework, Anand Karaj marriages must be registered on par with others.
- It placed a **positive duty on states** to create workable registration systems and clarified that applications cannot be refused merely because rules have not been notified.

Ongoing Debate on Sikh Marriage Rights

- Despite legal recognition through the **Anand Marriage Act, 1909** and its **2012 Amendment**, most Sikh couples still register marriages under the **Hindu Marriage Act, 1955**, which also governs divorce and disputes.
- The Anand Act lacks provisions for divorce or matrimonial issues, forcing Sikhs to rely on Hindu law, undermining their distinct religious identity.
- Community leaders and scholars argue that Sikhs need a **comprehensive marriage law** similar to those for Muslims and Christians.
- Critics highlight that the Anand Act, barely a page long, is symbolic rather than substantive, offering limited rights and failing to fully recognise Sikhs as a separate community.

Importance of Marriage Registration

- The Supreme Court stressed that marriage registration is essential for equality, civil administration, and legal proof of status in matters such as residence, maintenance, inheritance, insurance, succession, and monogamy.
- It also safeguards the rights of women and children.
- Emphasising uniformity, the bench stated that in a secular framework, marriages solemnised by **Anand Karaj** must be recorded and certified on the same footing as other marriages to ensure both religious respect and civic equality.

Himachal Pradesh Becomes Fully Literate State

Himachal Pradesh has been declared 'fully literate', joining Goa, Ladakh, Mizoram, and Tripura. However, 'fully literate' does not imply 100% literacy. It means the state has achieved a literacy rate above 95%, with Himachal recording 99.3%.

Other states also fall in this category, though none have absolute universal literacy.

Defining Literacy and Full Literacy in India

- The Ministry of Education defines **literacy as the ability to read, write, and compute with comprehension, including skills like digital and financial literacy**.
- A State/UT is considered 'fully literate' when it achieves 95% literacy.
- These definitions were issued in August 2023 for the ULLAS programme, launched in 2022 to promote adult education for those above 15.
- Aimed at achieving 100% literacy by 2030, ULLAS aligns with the UN's SDG 4 and India's National Education Policy 2020.

ULLAS Programme

- **ULLAS (Understanding Lifelong Learning for All in Society)** is a national adult education initiative launched in 2022 by the Ministry of Education.
- It targets individuals aged 15 and above who missed formal schooling, aiming to equip them with reading, writing, numeracy, digital skills, and financial literacy.
- The programme aligns with the National Education Policy 2020 and the UN Sustainable Development Goal of achieving 100% literacy by 2030.
- **How Literacy is Attained under ULLAS**
 - Adults are taught basic reading, writing, and arithmetic (up to Class 3 level), along with practical skills like reading time, using calendars, handling money, writing cheques, and making safe digital transactions.

Other adult literacy schemes

- In the 1960s-70s, the Centre and several states ran programs targeting literacy among farmers and women.
- The National Adult Education Programme was launched in 1978 to eliminate illiteracy in the 15-35 age group.
- The National Literacy Mission, which ran from 1988 to 2009, also targeted this age bracket.
- In 2009, the UPA government launched the 'Saakshar Bharat' (Literate India) scheme which it ran until 2018. Meant for people aged 15 and above, it also focused on functional literacy and numeracy.

- Training is delivered via a mobile app or offline by students and community volunteers.
- Learners then take the **Functional Literacy Numeracy Assessment Test (FLNAT)**, a 150-mark test in their chosen language.
- Successful candidates are certified by the **National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS)** as having achieved foundational literacy and numeracy.

Process of Becoming a 'Fully Literate' State

- To achieve the 'fully literate' tag, states first identify adults lacking literacy through door-to-door surveys or data records.
- These individuals are trained under the ULLAS programme and tested through **FLNAT**.

Measuring Literacy in India

- In the 2011 Census, literacy was defined as the ability to read and write with understanding in any language for those aged seven and above.
- The literacy rate stood at **80.9% for men** and **64.6% for women**, while adult literacy (15+) was 69.3%.
- Subsequent surveys have tracked progress. The **NSS 71st round (2014)** reported 71% adult literacy nationally, with Mizoram at 96%, Goa at 90%, Himachal at 83%, and Tripura at 86%.
- The **PLFS 2023-24** estimated a national literacy rate of 77.5%, with Mizoram (98.2%), Goa (93.6%), Tripura (93.7%), and Himachal (88.8%) among the top performers.
- However, 22.3% of Indians aged 15+ were still not literate, with the highest levels in Bihar (33.1%), Andhra Pradesh (31.5%), and Madhya Pradesh (28.9%).

Geotagging Buildings in Census

India's 2027 Census will introduce several firsts, including digital enumeration, self-enumeration, and caste counting after 1931.

A major innovation will be **geotagging of all buildings** across the country. Each structure will be assigned precise GPS coordinates using mobile devices, ensuring accurate mapping of households and institutions. This will help remove duplication, improve coverage, and create a reliable spatial database to aid urban planning, infrastructure development, and better targeting of welfare schemes.

About Geotagging

- Geotagging is the process of marking a **building's exact latitude-longitude coordinates on a Geographic Information System (GIS) map**.

Number of Buildings in India (Census 2011)

- In Census 2011, a '**Census House**' was defined as any building or part of a building with a separate main entrance, used as a distinct unit.
- Such houses could be occupied or vacant, and used for residential, non-residential, or mixed purposes.
- The Census recorded **330.84 million houses** across India, of which **306.16 million were occupied** and **24.67 million vacant**.

CENSUS BASICS

THE POPULATION CENSUS has been conducted since 1872; the 2027 Census will be the 16th such exercise, and the eighth since Independence.

A RANGE OF DATA, including data on housing conditions, amenities and assets, demography, religion, language, literacy and education, economic activity, migration, fertility, etc., are collected along with the headcount of individuals at the village, town, and ward levels.

INDIA'S POPULATION was 1.21 billion as of March 1, 2011. India is now estimated to have surpassed China to become the most populous nation in the world.

A BUDGET of Rs 14,618.95 crore has been sought by the Office of the Registrar General of India (RGI), which is under the Ministry of Home Affairs, for the conduct of Census 2027, according to sources.

MORE THAN 34 LAKH enumerators and field functionaries are expected to be involved in conducting the Census. The enumerators will use their own smartphones for collecting data. In the Socio Economic and Caste Census 2011 (SECC), dedicated handheld tablets provided by Bharat Electronics Limited were used.

- Rural areas accounted for **220.70 million houses**, while **110.14 million were in urban areas**.

How Geotagging Will Be Conducted in Census 2027?

- Geotagging will take place during the **Houselisting Operations (HLO)**, the first phase of the Census scheduled for April–September 2026.
- The second phase, **Population Enumeration** (will begin in February 2027) will record demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural details.
 - In Ladakh, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, it will begin earlier in September 2026.
- **Role of Enumerators**
 - Enumerators will visit all buildings within their assigned Houselisting Blocks (HLBs) — clearly demarcated areas in villages or town wards with notional maps.
 - Using Digital Layout Mapping (DLM) and smartphone apps, they will switch on location services and geotag each building.
 - The exercise will record the number of Census Houses and Households in each building.
 - Buildings will be classified as residential, non-residential, partly residential, or landmarks.
- **Definition of Household**
 - As per Census 2011, a household is a group of people normally living together and sharing meals from a common kitchen, unless prevented by work conditions.

Benefits of Geotagging in the Census

- The government already uses geotagging on a smaller scale, such as for tracking houses built under **Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (PMAY)** in rural and urban areas, demonstrating its practical usefulness.

Sample Registration Survey Statistical Report 2023

The Office of the Registrar General of India (RGI) released the Sample Registration Survey (SRS) Statistical Report for 2023.

Key Insights from SRS Statistical Report 2023

- **Fertility & Births:**
 - **Crude Birth Rate (CBR):** Declined from 19.1 (2022) to 18.4 (2023). **Highest:** Bihar (25.8); **Lowest:** Tamil Nadu (12.0)
 - **Total Fertility Rate (TFR):** Declined to 1.9 in 2023 (below replacement level 2.1). **Highest:** Bihar (2.8); **Lowest:** Delhi (1.2). 18 States/UTs have TFR below replacement.
 - ✓ TFR is the average number of children a woman is expected to have during her reproductive years (15-49 years).
 - **Rural-Urban:** Rural women (2.1) have on average one child more than urban women (1.5).
- **Mortality:**
 - **Crude Death Rate (CDR):** Declined from 6.8 (2022) to 6.4 (2023). **Highest:** Chhattisgarh (8.3); **Lowest:** Delhi (4.5)

SRS

- ✓ **About:** The SRS is the largest demographic survey in the world, covering about 8.8 million people. It provides annual estimates of fertility as well as mortality indicators at the State and National level (separately for rural and urban areas).
- ✓ **Conducting Authority:** Office of the **Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India (under the Ministry of Home Affairs)**.
- ✓ **Method (Dual Record System):**
 - ✓ **Continuous Enumeration:** A part-time local enumerator continuously records all births and deaths in a sample of villages/urban blocks.
 - ✓ **Half-Yearly Survey:** A full-time supervisor independently conducts a retrospective survey every six months to capture the same events.
 - ✓ **Matching & Verification:** Records from both sources are matched. Any unmatched or partially matched events are re-verified in the field. This ensures **accuracy, removes duplication, and makes SRS self-evaluating**.
- ✓ **Sample Design:** is based on **Census 2011 Frame**. It uses **stratified random sampling** in both rural (villages) and urban (Census Enumeration Blocks) areas. Sampling frame is **revised every 10 years** (last in 2014).
- ✓ **Indicators Covered:** Birth Rate, Death Rate, IMR, Under-5 Mortality, Fertility Rates, SRB, Age-specific mortality/fertility, maternal & child health indicators, etc.
- ✓ **Key Advantage:** By combining **continuous real-time reporting** with **independent verification**, SRS produces **high-quality demographic data** even where civil registration is incomplete. Thus, helping in **policy planning, monitoring demographic trends**, and designing **health and population programs**.

- **Infant Mortality Rate (IMR):** Fell to 25 per 1,000 live births in 2023 (down 7 points in last 5 years). **Highest:** Chhattisgarh, MP, UP (37); **Lowest:** Kerala (5). Still, 1 in 40 infants die before age 1 (1 in 36 in rural, 1 in 56 in urban).
- **Under-5 Mortality Rate (U5MR):** Declined from 30 (2022) to 29 (2023).
- **Neonatal Mortality:** Remains the largest contributor to infant deaths, though falling.
- **Perinatal Mortality Rate (PMR) & Stillbirth Rate:** Reported separately, reflecting improvements in maternal-newborn care.
- **Sex Ratio:**
 - **Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB): National average:** 917 girls per 1000 boys (2021-23). **Highest:** Chhattisgarh (974), Kerala (971); **Lowest:** Uttarakhand (868); Bihar's decline: From 964 (2020) → 897 (2023).
 - **Rural-Urban (2021-23):** 914 (rural), 925 (urban).
- **Population Composition & Demographic Transition:**
 - **Children (0-14 years):** 24.2% of population (25.9% in rural, 21.1% in urban).
 - **Working-age (15-59 years):** 66.1% overall (64.6% rural, 68.8% urban).
 - **Elderly (60+):** Rose to 9.7% in 2023 (up 0.7% in a year). **Highest:** Kerala (15%); **Lowest:** Assam, Delhi, Jharkhand (~7.6-7.7%).
 - **Gender trends:** Males dominate younger ages; females outnumber males in 60+.

Significance

- **Demographic Shift:** India is moving towards population stabilization, with fertility dropping below replacement in most states.
- **Regional Disparity:** North Indian states (Bihar, UP, MP, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh) still have higher fertility, while southern and western states are aging faster.
- **Ageing Challenge:** With a rising elderly share, India will face growing needs in healthcare, pensions, and social support.
- **Policy Direction:** The government must balance leveraging the young workforce (demographic dividend) while preparing for a greying population.

Overall Trends (2018-2023)

- CBR: Declined by 1.6 points (from 20.0 to 18.4).
- TFR: Declined by 0.3 points (from 2.2 to 1.9).
- IMR: Declined by 7 points (from 32 to 25).
- SRB: Improved slightly (from 914 in 2020-22 to 917 in 2021-23).

Immigration & Foreigners Orders, 2025

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) recently notified the Immigration and Foreigners Order, 2025 and the Immigration and Foreigners (Exemption) Order, 2025 under Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025.

The Immigration and Foreigners Order, 2025	Immigration And Foreigners (Exemption) Order, 2025
It replaces earlier Foreigners Orders (1948, 1958, 1963, 1964) to provide a comprehensive framework for entry, stay, movement, and exit of foreigners in India. Key Provisions • Entry and Stay: Foreigners may be denied entry if linked to anti-national /terrorist /espionage /organized crime, drug or human trafficking, cybercrime, money laundering, or use of fake documents, linked to banned orgs (UAPA, 1967) or UN sanctions. ◦ Immigration officers (IOs) may deny entry in public/national interest (subject to central review). ◦ Bureau of Immigration (BoI) will maintain a blacklist of barred foreigners (periodic review allowed). • Exit from India: Exit may be denied if: pending court proceedings, public health risk, adverse impact on foreign relations, or prohibited by Govt. ◦ IOs may restrict exit if against public interest (reviewable by Centre). BoI will maintain list of restricted persons. • Monitoring and Data Collection: Mandatory biometric capture (fingerprints, iris, face) for visa applicants and foreigners in India (Validity- 10 years). Foreigners must submit to checks, inspections, and data collection. ◦ Exceptions: minors, persons with damaged/absent fingerprints. • Restrictions on Foreigners: They cannot hold public service posts (limited exceptions). Restrictions on residence, movement, associations, or possessions may be imposed. Need approval for sensitive sectors (defense, telecom, nuclear, energy, HR). ◦ Prior approval required for films, documentaries, media work, and mountaineering near sensitive borders (especially for peaks near borders with China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan). • Illegal Immigrants: Immigration, border forces, and state authorities empowered to detect, detain, and deport illegal immigrants. Searches of aircraft, ships, premises allowed. Biometric and nationality records maintained. Deportation expenses can be recovered from foreigner's assets. • Protected and Restricted Areas: Foreigners need special permit for PA/RA (applied via FRRO online portal). Bhutanese nationals exempt (except of Afghan/Chinese/Pakistani origin). Special provisions for Afghani, Chinese, Pakistani, Bangladeshi nationals. • Prohibited Places: Foreigners entry is barred in prohibited places (sensitive defense /security / research installations under Official Secrets Act, 1923 or govt. notification). Special permits needed. • Foreigners Tribunals (FTs): are quasi-judicial bodies tasked with deciding whether a person is a foreigner under the Foreigners Act, 1946. It may also hear appeals linked to Citizenship Act, 1955 and NRC processes (earlier unique to Assam). ◦ Constitution: Can be set up by the Centre, State, UT administration, District Collector, or District Magistrate. Each Tribunal may have up to 3 members with judicial experience (appointed by Central Government), one of whom is Chairperson. ◦ Procedure: Show cause notice served within 10 days; burden of proof on alleged foreigner; 10 days to reply + 10 days to submit evidence; bail possible if documents produced. ▪ If unable to prove citizenship, the person may be sent to a holding centre (detention). ▪ Cases are to be disposed within 60 days (appeals within 120 days). Ex parte orders (passed in the presence of only one party) can be reviewed within 30 days. ◦ Powers: Same as a civil court under Civil Procedure Code (CPC), 1908 and a Judicial Magistrate (First Class) under Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023 for summoning witnesses, examining on oath, requiring production of documents and issuing warrants of arrest.	It supersedes Registration of Foreigners (Exemption) Order, 1957 and Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Order, 2007 to consolidate exemptions for passports, visas, travel documents. Key Provisions of the Order: • Exemptions for Indian Nationals: Indian Armed Forces personnel on duty + families in govt. transport exempt. ◦ Indian citizens entering via Nepal/Bhutan land/air borders. • Exemptions for Foreign Nationals: Nepalese & Bhutanese citizens allowed free entry, passport needed only if arriving from China, Pakistan, Macau, Hong Kong. ◦ Tibetan refugees registered with Indian authorities exempt. ◦ Minority communities (Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, Christian) from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan entering before 31 Dec 2024 due to persecution, even without/expired docs are exempted. ◦ Registered Sri Lankan Tamil nationals sheltered up to 9 Jan 2015 are also exempted. • Visa Exemptions in Special Cases: Foreigners with diplomatic/official passports as per agreements. ◦ Eligible foreigners for visa-on-arrival at designated entry points. ◦ Foreign military on naval warships for exercises, goodwill, disaster relief, etc. • Exemptions for Carriers (Rail/Road/Air/Sea): in cases like- forged docs (undetectable without expert check), stowaways (if repatriated), diverted flights/ships, or if passengers are covered under exemptions. 

Section 3 of Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025

It provides for valid passport (and visa for foreigners) required for entry/exit, unless exempted under Sec. 33 or agreements. Entry/stay may be denied on security, sovereignty, foreign relations, or health grounds. Departure barred if presence needed. Officers can verify/seize invalid documents. Central Government holds overall authority.

- ✓ **Section 33 of the act** allows the Government to exempt citizens or classes of citizens of specified countries; individual foreigners or groups of foreigners, and carriers (airlines, ships, etc.) in public interest or under international obligations.

Implications of Immigration & Foreigners Orders, 2025

- **Security & Surveillance Strengthened:** Wider powers to deny entry/exit on grounds of terrorism, espionage, organized crime, foreign relations or health; blacklists and restricted lists maintained; mandatory biometrics and data collection introduced.
- **Illegal Immigration & Enforcement:** Authorities empowered to detect, detain, deport illegal immigrants, recover costs, and monitor transport; Foreigners Tribunals expanded nationwide with civil court-like powers for time-bound disposal.
- **Humanitarian & Neighbourhood Considerations:** Exemptions for Nepalese, Bhutanese, Tibetan refugees, persecuted minorities from neighbouring countries, and Sri Lankan Tamils facilitates regional mobility while balancing security needs.
- **Diplomatic & International Commitments:** Exemptions for diplomats, foreign militaries, and carriers in genuine cases; aligns India's immigration policy with global security obligations and bilateral agreements.

Extra Mile: SC to Review Alleged Gender Bias in Assam Foreigners' Tribunals

The Supreme Court (SC) recently agreed to examine a petition challenging the standard of proof applied by **Foreigners Tribunals (FTs) in Assam**, which makes it difficult for marginalized women to prove Indian citizenship.

Case Background: Meherunnessa, born in 1969 in Barpeta, Assam, was declared a foreigner by a FT despite evidence of her family living in Assam "since time immemorial." Her family appears in the **1951 NRC**, electoral rolls, and property documents. Certificates and oral testimonies proving her citizenship were rejected by lower courts.

Core Issue

- Tribunals demand **documentary evidence** of parental details and birth, excluding oral evidence.
- This disproportionately affects **illiterate, rural, and marginalized women**—many married young, without educational or land records.
- Petition argues this is **indirect discrimination**, violating **Articles 14, 15, and 21** (equality, prohibition of discrimination, right to life and liberty).

Legal Arguments

The **Evidence Act, 1872** and **Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam, 2023** allow oral evidence to establish relationships. High Court (HC) relied only on documents, ignoring socio-economic context and gender-based barriers. Minor inconsistencies in name spellings were used to reject the claim.

Broader Implications of the Issue

- Could affect many **women in Assam**, particularly those married young, with limited education, and lacking official documents.
- Raises questions on balancing **citizenship verification** with **gender justice and constitutional rights**.

C P Radhakrishnan- 15th Vice-President of India

Chandrapuram Ponnusamy (CP) Radhakrishnan was recently sworn in as the 15th Vice-President (VP) of India in a midterm election, following the resignation of the incumbent, Jagdeep Dhankhar.

- ✓ Before becoming VP, Shri Radhakrishnan served as Governor of Maharashtra and Jharkhand. While serving as Jharkhand governor, he also held brief additional charges of Telangana and Puducherry.

Election of the Vice-President of India: Constitutional & Statutory Provisions

- **Article 66 (Election of VP):** The VP is elected by an Electoral College consisting of the members of both Houses of Parliament.
 - State legislatures do not participate (unlike Presidential election).
 - **Election Method:** Proportional Representation by Single Transferable Vote (STV) and secret ballot.
- **Article 68 (Time of Election & Term):** Election to fill vacancy (death, resignation, removal, or otherwise) must be held as soon as possible. The elected VP serves a full 5-year term from the date of entering office.
- **Article 69 (Oath or Affirmation):** Vice-President takes oath before the President of India. Oath affirms true faith and allegiance to the Constitution and faithful discharge of duties.
- **Presidential & Vice-Presidential Elections Act, 1952:**
 - **Nomination:** Requires 20 proposers + 20 seconders; up to 4 nominations per candidate.
 - **Security Deposit:** ₹15,000.
 - **Returning Officer:** Secretary General of Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha (by rotation).
 - **Secrecy:** Ballot is secret; parties cannot issue whips.

SC Order on Regulatory Assets

The Supreme Court (SC) directed the State Electricity Regulatory Commissions (SERCs) and electricity distribution companies (DISCOMs) to clear regulatory assets within four years and liquidate any new assets within three years.

SC Verdict

- **Time-bound Liquidation:** Existing regulatory assets must be liquidated within 4 years (starting 1 April 2024). New regulatory assets must be cleared within a maximum of 3 years.
- **Cap on Regulatory Assets:** The Court imposed a ceiling: regulatory assets cannot exceed 3% of the DISCOM's ARR.
- **Cost-Reflective Tariff** as the first principle; revenue gaps should be exceptional.
- **Transparency and Audit Mechanisms:** SERCs must publish clear roadmaps for

What are Regulatory Assets?



- ❑ **Regulatory assets are pending losses of DISCOMs**, deferred for future recovery from consumers. These losses arise when the cost of supplying power is higher than the revenue earned (Annual Revenue Requirement-ARR) through consumer rates and subsidy funds from the government.
- ❑ Instead of raising tariffs immediately, regulators allow this gap (caused mainly by low tariffs- for agricultural or low-income families, delayed subsidies, or sudden rises in power costs) to be recorded as a regulatory asset.
- ❑ Over time, large regulatory assets reflect the financial stress of DISCOMs, as seen in Delhi (reported massive assets of total ₹66,324 crore) and Tamil Nadu (reported ₹89,375 crore in 2021-22).

Impact of Regulatory Assets on Consumers and DISCOMs:

- ❑ **Deferred Costs Become Costlier:** Consumers ultimately pay more due to carrying costs (interest) on regulatory assets.
- ❑ **Cash Flow Crunch:** Persistent gaps leave DISCOMs unable to cover operating costs, leading to **delayed payments to power generators**.
- ❑ **Debt Burden:** DISCOMs often borrow to bridge gaps, increasing their financial liabilities.
- ❑ **Reduced Investment Capacity:** Funds locked in unrecovered costs limit ability to modernize grids, integrate renewables, or improve services.
- ❑ **Vicious Cycle:** Financial stress → poor operations → higher losses → further delays in cost recovery.

Case Background

- ❑ **Origin of the Dispute:** The matter reached the SC through appeals involving Delhi distribution companies (DISCOMs). Over time, these DISCOMs accumulated massive regulatory assets, reflecting losses deferred for future recovery.
- ❑ **Nature of the Problem:** Instead of timely tariff revisions, revenue gaps were routinely converted into regulatory assets. This created a spiral of deferred losses, increasing carrying costs (interest) and inflating the burden on consumers.
- ❑ **Judicial Observation:** Persistent build-up of regulatory assets indicated a "regulatory failure" on the part of SERCs and such practices are inconsistent with the Electricity Act, 2003 and National Tariff Policy, both of which stress on cost-reflective tariffs, timely recovery of gaps and financial discipline.

liquidation, including carrying cost calculations and conduct intensive audits of DISCOMs that repeatedly fail to recover regulatory assets.

- Oversight by Appellate Tribunal for Electricity (APTEL):** The Court invoked Section 121 of the Electricity Act, 2003, empowering APTEL to monitor compliance across states and initiate Suo motu proceedings if regulators or DISCOMs fail to follow directions.

Global Practices

- United Kingdom (UK) & European Union (EU):** Strict cost-reflective tariffs, automatic fuel-cost pass-through, and minimal scope for deferred losses.
- USA:** Regulators allow recovery of specific extraordinary costs (e.g., storms, fuel spikes), but with strict timelines and audits.

Way Forward

- Cost-Reflective Tariffs:** Regular/annual revisions; subsidies made direct and targeted to protect vulnerable consumers.
- Timely Subsidy Payments:** Create escrow mechanisms for automatic subsidy transfer to avoid artificial gaps.
- Automatic Cost Adjustments:** Introduce formula-based adjustments for fuel/power costs.
- Stronger Regulators:** Build expertise and ensure independence.
- DISCOM Reforms:** Link support to loss reduction, efficiency, and competition.

Adi Sanskriti

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs launched the Beta Version of **Adi Sanskriti**, a digital platform for tribal artforms and culture during the National Conference on Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan in New Delhi.

What is Adi Sanskriti Platform?

- Adi Sanskriti is envisioned as the **world’s first Digital Tribal University** and online marketplace **for the world to access products made by tribal artisans**.
- It seeks to **preserve and promote tribal culture, knowledge systems, and artforms**, while also creating **sustainable livelihoods** for tribal communities through digital platforms.
 - ✓ India is home to over 700 tribal communities, constituting at 10.45 crore, or 8.6% of the total population (as per Census 2011)
 - ✓ other Initiative for Tribals: **Adi Vaani – AI-based tribal language translator**

Key Components of Adi Sanskriti Platform

- Adi Vishwavidyalaya (Digital Tribal Art Academy):** 45 online **courses** on tribal dance, painting, crafts, music, and folklore.
- Adi Sampada (Socio-Cultural Repository):** Over 5,000 curated documents on paintings, dance, textiles, artefacts, and livelihoods.

Implications of the Judgment

Positive Implications	Negative Implications
Restores Tariff Discipline: Mandates cost-reflective tariffs and prevents indefinite deferral of losses. Regulatory Accountability: Enforces audits, transparent recovery roadmaps, and stricter oversight by APTEL. Financial Stability for DISCOMs: Time-bound liquidation will help clean up balance sheets, improve cash flows, and enhance creditworthiness. Consumer Transparency: Predictable recovery schedules will help avoid sudden tariff shocks. Long-term Sector Efficiency: DISCOMs gain scope for future reforms such as grid modernization and renewable energy integration.	Tariff Burden on Consumers: For example, Delhi DISCOMs would need to recover ~₹16,580 crore annually, translating into ₹5.5/unit higher tariffs. Stress on DISCOMs: Immediate liquidation pressures financially weak DISCOMs, forcing them to borrow and increasing their debt burden. Political Economy Challenges: States dependent on subsidies may resist cost-reflective tariffs due to electoral sensitivities, risking non-compliance.

- **Adi Haat (Online Marketplace):** Linked with TRIFED, evolving into a global e-marketplace for tribal products.

Significance

- **Cultural Preservation:** Digital documents and safeguards of diverse tribal traditions and artforms.

✓ This aligns with constitutional values (**Article 51A**) on preserving heritage and cultural pluralism.

- **Livelihood & Empowerment:** Provides direct market access to artisans, ensuring income security.

- **Digital Inclusion:** Brings tribal knowledge and products onto a global digital platform.

- **Policy Convergence:** Built in collaboration with State Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs) for authenticity and grassroots participation. States have contributed to the documentation, content curation, and digital mapping of tribal artforms.

About Adi Karmayogi Abhiyaan



It is a transformative tribal development initiative launched by Ministry of Tribal Affairs with the aim to empower tribal communities, promote responsive governance, and nurture local leadership under "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Prayas, Sabka Vishwas".

Objective:

- Strengthen **responsive, people-centric governance** in tribal areas.
- Conduct **multi-departmental Governance Labs** (state to district, block, and village level) for capacity building.
- Co-create "**1 Lakh Tribal Villages - Vision 2030**", including detailed action plans and investments.
- Build a network of **20 lakh change leaders** across 550 districts in 30 States/UTs.

Key Outcomes:

- **Sewa Kendra:** A single-window centre for grievance redressal, information, and services where government officers and community members dedicate 1–2 hours fortnightly as '**Adi Sewa Samay**' to address local issues, mentor youth, and support governance initiatives.
- **Saturation of Services:** Ensuring universal coverage of critical government services in tribal areas.
- **Village Action Plans:** Preparing vision-driven development plans at the village level.
- **Governance Lab Workshops:** Process workshops to co-create tribal development solutions.
- **Community Participation**
 - **Adi Sahyogi:** Professionals (teachers, doctors, mentors).
 - **Adi Saathi:** Local SHGs, NRLM members, youth, leaders, elders.
 - **Leadership Training:** For tribal youth, women & leaders in governance and mobilization.

Scale & Reach: It is spread across 30 States, 550 districts, 3000+ blocks and 1 lakh+ tribal villages building on major tribal initiatives like **PM JANMAN, Dharti Aaba Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan**, and **National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission**.

About TRIFED (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India)

- **Set up in 1987** under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 1984. It works under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- **Mandate:** **Socio-economic development of tribals** through trade of **Minor Forest Produce (MFP)** and surplus crops.
- **Functions:** Market linkages, capacity building, Self Help Groups, branding & training.
- **Key Schemes:** **MSP (Minimum Support Price)** for MFP & **Van Dhan Yojana**.
- **Significance:** Ensures **livelihood security, fair prices, and empowerment** of tribal communities.

Supreme Court Flags Issue of Non-Working CCTVs in Police Stations

The Supreme Court (SC) suggested setting up a **central control room** to independently monitor police station CCTVs, preventing tampering or shutdown by personnel.

Case Background

The issue was taken up in a **Suo motu PIL** after reports of **11 custodial deaths in Rajasthan** over eight months, where authorities refused to provide CCTV footage citing dysfunctional cameras, lack of storage, or confidentiality.

Issues Highlighted	Court's Observations
• Custodial deaths persist despite CCTV directions. • Police often switch off or tamper with cameras. • Paper compliance: States/agencies file affidavits but don't implement fully. • Central agencies (CBI, NIA, ED, etc.) have not complied.	• Need for Automated Oversight: It stressed that monitoring should be without human intervention, possibly through AI-based systems. A centralized control room will generate immediate alerts if any camera goes offline. • Independent Inspections: Initially, inspections of police stations by an independent agency would be necessary. The court suggested involving IITs to develop software solutions for automated monitoring. • Accountability Mechanism: Any non-functional CCTV should be reported to the Legal Services Authority or designated oversight body.

Judicial Precedents

- **Paramvir Singh Saini v. Baljit Singh (2020):** A three-judge bench of SC directed installation of CCTVs in all police stations and offices of investigative agencies (National Investigation Agency (NIA) Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Directorate of Enforcement (ED), Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), Department of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO)).
 - **Coverage:** entry/exit points, lock-ups, corridors, lobbies, reception, interrogation rooms.
 - **Features:** night vision, audio recording, 18 months storage capacity.
 - **Basis:** safeguard Article 21 - Right to Life & Dignity.

Significance

- **Human Rights Protection:** Prevents custodial torture, ensures transparency.
- **Police Accountability:** Independent monitoring reduces manipulation.
- **Judicial Oversight:** Strengthens rule of law, ensures compliance with SC directions.
- **Public Trust:** Builds confidence in law enforcement and justice system.

Angikaar 2025

Housing and Urban Affairs Minister (**MoHUA**) launched the Angikaar 2025 campaign under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban 2.0 (PMAY-U 2.0).

What is Angikaar 2025?

It is a nationwide outreach campaign to **accelerate** the implementation of **PMAY-U 2.0**. The campaign is scheduled to run **from 4th September to 31st October 2025** across **5,000+ Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)** in two phases-

- **Phase I (4–27 Sept):** Door-to-door outreach, PMAY-U Awas Diwas, PM Awas Mela - Shehri (held in all district headquarters).
- **Phase II (18 Sept–31 Oct):** Continued Information Education Communication (IEC) activities, ULB-level camps, **Grih Pravesh (20 Oct)**, second round of PM Awas Mela - Shehri.

Objectives of Angikaar 2025:	Key Features of Angikaar 2025:
• Create Awareness about PMAY-U 2.0, its eligibility, benefits, and related schemes. • Fast-track Verification of applications under PMAY-U 2.0. • Facilitate Completion of already sanctioned houses under PMAY-U (earlier phases). • Promote Last-Mile Delivery through community mobilization and local outreach. • Integrate Schemes like Credit Risk Guarantee Fund Trust for Low Income Housing (CRGFTLIH) and PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana, so that beneficiaries get holistic benefits (housing + electricity + finance). • Special Focus Groups: Priority to vulnerable sections identified under PMAY-U 2.0.	• Community Mobilization: Door-to-door campaigns, street plays, rallies, folk songs. • PMAY-U Awas Diwas: celebrated on <u>17th Sept 2025 to mark 1st anniversary of PMAY-U 2.0</u>. • Mass Outreach: Hoardings, cinema ads, radio/FM, YouTube, social media, beneficiary stories. • Partnerships: SHGs, Civil Society Orgs, elected representatives, MY Bharat volunteers. ✓ MY Bharat (Mera Yuva Bharat) is a government platform for youth (15–29 yrs) to learn and grow through practical application. It builds leadership and civic responsibility in youth and enables meaningful youth participation in nation-building.

Implementation & Monitoring

- **National Level Monitoring Committee** will be formed chaired by Joint Secretary & Mission Director (Housing for All, MoHUA) with representatives from Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE) and Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance.
- **State/UT Governments** implementing PMAY-U 2.0 Scheme will direct District Collectors/Magistrates & ULBs to effectively plan, implement and monitor the activities of Angikaar 2025.
- **District Coordination Committees** will be formed to oversee implementation, organize awareness drives, and monitor PM Awas Mela – Shehri (Urban).

- **ULBs** will be responsible for on-ground execution through IEC (Information, Education, Communication) activities.
- **Online Monitoring Module:** A special **Angikaar 2025 module** has been created on the PMAY-U 2.0 portal for uploading progress, photos, videos, and beneficiary stories.

Significance of the Angikaar 2025 Campaign

- **Strengthens Housing for All mission** by bridging sanctioned-completed houses gap.
- **Encourages Jan Bhagidari** via cleanliness, plantation, and cultural drives.
- **Reaches vulnerable groups**, reaffirming government's inclusive welfare commitment & Social Justice.
- **Promotes SDG** 11 (Sustainable Cities & Communities), SDG 7 (Affordable & Clean Energy via Surya Ghar), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).
- **Technology & Innovation:** Potential role of digital platforms for tracking, verification, grievance redressal, monitoring. Also innovation in construction, materials, green energy linkages (e.g., free electricity / solar).
- **Federalism / Centre-State Relations:** As housing is a concurrent or shared responsibility, the role of states & UTs, local governments is crucial.



About PMAY-U 2.0



Launched: 2024 (revamp of PMAY-U, 2015).

Objective: To provide 1 crore urban poor & middle-class families with pucca houses over 5 years.

Subsidy: Central assistance up to ₹2.5 lakh per unit; 4% interest subsidy on loans (Interest Subsidy Scheme).

Budget: ₹10 lakh crore investment; ₹2.3 lakh crore govt subsidy.

Eligibility: Families belonging to the Economically Weaker Section (EWS- income up to ₹3 lakh), Low Income Group (LIG- income ₹3-6 lakh), and Middle-Income Group (MIG-1(6-12 lakhs) +MIG-2(12-18 lakhs)) segments not owning a pucca house anywhere in the country.

✓ Aadhaar integration is mandatory.

Key Components (Verticals):

- **Beneficiary-Led Construction (BLC):** Support for EWS families to build on own land.
- **Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP):** Houses via public-private/state partnerships. Example: Maharashtra's MHADA constructed over 10,000 low-cost homes in Pune under AHP.
- **In-Situ Slum Redevelopment (ISSR):** Redevelops slums on existing land using it as a resource, providing pucca houses with private sector participation.
- **Affordable Rental Housing (ARH):** Rental housing for migrants workers, students, destitute persons, & urban homeless.
- **Credit-Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS) & Interest Subsidy Scheme (ISS):** Subsidy on housing loans for EWS/LIG/MIG.

Funding Mechanism: Cost of construction will be shared among the Ministry, State/UT/ULBs, and beneficiaries, with varying cost-sharing patterns depending on the region.

Special Features of PMAY 2.0:

- **Focus on Vulnerable Groups:** Slum dwellers, SC/ST, minorities, widows, PwDs, workers, vendors, artisans.
- **Technology & Innovation Sub-Mission (TISM):** Green, disaster-resistant, fast construction.
- **Credit Risk Guarantee Fund Trust (CRGFT):** Corpus increased to ₹3,000 crore for affordable housing loans.
- **Jan Bhagidari:** Community participation & state-level Affordable Housing Policies.
- **Progress So Far:** Under PMAY-U 2.0, 7,09,979 houses have been sanctioned, including 1.25 lakh for women (single/widows), 44 for transgenders, 42,400 for Scheduled Castes, 17,574 for Scheduled Tribes, and 1,13,414 for Other Backward Classes, highlighting inclusiveness and social equity.

Jammu & Kashmir Rajya Sabha Polls Hang Fire

The Law Ministry **rejected** the Election Commission of India's (ECI) request for a Presidential order to stagger the terms of Jammu & Kashmir's (J&K) four Rajya Sabha (RS- Council of States) seats, holding that there is no legal provision to do so. The EC had sought this to ensure continuous representation of the UT in the Upper House, as all four seats currently fall vacant together.

Background

- **Vacancy:** J&K has 4 Rajya Sabha seats- all have been vacant since 2021 because the MPs' terms expired when the UT was under President's Rule, and no elections could be held (as RS elections are indirect and require an elected Assembly as the electoral college).
- **Assembly Revival:** J&K Assembly elections were held in 2024, creating the electoral college but the RS elections are still pending. Thus, J&K has no say in Presidential or Vice-Presidential (VP) elections (not represented in 2022 polls or in recent VP election).

EC's Proposal

- EC requested the Law & Justice Ministry for a Presidential Order to **stagger** the terms of J&K's 4 Rajya Sabha seats.
- **Rationale:** If all four are filled at once, they will vacate simultaneously after 6 years, leaving the UT temporarily unrepresented in the RS every six years. To avoid this, EC proposed curtailing some terms to maintain continuity of representation.

Related Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **RS- a Permanent House:** as under Article 83(1) Rajya Sabha is not subject to dissolution. One-third of members retire every 2 years (ensuring continuity).
- **Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1951 - Section 154:** provides for the term of office of a RS Member of Parliament (MP) to be six years.
- **Exception for continuity:** To make RS a permanent House (1/3rd retiring every 2 years), the law allowed **Presidential Orders** only:
 - **1952-** After the first Rajya Sabha was constituted.
 - **1956-** After the 7th Constitutional Amendment.
 - **Present status:** No provision now exists for further Presidential Orders. Any new staggered-term arrangement would require **amending the RP Act/Constitution** and would need to apply uniformly to all states/UTs with concurrent RS terms (not just J&K).

Comparative Cases

- **Delhi:** RS cycle disturbed after creation of the Delhi Assembly under the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991.
- **Punjab:** Similar concurrency issues due to historical disruptions (Emergency/President's Rule).
- **J&K:** Cycle disturbed since the 1990s due to prolonged President's Rule (1990-96)

Significance of the ECI-Law Ministry Standoff Over J&K RS Seats:

- **Federalism & Representation:** J&K's absence in RS weakens the principle of federal representation.
- **Checks & Balances:** RS is meant to be a "continuous House"; concurrent terms disrupt this design.
- **Constitutional Rigidity vs Flexibility:** Shows limits of executive discretion- cannot bypass the law through presidential orders now.
- **Legislative Reform Need:** May spark debate on amending RP Act to restore staggered terms in states/UTs where cycles are disturbed.
- **Political Sensitivity:** In Union Territories like J&K, delay or denial of representation has political ramifications and can be used in debates around statehood restoration and autonomy.

Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI)

As part of "Operation Weed Out", the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) recently seized 39.2 kg of hydroponic weed at Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport.

About Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI- headquarters, in New Delhi)

- **Origin & Establishment:** Created in 1957 (evolved from the Central Revenue Intelligence Bureau (CRIB)-1953) as the apex anti-smuggling intelligence and investigation agency.
- **Administrative Control:** Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC), Ministry of Finance.
- **Mandate & Functions:**
 - Enforces the Customs Act, 1962; Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985 and over 50 allied Acts (e.g. Arms Act, Wildlife Act, Antiquities Act).
 - Prevents smuggling of contraband (gold, drugs, arms, fake Indian currency notes (FICN), wildlife, antiques, environmentally sensitive items).
 - **IPR & consumer safety enforcement at borders:** Action against counterfeit goods, unsafe imports (e.g., toys, cosmetics) and fake medicines via seizures and legal steps.
 - Investigates commercial frauds in international trade and customs duty evasion.

- Collects, analyses, and disseminates intelligence on smuggling trends; plugs loopholes in customs laws and procedures.
- **Trade-based money-laundering (TBML) detection:** Investigate over-invoice/under-invoice schemes, shell import-export structures, FTA misuse and other devices used to siphon value across borders.
- Lead agency for S-CORD (National Anti-Smuggling Coordination Centre).
- **Structure & Reach:** Headed by a Director-General & Nationwide network of zonal, regional, sub-regional units and intelligence cells. Coordinates with other law enforcement agencies in India and abroad.
- **International Role:** Engages in Customs Mutual Assistance Agreements with 60+ countries for information exchange and best practices.
 - ✓ DRI officers are posted abroad as part of a **Customs Overseas Intelligence Network** (COIN) in selected missions/consulates to gather trade intelligence and assist in disrupting trade-based money-laundering and mis-declaration.

हिंदी दिवस (Hindi Diwas)

The country celebrated Hindi Diwas, which is observed annually on 14th September to commemorate the adoption of **Hindi as the official language** of the Union by the **Constituent Assembly in 1949**.

On this day, schools and colleges hold seminars, workshops, debates, and competitions; ministries receive the **Rajbhasha Kirti Puraskar**; and digital initiatives promote Hindi through social media and OTT content.

Significance of Hindi as a Language

- **Demographic Importance:** One of the most widely spoken languages in India. Globally, it is the third most spoken language (after English & Mandarin).
 - ✓ with ~44% population using Hindi as their first language (Census 2011)
 - ✓ Spoken by Indian diaspora in Mauritius, Fiji, Suriname, South Africa, and Gulf countries.
- **Cultural Identity & Global Presence:** Hindi literature, cinema (Bollywood), and popular digital media (OTT platforms) have shaped modern Indian cultural imagination.
- **Unity in Diversity:** Acts as a bridge language across many states, but not at the cost of other regional languages.

Why Hindi Diwas Matters?

- **Constitutional Significance:** Hindi Diwas connects with Constitutional provisions (Part XVII: Official

Historical Background



- ◆ **Constituent Assembly Debates (1946–49):** Language was among the **most contentious debates** in the Assembly. Questions debated included:

- ▶ Which should be the Union's official language?
- ▶ Should there be one national language?
- ▶ What script and numerals should be adopted?
- ▶ What should be the status of English?

Options proposed: Hindi, Hindustani, Sanskrit, and continued use of English.

- ◆ **Munshi-Ayyangar Formula (Compromise):** Drafting Committee members **K. M. Munshi** and **N. Gopalaswamy Ayyangar** proposed a middle path and **Article 343 was adopted in 1950 which stated-**
 - ▶ Hindi in **Devanagari script** as official language.
 - ▶ **International form of Indian numerals** for official purposes.
 - ▶ English to continue as an associate official language for **15 years (till 1965)**.
 - ✓ After the end of 15 years tenure, non-hindi speaking states, particularly **Tamil Nadu**, opposed compulsory Hindi. The opposition led to **Official Languages Act, 1963 (amended in 1967)** which stated that English would continue **indefinitely along with Hindi**.
 - ✓ **Article 344:** President to appoint a commission & parliamentary committee on official language.
 - ✓ **Article 351:** Duty of the Union to promote the spread of Hindi & develop it so that it serves as a medium of expression for all elements of composite culture.
- ◆ **Government Usage:** Hindi used for official communication within Hindi-speaking states;
 - ▶ For communication between Hindi & non-Hindi states → English is used. (English continues as a "link language" to avoid linguistic domination.)
- ◆ **Commemoration:** September 14 also marks the birth anniversary of **Beohar Rajendra Simha**, a prominent Hindi literature activist who significantly contributed to promoting Hindi as the official language.

Language), linguistic diversity, and centre-state relations (Federalism).

- **National Integration vs Regional Identity**
- **Policy Relevance:** Education (NEP 2020), E-Governance (bilingual portals).
- **Cultural Diplomacy:** Promotion of Hindi abroad strengthens India's cultural influence (global soft power)

Applicability of Foreign Court Divorce Order to Indian Marriages

The Gujarat High Court (HC) ruled that marriages solemnized under the **Hindu Marriage Act (HMA), 1955**, cannot be dissolved by foreign courts as “irretrievable breakdown of marriage” as this is not a ground under the HMA.

Case Background

An Indian-origin couple married under the HMA in Ahmedabad in 2008 later became Australian citizens. In 2016, the husband obtained a divorce in Australia on the ground of “irretrievable breakdown” despite the wife’s objection that this ground is not recognized under the HMA. The wife filed for restitution of conjugal rights in Ahmedabad, but the family court dismissed her plea, holding the Australian divorce valid due to their citizenship.

HC’s Observations

- Hindu marriages in India remain governed by HMA, regardless of domicile or citizenship. Citizenship change does not alter that an HMA marriage must be dissolved only under HMA.
- Parliament has deliberately not included “irretrievable breakdown” as a divorce ground.
- Foreign courts cannot apply their own divorce law to such marriages; they can only apply HMA if both parties consent.

Since the wife objected, the Australian decree had no legal effect in India.

Applicability of Foreign Divorce Laws in India

- India lacks a codified private international law; courts rely on statutes and precedents. For marriages under the HMA, dissolution must follow HMA grounds, irrespective of residence or citizenship.
- **CPC (Civil Procedure Code-1908) Sections 13 & 14:** (require foreign judgements to align with Indian law and natural justice)

Types of Divorce Decrees by Foreign Courts

- ✓ **Mutual Consent (Uncontested) Divorce:** Foreign decrees are generally valid and binding in India under CPC Sections 13 and 14, unless barred by conditions in Section 13. It is less contentious, as both parties voluntarily submit to jurisdiction.
- ✓ **Contested Divorce:** A divorce granted when one spouse opposes the petition. Contested ones face stricter scrutiny- if grounds conflict with Section 13 CPC, their validity becomes doubtful.
- ✓ **Default or Ex-parte Divorce Decree:** A decree granted when one spouse does not appear or respond to the divorce petition.

When are Foreign Divorce Decrees Inconclusive (Not Recognized) in India?	When Foreign Divorce Decrees are Conclusive (Recognized)?
• Grounds not recognized under Indian law, e.g., irretrievable breakdown/no-fault divorce (common in US, Australia). • Ex-parte decrees (passed without hearing the other party). • Decrees applying foreign laws instead of Indian marriage laws. • Decree is interim, appealed, or set aside in the foreign jurisdiction. • Decree contravenes public policy, e.g., attempts to override HMA/SMA (Special Marriage Act 1954), bigamy risk.	• Grounds recognized under Indian personal laws (HMA 1955, SMA 1954), e.g., adultery, cruelty, desertion, mutual consent. • Both parties contested and submitted to the foreign court's jurisdiction. • Respect under the principle of comity of courts (mutual recognition of judgments internationally).

Supreme Court (SC) Precedent:

- ❶ **Y. Narasimha Rao v. Venkata Lakshmi, 1991:** The SC refused to recognize a US divorce decree, holding that a foreign divorce is valid in India only if- (a) the ground is recognized under Indian law; and (b) both spouses voluntarily submit to the foreign court's jurisdiction. If either condition is missing, the decree has no effect in India.
- ❶ **Shilpa Sailesh v. Varun Sreenivasan, 2023:** A five-judge Constitution bench granted divorce on irretrievable breakdown under **Article 142**, clarifying it is not a right but a discretionary power to be used cautiously to ensure complete justice.
 - ✓ Article 142 empowers the SC to pass any order or decree necessary to ensure complete justice in cases before it, enforceable across India. It also grants it powers to secure attendance, demand documents, and punish contempt, subject to parliamentary law.

- Section 13: A foreign judgment is conclusive **unless** court lacks jurisdiction, isn't on merits, or applies a law not recognized in India, obtained by fraud, misrepresentation, or violating natural justice.
- Section 14: Presumes a foreign judgment valid, but this can be rebutted using Section 13.
- HMA permits divorce only on limited grounds (cruelty, adultery, desertion, mutual consent, conversion, unsoundness of mind, and presumption of death etc). Since “irretrievable breakdown” is not a recognized ground, the Gujarat HC refused to recognize the Australian decree.

Practical Implications related to this Case

- **Bigamy Risk:** If an Indian citizen remarries after obtaining a foreign divorce not recognized in India, it may constitute bigamy under Section 494 of the IPC.
- **Custody and Maintenance:** Foreign divorce decrees may not automatically enforce child custody, alimony, or property rights in India.
- **Gender and Social Implications:** Non-recognition of foreign divorces can disproportionately affect women, especially those financially dependent on spouses.

Centre Directs 65% Of NREGS Funds to Water Conservation in Critical Rural Blocks

The Ministry of Rural Development amended Schedule-I of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA), 2005, mandating minimum expenditure on water-related works in rural blocks according to their groundwater status.

- ✓ Schedule-I of the MGNREGA provides the list of permissible works under the rural job guarantee scheme. (works in water conservation (e.g., renovation of traditional water bodies, micro-irrigation), land development, and rural infrastructure).

Trigger: Directive followed PM Modi's expectation to prioritize water conservation under MNREGA.

Expenditure Norms

- **Over-exploited & Critical blocks:** ≥65% of NREGS funds for water conservation/harvesting.
- **Semi-critical blocks:** ≥40%.
- **Safe blocks:** ≥30%.

- **Over-exploited:** Groundwater extraction >100% of annual replenishable groundwater.
- **Critical:** Extraction between 90–100%.
- **Semi-critical:** 70–90%.
- **Safe:** ≤70%.
- ✓ As per the CGWB's National Compilation on Dynamic Ground Water Resources of India, 2024, 11.13% blocks were assessed as 'Over-exploited', 3.05% as 'Critical', 10.54% as 'Semi-critical', and 73.39% as 'Safe' in 2024.

Significance:

- Ensures targeted water resource management and groundwater recharge in vulnerable areas.
- Mobilizes approx. **Rs 35,000 crore** for water-related works under MGNREGA.
- Aligns rural employment scheme with water security and sustainability objectives.

Case Pendency Crisis Deepens in Supreme Court

Supreme Court pendency has touched a record 88,417 cases, despite the court functioning with its full strength of 34 judges.

Current Situation

- **Pending Cases Breakdown:** Civil matters- 69,553; Criminal matters- 18,864
- **Filing vs. Disposal (Aug 2025):**
 - **New cases filed:** 7,080
 - **Cases disposed:** 5,667 (80.04% disposal rate).
 - **Net result:** backlog continues to grow.
- **Trends in Pendency:** In 2025- 52,630 cases filed; 46,309 disposed (88% disposal rate).
 - **Pandemic Effect:** Since 2020, pendency has become a perennial problem, especially surging after 2023. Collegium (Nov 2023) stressed that even a single vacancy aggravates pendency due to heavy workload.

Reasons for the Escalating Crisis

- **Low Judge-to-Population Ratio:** India has ~15 judges per million people, significantly lower than recommended and compared to other countries.
- **Judicial Vacancies and Infrastructure:** Over 5,600 vacancies exist across India's judiciary, coupled with insufficient courtrooms, administrative staff, and weak ICT systems, hindering efficient case management.
 - ✓ Frequent adjournments (average 5-7/case), lawyer strikes, and inefficient listing. Despite digital shifts (e-filing since 2020), legacy systems persist.
 - ✓ **Lack of Case Management:** No scientific prioritisation; urgent cases often overshadow others.
- **High Government Litigation:** Government departments are involved in nearly 50% of all pending cases, adding to the judicial burden.
 - ✓ Rising litigation from urbanization, economic disputes (e.g., insolvency under IBC), & PILs.
- **Underutilized ADR:** Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms like mediation and

Challenges Faced by the Courts

- **Rising Caseload vs. Limited Capacity:** Filing rate consistently exceeds disposal rate.
- **Structural Constraints:** Only **one apex court** for the entire country thus overburdened.
- **Lack of Special Courts** for cases under NIA Act, UAPA, etc., leads to delays. Out of 52 designated courts, only **3 exclusively handle NIA cases.**

Effects

- **Rule of Law:** Delay in justice undermines **constitutional rights** (Article 21- right to speedy trial).
- **Judicial Credibility:** Persistent backlog weakens public trust in the judiciary.
- **Governance & Security:** Delay in sensitive cases (NIA, UAPA) affects **national security and internal stability.**

Judicial Initiatives

- **E-Courts Project** → Digitisation, e-filing, virtual hearings.
- **E-SCR Project** → Digital Supreme Court Reports available online for free.
- **Partial Working Days:** Chief Justice of India (CJI) B.R. Gavai renamed summer vacations (May-July 2025) as 'partial working days', with 21 Benches sitting in rotation to hear cases.
- **Maintaining Judge Strength:** Successive CJIs, from Justice D.Y. Chandrachud to Justice Gavai, ensured minimum or zero vacancies through quick Collegium recommendations.
- **Government Cooperation:** Collegium recommendations have been cleared promptly.

Way Forward

- **Structural Reforms:** Establish **National Court of Appeal (NCA)** for routine cases, keeping SC focused on constitutional matters. Set up **exclusive special courts** with proper infrastructure.
 - ✓ **Split the Supreme Court into:** Constitutional Bench (Delhi) for constitutional matters and Cassation/Appeals Benches (in 4 zones) for routine appeals.
- **Process Re-engineering:** Mandate time-bound hearings, curb adjournments (max 3/case); prioritize old cases (>10 years).
- **Technological Integration:** Strengthen **e-Courts and AI-based case management.** Expand **virtual hearings** for procedural matters.
 - ✓ SC exploring AI-based **SUPACE** (Supreme Court Portal for Assistance in Courts Efficiency) for case summarization and research.
- **Institutional Measures:** Enforce **case-flow management rules** (ensure **speedy and efficient disposal of cases** by regulating how cases move from filing to final disposal) to prioritize urgent and constitutional cases. Encourage **Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)** to reduce inflow.
- **Manpower & Bench Expansion:** Increase **number of judges and benches** proportionate to case volume. Consider **regional benches of SC** under Article 130 (Seat of SC).

arbitration are not effectively utilized.

- **Post-Pandemic Impact:** COVID-19 pandemic significantly increased pendency, and the backlog continued to rise from 2023 onwards despite efforts to clear cases.

SC upholds Telangana's 4-year Domicile Rules for Medical College Admissions

The Supreme Court (SC) upheld Telangana's rule requiring four years of study in the state before Class 12 for students to qualify as "local candidates" for 85% of MBBS and BDS seats, overturning High Court (HC) rulings that had extended the quota to permanent residents studying outside.

SC's Verdict in the Case

- **Rule Upheld as Constitutional:** The court upheld the four-year study requirement (Classes 9-12 in Telangana) for eligibility under the State quota. Students' petitions were dismissed, and HC judgments were set aside.
- **Rejection of HC's Interpretation:** The court held that HC's exemption for permanent residents would create an "anomalous situation" due to the absence of a statutory definition of residence. It would render domicile reservation unworkable and prone to litigation, risking opening state quota seats to outsiders.
- **Reliance on Precedents:**
 - **Anand Madaan v. Haryana (1995):** Upheld requirement of studying Classes 10–12 in Haryana.
 - **Rajdeep Ghosh v. Assam (2018):** Approved Assam's rule requiring study from Classes 7–12.
 - **Pradeep Jain v. Union of India (1984):** Domicile-based reservations justified for undergraduate admissions (provides broad access to professional courses), but not for postgraduate medical courses (focuses on specialized training).
- **Fairness Through Proviso (2024 Amendment):** Exception added for children of State government employees, All India Services officers, Defence/paramilitary forces and Employees of State PSUs with transfer liability. Court noted this mitigates hardship faced by families with compulsory transfers.
- **Socio-Economic Justification:** It held that the rule protects students genuinely educated in Telangana, often from **less privileged backgrounds**, who cannot afford to study outside or join elite coaching hubs and prevents dilution of benefits by students with greater mobility/resources.

Case Background:

- **2017 Rules:** Telangana framed the Medical & Dental Colleges Admission Rules, 2017, reserving **85% of MBBS and BDS seats** under the State quota for "local candidates."
- ✓ It defined Local Candidate (under Rule 3) as the one who has studied continuously in Telangana for four years preceding the qualifying exam (Classes 9–12) or residence in the state for that period.
- **Telangana HC Position (2023 & 24):** It held that the rule unfairly excluded permanent residents who had studied outside due to reasons like parental transfers or NEET coaching. It "read down" the rule to exempt such students citing **Article 14 (equality)**.
- **State's Argument:** HC's reading diluted the **special protection under Article 371D**, designed to ensure equitable access for students integrated into Telangana's education system.
- ✓ **Article 371D:** Special provision for equitable opportunities in education and public employment for Andhra Pradesh (extended to Telangana in 2014).
- **SC Intervention:** State appealed, leading to the SC's final ruling in 2025.

Significance of the Ruling

- **Prevents Dilution:** Stops misuse of quota by permanent residents who study outside for strategic advantages.
- **Protects Disadvantaged Students:** Ensures that those fully integrated into the state's education system get priority.
- **Limits Judicial Overreach:** Reinforces that courts must avoid creating vague standards like "permanent resident" in absence of legislative backing.
- **Reinforces State Autonomy:** Upholds the right of states to frame **strict domicile/educational integration rules**.
- **Clarity in Legal Framework:** Avoids ambiguity in defining domicile by sticking to measurable educational criteria (study years).
- **Policy Signal:** Highlights SC's consistent position- **domicile reservations are permissible at UG level but not at PG level**.
- **Precedent for Other States**

Limitations of the Ruling

- **Rigid Criteria:** The four-year study rule is inflexible, excluding permanent residents who study outside due to transfers, health, or coaching needs.
- **Reduced Mobility:** Families who move across states for jobs may face barriers in accessing educational opportunities for their children, limiting mobility in a federal country.
- **Inequality Among Students:** Wealthier students with access to in-state coaching benefit, while equally capable peers studying outside are penalized.
- **Risk of Talent Drain:** Exclusion from state quota might push some meritorious students to seek opportunities outside Telangana, leading to loss of talent pool in the state.

- **Past Admissions Protected:** Admissions already granted in 2024-25 under concessions will not be disturbed.
- **Constitutional Angle:** SC affirmed that the rule was consistent with Article 371D's object of protecting **local students' educational opportunities**.
 - **Article 14 Challenge (Equality):** SC rejected the claim of arbitrariness; held the classification based on four years' continuous study was **reasonable, not discriminatory**.

Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, 2003 (COTPA)

Writer and activist **Arundhati Roy** is facing a **Public Interest Litigation (PIL)** in the Kerala High Court (HC) over the cover of her latest book *Mother Mary Comes to Me*, which depicts her smoking a beedi. The Petitioner claimed that the cover allegedly violates Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, 2003 (COTPA) by lacking statutory health warnings.

- ✓ The plea seeks a **ban on sale, circulation, and display** of the book and withdrawal of existing copies, arguing that the image **glorifies smoking** and misleads youth, particularly teen girls, into associating smoking with creativity.
- ✓ The book cover **does not advertise or package tobacco products**, only depicts Roy smoking. The **back cover disclaimer** clarifies: *"Any depiction of smoking in this book is for representation purposes only. Penguin Random House India does not promote or endorse tobacco use."*

Government Initiatives to restrict marketing and sale of alcohol and tobacco products

- **Guidelines for Tobacco-Free Educational Institutions (ToFEI), 2019:** Issued to enforce Section 6 of COTPA. Schools/colleges to adopt anti-tobacco activities and ensure compliance.
- **Tobacco Free Youth Campaign (since 2023):** Annual awareness campaign at grassroots level to discourage youth tobacco use.
- **PECA, 2019:** Complete ban on **electronic cigarettes/vapes:** production, sale, storage, advertisement, etc.



About COTPA, 2003

It was passed by Parliament in **2003** to replace the earlier Cigarettes Act, 1975. It extends to all of India.

Objective: To protect public health by reducing tobacco use, prohibiting advertisements, and regulating trade, production, supply, and distribution of tobacco products; while fulfilling WHO commitments and safeguarding children, women, and non-smokers from exposure.

Key Provisions:

- ✓ **Ban on smoking in public places (Section 4)** with limited exceptions like designated smoking areas in hotels/restaurants with 30+ capacity, airports).
- ✓ **Ban on advertisement (Section 5)** of tobacco products in all forms (direct and indirect), including sponsorship.
- ✓ **Ban on sale to minors** (below 18 years) and within **100 yards of educational institutions (Section 6)**.
- ✓ **Mandatory health warnings** (including pictorial warnings) and disclosure of nicotine/tar content on all packages (**Section 7**).
- ✓ **Packaging norms (Section 8-9):** warnings must be prominent, legible, and in English/Indian languages.
- ✓ **Search, seizure, and confiscation powers** to police and authorized officers (**Section 12-15**).
- ✓ **Penalties:**
 - ✓ Up to **2 years' imprisonment / ₹5000 fine** for manufacturers violating packaging/warning norms (**Section 20**).
 - ✓ Fine for smoking in public places (up to ₹200) (**Section 21**).
 - ✓ Stronger punishments for advertising (up to 5 years' imprisonment / ₹5,000 fine; forfeiture of ad material) (**Section 22-23**).
 - ✓ Fine up to ₹200 for sale to minors/near school (Section 24)
 - ✓ Stronger punishment for repeat offenders.
- ✓ **Offences by companies, trial & compounding:** liability of management; offences bailable; compounding of minor offences (Section 26).
- ✓ **Covers all tobacco products:** cigarettes, beedis, cigars, chewing tobacco, pan masala with tobacco, snuff, etc.

COTPA Notified Rules

- ✓ **Advertising:** Complete ban on ads, promotion, and sponsorship.
- ✓ **Packaging & Labelling (2008, amended 2017 & 2018):**
 - ✓ Pictorial health warnings covering **85% of tobacco pack**.
 - ✓ Rotating warnings every 12 months; must be **clear, legible, visible before opening**.
 - ✓ **Nicotine & tar content** display mandatory; misleading terms prohibited.
 - ✓ Applies to both **manufactured & imported** products.
- ✓ **Films & TV:** Anti-tobacco health spots, disclaimers, and static warnings compulsory when tobacco use is shown.

E-Cigarettes (Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2019): Complete ban on production, sale, import, storage, and advertising.

- **Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 (Section 77):** Giving alcohol, narcotics, or tobacco to children under 18 is prohibited & punishable.
- **Draft COTPA Amendment Bill, 2020 (Bill not yet passed, but reflects evolving approach):** Placed for public consultation in 2021; aims to further strengthen tobacco control provisions. **(Proposed):** Raising legal age for sale from 18 to 21 years; Harsher penalties (up to ₹1 lakh fine and imprisonment)

SC on Anticipatory Bail in Caste Crime

The Supreme Court (SC) recently quashed the Bombay High Court (HC) order granting anticipatory bail in a caste atrocity case **Kiran vs Rajkumar Jivaraj Jain (2025)**, reaffirming that **Section 18 of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) (SC/ST) Act, 1989 bars anticipatory bail where a prima facie offence exists.**

- ✓ The case involved caste-based assault, abuse, and intimidation linked to an **electoral dispute**, underscoring the Act's role as a substantive safeguard for marginalized communities and democratic participation.
- ✓ SC/ST Act, 1989 seeks to prevent the **caste-based atrocities** against Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), ensure **protection of their rights**, and provide for **strict punishments**, speedy trials through **special courts** and for the **relief and rehabilitation of the victims** of such offences.

FCRA License of Wangchuk's Organization Revoked

The Union Home Ministry cancelled the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) registration of an organization founded by Ladakh-based climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, citing alleged violations. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is also conducting an inquiry involving another non-profit organization established by Mr. Wangchuk regarding similar allegations.

- ✓ The development came after violence erupted in Leh city of Ladakh, during an ongoing protest demanding Statehood and tribal status for the region.

What is FCRA?

The FCRA regulates the acceptance and utilization of foreign contributions by individuals, associations, and NGOs in India to ensure such funds are not misused and do not affect national interests (sovereignty, integrity, security, electoral processes).

What is meant by Anticipatory bail?

It is a pre-arrest legal remedy under **Section 438 of Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC)**, where a person who fears arrest for a **non-bailable offence** can apply to the High Court or Sessions Court for bail in advance. If granted, the person is released on bail immediately upon arrest, subject to conditions like cooperation with investigation, not tampering with evidence, and not fleeing the country.

Why anticipatory bail is barred under the SC/ST Act?

- ❶ **Statutory Bar (Section 18):** The SC/ST Act explicitly excludes the application of **Section 438 CrPC** (anticipatory bail). Parliament inserted this bar to give the law **teeth against caste atrocities**.
 - ▶ Similar bars apply under laws like POCSO Act or UAPA in specific cases.
- ❷ **Protection of Victims:** It prevents accused from using bail to **intimidate, threaten, or influence** SC/ST complainants and witnesses and ensures **effective investigation and prosecution**.
- ❸ **Distinct Nature of Offences:** Caste crimes are rooted in **systemic untouchability and discrimination** and are treated as a **special class of offences** requiring stricter safeguards.
- ❹ **Judicial Precedents:** Ram Krishna Balothia (1995), Vilas Pandurang Pawar (2012), Prathvi Raj Chauhan (2020) upheld the **validity of the bar**. Courts affirmed it does not violate **Article 14 (equality) or 21 (liberty)**.
- ❺ **Prima Facie Standard:** At bail stage, courts only need to check if a **prima facie case exists**. No "mini-trial" or detailed evidence scrutiny is permitted.

What did the SC rule in Present Case?

- ❶ **Public View Requirement:** Insults and assaults outside the complainant's house, visible to others, qualify as acts "within public view" under Section 3(1)(r) of the SC/ST Act.
- ❷ **Electoral Retaliation:** Attack was linked to the complainant's voting choice, attracting Section 3(1)(o), which penalizes coercion/retaliation against SC/ST members in elections.
- ❸ **Judicial Caution:** HCs must not conduct mini-trials or dismiss FIRs as politically motivated at the anticipatory bail stage.
- ❹ **Final Ruling:** SC quashed anticipatory bail, terming the HC's order a "manifest error and jurisdictional illegality."

Key Provisions (Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Act, 2020)

- **Registration Requirement:** NGOs/individuals must be registered under FCRA to receive foreign funds.
- **Designated Bank Account:** All foreign contributions must be received in a single **FCRA Account at State Bank of India, New Delhi**
- **Utilization of Funds:** Contributions can be used only for the specific purpose for which they were received.

Annual Returns:

Compulsory filing of annual statements of receipts and utilization.

Prohibited Recipients:

Candidates for elections, legislators, political parties, judges, government servants, journalists, media houses, and organizations of political nature cannot receive foreign funds.

No Transfer Rule:

Registered entities cannot transfer foreign contributions to any other person/NGO. (Previously, transfers were allowed with prior approval.)

Administrative Expenses Cap:

Reduced from **50% to 20%** of foreign funds.

(Administrative costs include salaries, travel, and overheads; the rest must go to core activities.)

- **Mandatory Identification:** Aadhaar/Passport/OCI card required for key functionaries applying.

2022 Rule (Changes to FCRA 2020)

- **Compoundable offences:** In 2020, only 7 offences were compoundable; in 2022, this was raised to **12**, allowing more violations to be settled with penalty instead of prosecution.
- **Foreign funds from relatives abroad:** Earlier (2020), intimation was mandatory if the amount exceeded **₹1 lakh**; in 2022, the limit was raised to **₹10 lakh**.
- **Intimation of bank accounts:** 2020 rules had stricter timelines; 2022 rules **extended the time limit**, giving NGOs more flexibility.
- **Prohibited persons (politicians, judges, govt servants, journalists, media houses, etc.):** In 2020, any receipt of foreign funds (even from relatives) was a violation leading to prosecution. In 2022, **no prosecution** if such funds are from relatives but failure to intimate within 90 days → only a **5% penalty** of the amount applies or **1 lakh whichever is higher**.

FCRA Registration Process	Cancellation & Suspension
• Application: Apply online with details of activities (cultural, economic, educational, religious, social). • Verification: MHA verifies through Intelligence Bureau. • Conditions: Not fictitious/benami, no record of forced religious conversions, communal tension, sedition, or fund misuse. • Validity: 5 years; must apply for renewal 6 months before expiry.	• Grounds: False statements, violation of terms, inactivity for 2+ years, misutilization, or "public interest." • Cancellation = no re-registration for 3 years. • Suspension possible for up to 360 days. • NGOs have right to be heard and can appeal in High Court.
Significance of FCRA	Concerns Raised
• Transparency: Ensures proper tracking of foreign funds and their utilization. • National Security: Prevents foreign influence in politics, media, and sensitive sectors. • Centralised Monitoring: SBI Delhi account makes fund flow easier to regulate. • Accountability: Annual returns and audits improve public confidence in NGOs.	• Compliance Burden: Small NGOs face difficulties in meeting strict rules. • Reduced Collaboration: Ban on fund transfer hampers joint projects and grassroots work. • Operational Constraint: 20% cap on admin expenses limits organizational development. • Tool Against Dissent: Critics allege misuse to suppress NGOs critical of government policies. As of September, 2025, there are only 16,188 registered NGOs in the country. Registrations of 20,724 NGOs have been cancelled while 15,139 registrations are pending renewal.

Capacity Building and Human Resource Development

The Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister (PM) recently approved the “Capacity Building and Human Resource Development” Scheme with a total outlay of Rs.2277.39 crore for the period of the Fifteenth Finance Commission Cycle 2021-22 to 2025-26.

What is Capacity Building and Human Resource Development (CBHRD) Scheme?

The CBHRD Scheme is a flagship CSIR (Council of Scientific and Industrial Research) initiative to nurture scientific talent, expand India’s research base, and boost global competitiveness in science and technology.

Coverage: All R&D institutions, national laboratories, Institutes of National Importance, Institutes of Eminence (IoE), and Universities across the country.

Objectives:

- To provide a **platform for young researchers** to build careers in academia, industry, and national R&D labs.
- Guided by **eminent scientists/professors**, foster growth in **STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Medical, Mathematical sciences)**.

Sub-Schemes of CBHRD:

- Doctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowships
- Extramural Research Scheme (ERS), Emeritus Scientist Scheme (ESS) & Bhatnagar Fellowship Programme (BFP)
- Promotion & Recognition of Excellence (Award Scheme)
- Knowledge Sharing (Travel & Symposia Grants): Enables knowledge sharing, interaction among Indian and international researchers

Through sustained R&D efforts in Science and Technology, India improved its Global Innovation Index (WIPO) rank to 38 in 2025 and now ranks among the top three globally in scientific publications.

Doctrine of Contributory Negligence

The Andhra Pradesh High Court (HC) recently ruled that contributory negligence cannot be invoked in criminal cases. A driver causing death through rash or negligent driving is liable under **Section 304A IPC**, even if the victim was partly negligent.

What is meant by Doctrine of Contributory Negligence?

Contributory negligence arises when a person suffers harm partly due to their own lack of reasonable care for their safety, alongside another’s negligent or wrongful conduct. It is rooted in the principle of ***Volenti non fit injuria***- no injury is done to one who consents to the risk. **Example:** A pedestrian crossing the wrong side of the road and getting hit by a reckless driver.

Key Principles Involved:

- Individuals have a duty to exercise **reasonable care** for their own safety.
- If a plaintiff’s (the injured party) negligence contributes to their injury, the defendant can claim **partial or full defence** under contributory negligence.
- Courts assess the **relative fault** of each party and apportion **liability and damages** accordingly.
- **Burden of Proof:** Lies on the defendant to show the plaintiff’s negligence contributed to the harm.
- **Limitations:** Not applicable when the defendant is **legally bound to take full care**. Plaintiff cannot be held negligent if all reasonable measures were taken to avoid the injury.

Indian Context: India does not have a specific law on contributory negligence; courts apply **comparative negligence** principles to distribute damages based on each party’s fault.

- ✓ In motor vehicle cases, *the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 (amended 2019)*, incorporates elements of comparative negligence, allowing tribunals to reduce compensation proportionally.

Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC)

Recently, multiple films faced heavy censorship by the CBFC over caste, mythology, and political references.

About CBFC (Popularly known as the Censor Board)

It is a statutory body under the **Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (I&B)** which regulates public exhibition of films under the **Cinematograph Act, 1952**. Films can be released in India **only after CBFC certification**.

Legal Framework	Structure
• Cinematograph (Amendment) Act, 2023 • Cinematograph (Certification) Rules, 2024 • Guidelines issued u/s 5(B) by Central Government	• Head Office: Mumbai. • 9 regional offices across Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Thiruvananthapuram, Cuttack, Guwahati, and Mumbai • Composition: Chairperson + 12-25 non-official members, appointed by Central Government. • Advisory Panels (citizens from various fields) assist regional offices.

- ✓ **2023 Cinematograph (Amendment) Act:** Amended the Cinematograph Act, 1952 to include anti-piracy measures (up to 3 years jail), perpetual certificate validity, and sub-categories

Certification Categories

U (Universal)- All ages	U/A- Parental guidance below 12	A- Adults only (18+)
S- Restricted to special classes (e.g., doctors, farmers)	New Sub-categories (2023 amendment): UA 7+, UA 13+, UA 16+ (parental guidance required & aligned with global norms)	

Landmark Judicial Interventions

- **K.A. Abbas vs Union of India (1970)** – SC upheld film pre-censorship as constitutional, citing its potential impact on society.
- **Anand Patwardhan cases** – SC reiterated that films cannot be denied certificate on vague grounds; must align with reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2).
- **S. Rangarajan vs P. Jagjivan Ram (1989)** – Freedom of expression cannot be suppressed unless film poses clear and present danger to public order.

Challenges Faced by CBFC



- ✦ **Centralization of Power:** Chairperson dominates decisions; advisory panels underutilized.
- ✦ **Legal & Tenure Issues:** Board last reconstituted in **Aug 2017** for 3 years; tenure ended in 2020, no reappointments raise doubts over **current board's legal status**.
- ✦ **Non-Compliance with Rules (2024):** Board is mandated to meet **every quarter**, but last meeting was on **Aug 31, 2019**. Last **annual report** published in **2016-17**, despite rule requiring yearly submission to I&B Ministry.
- ✦ **Delays in Certification:** Films face months-long delays affecting release schedules (Homebound, Punjab '95). 'India's Daughter' (2015), documentary on Nirbhaya case, faced prolonged CBFC scrutiny due to sensitive content, illustrating the conflict between freedom of expression (Art. 19(1)(a)) and societal sensitivities (Art. 19(2)).
- ✦ **Arbitrary Cuts:** Excessive modifications on caste, communal, or political grounds; leads to self-censorship & impacts Creativity & Culture.
- ✦ **Limited Redressal:** Abolition of Film Certification Appellate Tribunal (FCAT) in 2021; filmmakers now need to approach High Courts, which is costly and slow.
 - ✓ FCAT was a statutory body set up under the **Cinematograph Act, 1952**. It heard appeals of filmmakers against orders of the **CBFC**.
- ✦ **Implementation Gaps:** Shyam Benegal Committee recommendations partially implemented; arbitrariness persists despite new subcategories.

Shyam Benegal Committee Recommendations (2016)

- **From Censorship to Certification:** CBFC should certify, not censor (cuts only if illegal).
- **Age-Based Certification:** U, UA 12+, UA 15+, A, AC (Adult with Caution).
- **Decentralization & Expertise:** Include domain experts + at least 1/3rd women in panels.
- **Board's Role:** Act as guidance/oversight, not interventionist.
- **Context & Intent Focus:** Assess films holistically, not mechanically.
- **Grievance Redressal:** Strengthen appellate mechanisms for quick, fair resolution.

Doctrine Of Escheat

The Supreme Court (SC) recently ruled that a State cannot claim property under **Section 29 of the Hindu Succession Act** once a Hindu male has executed a **valid Will** that has been **granted probate** by a court.

What is Doctrine of Escheat?

The doctrine of escheat ensures that no property remains ownerless. If a person dies **intestate** (without a will) and without legal heirs, or if property is **unclaimed or abandoned**, it **reverts to the State**. This prevents wastage of assets, protects societal interests, and maintains orderly succession.

Historical Origins: Derived from the Old French word “**eschete**”, meaning “to fall to.” The concept is rooted in **medieval European feudalism**: land held by tenants would revert to the lord if the tenant died without heirs or committed crimes like treason. Over time, the **monarch or State** became the ultimate recipient of such property.

Escheat in Modern Legal Systems

- It ensures **ownerless or unclaimed property** does not remain in limbo.
- The State assumes ownership **temporarily or permanently**, until rightful claimants are identified.
- Laws differ across countries; in **India**, escheat is governed by **Section 29, Hindu Succession Act, 1956 and Article 296 of the Constitution of India** (deals with escheat and ownerless property in India).
 - ✓ **According to Section 29, Hindu Succession Act, 1956-** escheat is a **last-resort remedy**. If a valid will exists, property must devolve according to the testator's intent; the State cannot claim it.

SC Ruling on Teaching Eligibility Test

The Supreme Court (SC) in *Anjuman Ishaat-e-Taleem Trust v. State of Maharashtra* recently made the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) mandatory for both new teacher appointments and in-service teachers seeking promotions in non-minority schools for Classes 1 to 8.

- ✓ In response to this SC judgement, Tamil Nadu government has filed **review petition** in Supreme Court challenging mandatory TET order for teachers, arguing the SC overlooked state autonomy under Entry 25, List III (Concurrent List: Education).
- ✓ TET was introduced under **Section 23 of the RTE Act, 2009** to set **minimum qualifications** for teachers. In **2010**, the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) was made the authority to frame these standards, making TET **mandatory for teaching Classes I–VIII**. The **2017 RTE amendment** required teachers without these qualifications as of March 31, 2015,

Key Highlights of the SC Ruling (in *Anjuman Ishaat-e-Taleem Trust v. State of Maharashtra*)

The judgment anchors in Article 21A (fundamental right to education) and the RTE Act's mandate for "child-centric" pedagogy, interpreting TET as non-negotiable for "minimum competence" under Section 23 of the RTE.

- **Mandatory TET for All Teachers:** The Court clarified that qualifying the TET is not a mere procedural requirement but an essential part of the minimum qualification criteria for teachers, as mandated by the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act).
- **Teachers with Over 5 Years of remaining Service:** Teachers appointed before the RTE Act, with more than five years remaining in service, are required to pass the TET within two years. Failure to do so may result in compulsory retirement, with applicable terminal benefits.
- **Teachers with Less Than 5 Years of remaining Service:** They can **continue in service until retirement** without clearing the TET. However, they are **ineligible for promotions** unless they qualify the TET.
- **Promotion Eligibility:** In-service teachers who do not clear the TET will be ineligible for promotions, irrespective of their years of experience.
- **Minority Educational Institutions (MEIs):** The Court referred the issue of whether the RTE Act applies to MEIs to a larger bench, temporarily exempting them from this mandate.
- **Constitutional reasoning:** Quality education is part of **Article 21A (Right to Education)**. Minority rights under **Article 30(1)** are not absolute and must coexist with educational standards.

Implications of the Ruling

- **For Teachers:** The ruling underscores the importance of the TET in ensuring quality education and may lead to job insecurity for those unable to clear the exam.
 - ✓ Several states, including Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh, are considering filing review petitions against the ruling, citing concerns over its retrospective application and potential impact on teachers appointed before 2010.
- **For Educational Institutions:** Schools may face challenges in meeting staffing requirements, especially in states with a significant number of teachers appointed before 2010.
- **For State Governments:** The decision may prompt policy revisions and the introduction of special TET examinations to accommodate in-service teachers.

This ruling emphasizes the constitutional necessity of quality education and the role of qualified teachers in achieving this goal.

to meet them within **four years (March 31, 2019)**.

Case Background

- Appeals were filed by minority educational institutions, state authorities, and individual teachers highlighting following key issues:
 - Whether **TET is mandatory** for recruitment in minority and non-minority schools?
 - Whether **in-service teachers**, appointed before the Right to Education (RTE) Act (2009), must clear TET for promotion?
- **Conflicting High Court (HC) rulings:**
 - Madras HC: TET mandatory for non-minority schools; not binding on minority institutions.
 - Bombay HC: TET mandatory for minority institutions; interim relief granted to some teachers.
- **Context:** NCTE notifications and RTE Act provisions (especially Section 23) mandated TET to ensure minimum professional standards for teachers.

Extra Mile: SC Questions 2014 Exemption of Minority Schools from RTE Act

The SC recently questioned its 2014 judgment in *Pramati Educational and Cultural Trust v. Union of India*, which **exempted minority educational institutions** from the provisions of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE Act)

✓ The Court has referred the matter to a larger bench for reconsideration, expressing concerns that the exemption may have inadvertently compromised the fundamental right to quality education for children studying in these institutions.

Highlights from the Case:

- **2014 Judgment:** A five-judge bench in 2014 held that the RTE Act, particularly Section 12(1)(c) mandating 25% reservation for children from weaker sections, was unconstitutional as it applied to minority schools under Article 30(1) of the Constitution, which grants minorities the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.
- **Recent Developments:** In a 2025 ruling, a two-judge bench noted that the earlier exemption might have led to disparities in educational standards and facilities between minority and non-minority schools, undermining the inclusive vision of the RTE Act.
 - The Court highlighted that some minority schools may not provide essential facilities mandated by the RTE Act, such as trained teachers, infrastructure, and mid-day meals, potentially affecting the quality of education for their students.
- **Implications:** The Court's reference to a larger bench indicates a potential shift in the interpretation of the balance between minority rights and the universal right to education. A **reconsideration of the 2014 judgment** could lead to a more inclusive application of the RTE Act, ensuring that all children, regardless of the type of school they attend, have access to quality education.

SC Allows Aadhaar as Proof of Identity for Bihar SIR, Not as Citizenship Proof

The Supreme Court (SC) recently directed the Election Commission (EC) to accept Aadhaar as 12th document for identification for Bihar voter roll revision but clarified it is not proof of citizenship.

- ✓ **Aadhaar** is a **12-digit unique identification number** issued by the **Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)** to residents of India, based on their biometric and demographic data. It is primarily used for identity and address verification.

Extra Mile: EC Introduces Aadhaar-Based e-Sign to Curb Fake Online Voter Deletions

- EC has introduced a new **Aadhaar-based e-sign feature** on its ECINet portal/app.
 - ✓ ECINet is the **Election Commission's unified portal and app** for voter registration, corrections, and objections, integrating multiple earlier platforms for streamlined electoral services.
- Applicants must now verify identity using an **Aadhaar-linked mobile OTP**, ensuring names and numbers match Aadhaar records.
- This move, after misuse allegations in Karnataka's constituency, aims to **prevent fraudulent online voter deletions** and strengthen verification.

Background: During the Bihar Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, EC had listed **11 documents** to establish identity/residence for inclusion/exclusion. Petitioners argued Aadhaar should also be accepted.

SC's Direction:

- **Ordered the Election Commission (EC) to accept Aadhaar as the 12th document** for voter roll revision.
- **Clarified- Aadhaar is proof of identity/residence, not proof of citizenship** (as per Aadhaar Act, 2016).
- EC is entitled to **verify Aadhaar's authenticity** like other documents and seek further proof if needed.

Legal Framework:

- Under **Representation of the People Act, 1950 (Sec. 23(4))**, Aadhaar can be used to establish identity.
- Citizenship determination rests under **Citizenship Act, 1955**, and disputes referred to **Foreigner Tribunals**.

Significance of SC Directive:

- **Raises bar for exclusion:** Individuals excluded from draft rolls can now rely on Aadhaar to claim inclusion/contest removal.
- **Expands inclusion net:** Aadhaar covers **87% of India's population**, thus aiding voter access.
- Still, EC can **exclude individuals** if citizenship is doubtful (since no single document conclusively proves citizenship).

Supreme Court Judgment on Beggars' Homes

The Supreme Court (SC) in a judgement recently addressed the legal and constitutional status of beggars' homes in India.

Case Background: The case arose from a cholera and gastroenteritis outbreak at the Narela beggars' home in Delhi in 2000, which led to six deaths and 107 hospitalizations due to contaminated water.

Key Observations of the Court:

- **Not Penal or Charitable Institutions:** Beggars' homes are neither quasi-penal facilities nor "discretionary charity" run by the state. Their primary purpose must be restorative rather than punitive.
- **Constitutional Trust:** These homes are a "constitutional trust" representing the State's guarantee of rights to dignity, bodily autonomy, health, shelter, privacy, and humane treatment, especially for the most vulnerable.
- **Rights of Residents:** Residents, often victims of poverty, mental illness, domestic violence, or social exclusion, are entitled to constitutional protections. If convicts have rights during lawful deprivation of liberty, non-offending residents of beggars' homes deserve even greater safeguards.
- **Conditions and Confinement:** Any confinement must be protective rather than coercive. Overcrowding, unhygienic conditions, denial of medical care, or restriction of liberty constitutes a constitutional violation under **Article 21** (Right to Life and Dignity).

Directions Issued by the Court:

- **Mandatory medical check-ups** within 24 hours of admission.
 - **Regular verification of food quality** and nutrition by a qualified dietician.
 - **Independent infrastructure audits** at least once every two years.
 - **Ensuring occupancy does not exceed sanctioned capacity** to prevent overcrowding and disease spread.
Provision of **vocational training and rehabilitation services**.
 - **Separate facilities for women and children**, ensuring privacy, safety, childcare, education, and counselling.
 - **Children found begging** must be referred to **child welfare institutions** under the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**, rather than being detained in beggars' homes.
- #### Significance of the Judgement:
- **Constitutional Law:** Reinforces the expansive interpretation of **Article 21**, emphasizing dignity and humane treatment for all, not just convicts.
 - **Social Justice and Welfare:** Positions beggars' homes as spaces of social justice, highlighting the State's duty to rehabilitate, empower, and integrate marginalized populations.
 - **Policy and Governance:** Sets guidelines for the management of welfare institutions, highlighting accountability, monitoring, and adherence to human rights standards.
 - **Public Health:** Recognizes the link between living conditions in state-run facilities and the prevention of communicable diseases.



Multi-Lane Free Flow Tolling System

- An agreement has been signed to implement the country's first comprehensive Multi-Lane Free Flow (MLFF) tolling system at Choryasi Fee Plaza in Gujarat on NH-48.
- The agreement was signed between the **Indian Highways Management Company Limited (IHMCL)**, a company promoted by National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and ICICI Bank.
- The **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)** is planning to introduce MLFF tolling system at **25 National Highway fee plazas** during the current fiscal.
- MLFF tolling is a **barrier-less tolling system**. It enables transactions through reading of FASTag and Vehicle Registration Number (VRN) by High performance **Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) Readers** and **Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras**.
- It enables seamless toll collection without stopping vehicles at fee plazas, reducing congestion and travel time leading to enhanced fuel efficiency and lowering emissions. MLFF will also contribute towards improving toll revenue collection and creating a smarter, faster and more efficient National Highway network across the country.

BHARATI Initiative

- The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) launched its new initiative BHARATI (Bharat's Hub for Agri-tech, Resilience, Advancement and Incubation for Export Enablement).
- BHARATI is a significant step to **strengthen India's agricultural and processed food exports**.
- It has been designed to **empower 100 agri-food and agri-tech startups**, accelerate their journey, promote innovation and create new export opportunities for young entrepreneurs.
- It is structured to complement and enhance industry and government-led incubation programmes in the agriculture, food and food processing sectors.
- Selected startups will undergo a **3-month acceleration programme** focusing on export readiness, regulatory compliance, market access and collaborative solutions to address export challenges.
- To strengthen this ecosystem, APEDA will partner with state agricultural boards, agricultural universities, premier institutions like IITs and NITs, industry bodies and existing accelerators to attract startups for agri-export enablement.
- The pilot cohort will serve as a model for a scalable annual incubation programme.



Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)

- ✓ APEDA was established under the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act, 1985.
- ✓ Headquartered in New Delhi, it functions under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.

Functions

- ✓ Promotion of export-oriented production and development of the Scheduled products;
- ✓ Registration of persons as exporters of the scheduled products;
- ✓ Fixing of standards & specifications for scheduled products for the purpose of exports;
- ✓ Improving of packaging of the scheduled products;
- ✓ Improving of marketing of the scheduled products outside India;
- ✓ Training in various aspects of the industries connected with the scheduled products;
- ✓ It also functions as the Secretariat to the National Accreditation Board (NAB) for the implementation of accreditation of the Certification Bodies under National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) for Organic exports.

Focus Areas

- It seeks to **drive innovation in high-value categories** such as GI-tagged agri-products, organic foods, superfoods, novel processed Indian agri-foods, livestock products and AYUSH products.

- It also aims to **attract startups working on advanced technologies** like AI-based quality control, blockchain-enabled traceability, IoT-enabled cold chains and agri-fintech, while addressing innovative packaging, sustainability and sea protocols.
- It seeks to resolve export challenges related to product development, value addition, quality assurance, perishability, wastage and logistics.

National Maritime Heritage Complex

- The Chief of the Naval Staff visited the National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC) at Lothal, Gujarat.
- NMHC is developed *under India's Sagarmala Programme* by the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways**, with the support of the **Government of Gujarat** and the contribution of the **Indian Navy**.
- Developed at a cost of Rs 3,500 crore, it aims to display India's rich and diverse maritime heritage and to help Lothal to emerge as a world class international tourist destination.



- It was one of the southernmost sites of the Indus Valley civilization, located in the Bhāl region of what is now the state of Gujarat.
- It is known for the **discovery of the oldest man-made dockyard**, connecting the city to an ancient course of the Sabarmati river.
- The meaning of Lothal (a combination of Loth & (s) thal) in Gujarati is "the mound of the dead".
 - Incidentally, the name of the city of Mohenjo-daro (also part of the Indus Valley Civilisation, now in Pakistan) means the same in Sindhi.
- Believed to have been built in **2,200 BC**, Lothal was a thriving trade centre in ancient times, with its trade of beads, gems and ornaments reaching West Asia and Africa.
- Lothal was nominated in 2014 as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and its application is pending on the tentative list of UNESCO.
- In the region, it can be compared with other Indus port towns of Balakot (Pakistan), Khirasa (in Gujarat's Kutch) and Kuntasi (in Rajkot).

Features

- It will have several innovative features such as **Lothal mini-recreation**, which will recreate Harappan architecture and lifestyle through immersive technology.
- It will have **four theme parks** – Memorial theme park, Maritime and Navy theme park, Climate theme park, and Adventure and Amusement theme park.
- It will also house the world's tallest lighthouse museum, 14 galleries highlighting India's maritime heritage starting from the Harappan time till today.
- A **coastal states pavilion** displaying the diverse maritime heritage of Indian states and UTs will also be a part of the project.

Engineering Export Promotion Council India

- The Engineering Export Promotion Council (EEPC) India celebrated its platinum jubilee (70 years).
- **Set up in 1955**, EEPC India is the **trade and investment promotion organization for the engineering sector**, sponsored by the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.
- As an advisory body it actively contributes to the policies of Government of India and acts as the prime channel between the engineering fraternity and the government.
- It organizes promotional activities such as buyer-seller meets (BSM) – both in India and abroad, overseas trade fairs/exhibitions, and India pavilion/information booths in overseas exhibitions.
- It facilitates sourcing from India and encourages MSMEs to raise their standard at par with international best practices. It also encourages MSMEs to integrate their business with the global value chain.

Sex Sorted Semen Facility

- The Prime Minister inaugurated a Rs 10 crore Sex Sorted Semen facility under the Rashtriya Gokul Mission at **Purnea, Bihar**.

- Purnea semen station, is one of the largest government-run semen stations in the country. It already produces ~50 lakh doses annually.
- The facility will use the **indigenous Gausort technology** to produce 5 lakh doses of *Sex Sorted Semen* per year.
 - Semen Sex-Sorting is a technology that **increases the likelihood of birth of female calves** with about 90% accuracy.
- This reduces the economic burden on dairy farmers, who otherwise have to spend resources on maintaining unproductive male calves.
- The technology will make sex sorted semen available to farmers of the Eastern and North-Eastern region at affordable rates.
- This will help farmers to expand milk production, secure a steady supply of heifers and improve their incomes.
Heifers are female cows who have not given birth to a calf.



Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM)

- ✓ **Launched in 2014**, RGM is a project under **National Programme for Bovine Breeding and Dairy Development**.
- ✓ It aims to **conserve and develop indigenous breeds** in a focused and scientific manner.
- ✓ **Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture** has been implementing the Mission through the State Implementing Agencies (SIA viz Livestock Development Boards).

Activities under RGM

- ✓ Strengthening of semen stations and Artificial Insemination (AI) network.
- ✓ Bull production and breed improvement using sex-sorted semen.
- ✓ Skill development and farmer awareness programs.
- ✓ Establishment of Centres of Excellence & strengthening of Central Cattle Breeding Farms.

Impact of RGM

- ✓ Milk production has increased by 63.55% in the last ten years. Along with this the **availability of milk per person**, which was 307 grams/day in 2013-14, has **increased to 471 grams/ day** in 2023-24.
- ✓ **Livestock productivity** has also **improved by 26.34%** in the same period.
- ✓ Over 8.39 crores animals have been covered and 5.21crores farmers have been benefitted under the Nationwide Artificial Insemination Programme (NAIP) under the RGM.
- ✓ 22 In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) labs has been set up across the country under the State Livestock Boards (SLBs) or in universities and over 2541 High Genetic Merit (HGM) calves have been born.

National Makhana Board

The Prime Minister launched the National Makhana Board in Purnea, Bihar. The Centre has also approved a development package worth Rs 475 crore for the Makhana sector.

Makhana

- Also known as **fox nut**, it is the **dried edible seed of the prickly water lily or gorgon plant**. This plant is found in freshwater ponds throughout South and East Asia.
- It is recognized for its **violet and white flowers**, as well as its large, round, and prickly leaves.
- The edible part of the Makhana plant consists of small, round seeds that have an outer layer ranging from black to brown. Thus, it is also known as the **Black Diamond**.
- After processing, these seeds are often consumed as **popped snacks known as 'lava.'** Makhana is **highly nutritious** and provides an excellent source of carbohydrates, protein, and minerals. Due to its versatile applications in medicine, healthcare, and nutrition, this plant can be consumed in various forms.

Cultivation

- Bihar accounts for approximately **90% of India's makhana production**.
- The production is **primarily concentrated in nine districts located in northern and eastern Bihar: Darbhanga, Madhubani, Purnea, Katihar, Saharsa, Supaul, Araria, Kishanganj, and Sitamarhi**, which are part of the **Mithilanchal region**.
- Among these districts, the **first four contribute to 80%** of Bihar's total makhana output. In 2022, '**Mithila Makhana**' was conferred a **Geographical Indication tag**.

- In addition to Bihar, makhana is cultivated in smaller quantities in the states of **Assam, Manipur, West Bengal, Tripura, and Odisha**, as well as in neighboring countries like **Nepal, Bangladesh, China, Japan, and Korea**.

Climatic Conditions for Makhana Cultivation

- Makhana is an **aquatic crop** and is mainly grown in **tropical and subtropical regions**. It is traditionally **cultivated in stagnant water bodies** such as ponds, land depressions, lakes, ditches, or wetlands with shallow water depths of up to 4-6 feet.
- For optimal growth and development, Makhana requires a **temperature range of 20-35°C**, relative **humidity of 50-90%**, and **annual rainfall between 100-250 cm**.

Significance of Makhana Board

- Despite being the largest producer of Makhana, Bihar has had difficulty tapping into the expanding market for this product.
- Although the state accounts for 90% of the country's makhana production, the largest exporters of makhana in India are Punjab and Assam, with Punjab not even producing the crop itself.
- This is due to **Bihar's lack of a developed food processing industry and inadequate export infrastructure**.
- Notably, **none of Bihar's airports have cargo facilities**, which further limits export capabilities. Additionally, **low productivity** in makhana cultivation is a significant issue. Currently, the cultivation process is extremely **labor-intensive** and challenging, **driving up overall input costs**.
- Further, farmers have been **slow to adopt high-yield varieties** of fox nut seeds, such as **Swarna Vaidehi** and **Sabour Makhana-1** developed by agricultural institutes
- The Makhana Board will provide training to farmers, making them export-oriented. People engaged in makhana cultivation will be organised in Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs).

India-ILO MoU on Occupational Classification

- The Union government has signed an MoU with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to advance the International Reference Classification of Occupations (**IRCO**).
- The agreement aims to help Indian youth access global job markets by aligning domestic occupational data with international standards.

IRCO

- **Developed by the ILO**, it is a system that **classifies occupations based on job functions, tasks and duties**.
- It serves as a universal framework for compiling and comparing occupational data across countries.
- The classification system supports key areas such as international migration management, vocational training, and labour market analysis.
- By adopting the IRCO framework, India aims to streamline its skill ecosystem, facilitate mutual recognition of qualifications, and position Indian workers more competitively in global labour markets.

Blue Ports

- The Department of Fisheries (DoF), under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying (MoFAHD) has signed a Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) agreement with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to strengthen Blue Port infrastructure in India.
- The FAO's TCP will provide assistance to strengthen the fishing ports' technical capacities in addressing the main environmental, social and economic challenges that affect the aquatic value chain.

Blue Ports Framework

- Under the Blue Ports framework, the DoF is leading the **development of Smart and Integrated Fishing Harbours** that combine technological innovation with environmental stewardship.
- Three pilot harbours namely **Vanakbara (Diu), Karaikal (Puducherry), and Jakhau (Gujarat)** have been approved with a total investment of Rs 369.8 crores.
- These modern harbours aim to revolutionize post-harvest fisheries infrastructure by ensuring safer, cleaner, and more efficient operations for India's fishing communities.
- Eco-friendly features such as rainwater harvesting, energy-efficient lighting, electric-powered equipment, and robust waste management systems will aid sustainability initiatives.
- Supported under the **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)**, it integrates smart technologies such as IoT devices, sensor networks, satellite communication, and data analytics to streamline harbour operations and enable real-time decision-making.

Bima Sugam

- Bima Sugam India Federation (BSIF) launched the Bima Sugam portal.
- Bima Sugam is an **online insurance marketplace** for buying, selling, and servicing insurance policies. It is like an e-commerce platform where insurance companies can sell their products.
- It will onboard all the companies that offer life and non-life insurance products under one roof.
- It aims to provide an end-to-end digital journey to all policyholders - from buying insurance policies to renewals to claim settlement to portability to grievance redressal.
- It will be a unified platform, which will be integrated with various govt databases, insurers, intermediaries, insurance repositories, etc., for fetching customer details, providing product information, and buying and servicing Insurance policies.

Benefits



- ✔ Bima Sugam will serve as a **one-stop solution** for all insurance stakeholders, including customers, insurers, intermediaries, and agents, thereby, promoting transparency, efficiency, and collaboration across the entire insurance value chain.
- ✔ It will help to reduce the paperwork as policies can be stored in electronic format. Settlement of claims and renewal of policies will also become faster as paperwork is reduced drastically, making it easier for the customers.
- ✔ Moreover, customers no longer need to keep a tab of different policies separately. They can view all their policies — life, health and non-life insurance — in one single application or window under Bima Sugam.
- ✔ At present, insurance web aggregators typically charge a fixed commission to sell insurance products.
- ✔ As insurance companies will sell policies directly through Bima Sugam, the commissions paid to intermediaries are likely to be reduced, leading to lower premiums for policyholders.
- ✔ It also aims to accelerate the acceptance of new and sandbox products, opening the door for innovation in insurance offerings

Public Financial Asset Management Program

- **Vivekanand Gupta**, the Regional Provident Fund Commissioner, has been selected for the Public Financial Asset Management (PFAM) Program 2025–26.
- Mr. Gupta is the first-ever representative from EPFO to be selected for the PFAM cohort.
- This achievement marks a significant milestone for EPFO and its apex training institution, the **Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay National Academy of Social Security (PDUNASS)**.
- By securing a place in this high-impact program, PDUNASS has established a strategic pathway for future institutional partnerships in areas such as long-term asset management, investment governance, and public financial policy.

About the PFAM Program

- PFAM is a prestigious initiative jointly organised by the **World Bank and the Milken Institute** and is hosted at **Bayes Business School, University of London**.
- It is a globally recognised leadership initiative aimed at equipping senior professionals with cutting-edge expertise in capital markets, governance frameworks, and strategic asset management.
- The 2025–26 cohort consists of 16 participants from 13 countries, including 11 from Central Banks, three from Sovereign Wealth Funds, and two from Pension Funds.

Pink Tax

- As per International Finance Students Association's (IFSA) research '*The Gender Tax: Assessing the Economic Toll on Women*', almost 67% of Indian individuals have never heard of the Pink Tax.
- Pink tax is **neither a real tax, nor is it a government-imposed fee**. It's just a **pricing phenomenon wherein women pay more** for buying a product exclusively made for them or enjoying a service tailor-made for them.
- Pink toys, haircuts, drycleaning, razors, shampoos, body lotions, deodorants, facial care, skincare items, beauty care, clothing, T-shirts, jeans, salon services etc. suffer the tax.
- The term is believed to have originated in the U.S. in California in 1994.
- As there is no outright ban on pink tax, firms enjoy benefits by pocketing extra revenue generated out of selling the items, without contributing to government's revenue.
- In 2017, the United Nations urged its member states to put an end to this gender-based price discrimination and to help women gain equal access to economic participation.
- While there are no specific laws in India to address the issue of pink tax, the *National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission* ruled that companies must follow fair pricing policies and avoid gender-based price discrimination.

Industrial Park Rating System 3.0

- The Ministry of Commerce & Industry has launched the Industrial Park Rating System (IPRS) 3.0.
- It has been developed by the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** with support from the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)**.
- The initiative aims to further **strengthen India's industrial ecosystem** and **enhance the competitiveness of industrial infrastructure**.
- The government is actively developing 20 plug-and-play industrial parks and smart cities under National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (NICDC), with four already completed and four under active construction.
- IPRS 3.0 will help assess and benchmark facilities, infrastructure, and competitiveness of industrial parks across the country.
- It will provide stakeholders with reliable data, encourage best practices, and support the creation of world-class infrastructure, thereby strengthening the Make in India programme and enhancing India's global competitiveness.
- Building on the pilot phase in 2018 and IPRS 2.0 in 2021, the third edition introduces an **expanded framework with new parameters**, including sustainability, green infrastructure, logistics connectivity, digitalization, skill linkages, and enhanced tenant feedback.

- Under IPRS 3.0, industrial parks will be benchmarked and categorized as **Leaders, Challengers, and Aspirers** based on their performance across key indicators.
- This will provide investors with transparent and credible information, facilitate healthy competition among States and UTs, and guide policymakers in designing targeted interventions.
- For States and UTs, the initiative offers an opportunity to showcase best-performing parks, identify gaps for improvement, attract investments & generate employment

Maitri 2.0

- The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has launched the second edition of the Brazil–India Cross-Incubation Programme in Agritech (Maitri 2.0).
- Maitri 2.0 is a two-way learning platform for co-creation between Indian and Brazilian innovators. It aligns with both nations' vision for cooperation in agriculture, emerging technologies, and food and nutritional security.
- Maitri 2.0 aims to strengthen incubator linkages, exchange best practices, promote co-incubation. It opens new opportunities in sustainable agriculture, digital technologies, value-chain development and bilateral cooperation.
- Bringing together innovators, startups, and institutions from both countries, the programme will help build resilient food systems and empower farmers.

AI for Viksit Bharat and Frontier Tech Repository

NITI Aayog has launched two transformative initiatives, **AI for Viksit Bharat Roadmap: Opportunity for Accelerated Economic Growth** and **NITI Frontier Tech Repository under its Frontier Tech Hub.**

- **Frontier Tech Hub** is a platform that brings together government, industry, and innovators into one ecosystem, accelerating ideas into impact.

AI for Viksit Bharat Roadmap (clear, sector-specific action plan)

- The roadmap lays out a practical action plan to translate AI's promise into outcomes, highlighting two major levers:
 - Accelerating adoption of AI across industries to enhance productivity and efficiency;
 - Transforming R&D with generative AI to help India leapfrog into innovation-driven opportunities.

Frontier Tech Repository (inspires states & districts to scale technology for real-world impact)

- Complementing the roadmap, the FTP showcases 200+ impact stories from across India in four sectors – Agriculture, Healthcare, Education, and National Security.
- It highlights how states and startups are deploying technology to transform livelihoods.
- Two initiatives to amplify grassroots adoption of technology and scale impact creation have been announced:
 - **Frontier 50 Initiative:** NITI Aayog will support 50 Aspirational Districts / Blocks to pick use cases from the Repository and deploy those frontier technologies that have potential to accelerate saturation of services across Aspirational Districts Programme/Aspirational Blocks Programme themes.
 - **NITI Frontier Tech Impact Awards for States:** It will recognize three states excelling in use of tech to improve governance, education, healthcare, livelihood etc., and support them to scale measurable, transformative outcomes.

Clearing Corporation of India

- The RBI Governor has urged the Clearing Corporation of India Limited (CCIL) to explore infrastructure that enables trading and settlement of the rupee against a wider basket of currencies, beyond the US dollar and rupee.
- CCIL currently facilitates settlement in USD-INR only.
- This is in line with the broader objective of internationalisation of the rupee. RBI has been making efforts to internationalise rupee by taking a number of steps including bilateral currency arrangements, rupee trade settlement mechanism, opening of special vostro accounts, etc.

Clearing Corporation of India Limited (*systemically important financial market infrastructure*)

- **Established in 2001**, CCIL is a central counterparty (CCP) providing clearing and settlement services for a range of financial instruments like government securities, money market instruments, foreign exchange and over the counter (OTC) derivatives.
- Authorized by the RBI as a Payment System Operator in India, CCIL's mission is to promote efficiency, systemic and financial stability, and safety by mitigating counterparty and settlement risk.

Cabinet approves maritime package

- The Union cabinet has announced a massive infrastructure boost for India's maritime sector with a Rs 69,725 crore package, aimed at building indigenous shipping and shipbuilding capabilities.
- The package introduces a **four-pillar approach** designed to
 - Strengthen domestic capacity;
 - Improve long-term financing;
 - Promote greenfield and brownfield shipyard development; and
 - Enhance technical capabilities and skilling, and implement legal, taxation, and policy reforms.

Details of the Package

- Under this package, the **Shipbuilding Financial Assistance Scheme (SBFAS)** will be extended until **31 March 2036** with a total corpus of Rs 24,736 crore.
- The scheme aims to incentivize ship building in India and includes a **Shipbreaking Credit Note** with an allocation of Rs 4,001 crore.
- The credit note scheme is much like the Centre's vehicle scrappage programme for automobiles.
- It will allow ship owners to avail a **credit note of 40% of the vessel's scrap value** when scrapped in an Indian yard – this will be reimbursable against the cost of constructing a new vessel in an Indian shipyard.
- In addition, the **Maritime Development Fund (MDF)** has been approved with a corpus of Rs 25,000 crore to **provide long-term financing for the sector**.
 - This includes a **Maritime Investment Fund of Rs 20,000 crore** with 49% participation from the Union Government and an **Interest Incentivization Fund of Rs 5,000 crore** to reduce the effective cost of debt and improve project bankability.
- Furthermore, the **Shipbuilding Development Scheme (SbDS)**, with an outlay of Rs.19,989 crore, aims to expand domestic **shipbuilding capacity to 4.5 million Gross Tonnage annually**.
- It also supports mega shipbuilding clusters, infrastructure expansion, establish the India Ship Technology Centre under the Indian Maritime University, and provide risk coverage, including insurance support for shipbuilding projects.
- A **National Shipbuilding Mission** will also be established to oversee the implementation of all initiatives.

Significance

- The overall package is expected generate nearly **30 lakh jobs** and attract **investments of approximately Rs 4.5 lakh crore** into India's maritime sector.
- Beyond its economic impact, the initiative will **strengthen national, energy, and food security** by bringing resilience to critical supply chains and maritime routes.

5 Years of Blue Revolution

- The Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) which was launched to bring about a Blue Revolution in the fisheries sector has completed 5 years.
- **Launched in 2020**, PMMSY is a flagship scheme launched for a period of five years from **FY 2020-21 to FY 2024-25**, with an investment of **Rs 20,050 crore**. The scheme has now been **extended up to 2025-26**.
- It aims to address critical gaps in fish production and productivity, quality, technology, post-harvest infrastructure and management.
- PMMSY implements a **cluster-based approach**. This model brings together enterprises from production to export, fostering cooperation and addressing value chain gaps to create business opportunities and livelihoods.

Objectives of PMMSY

- Add an additional fish production of 70 lakh metric tonnes by 2024-25;
- Enhance aquaculture productivity from the national average of 3 tonne to 5 tonne per hectare;
- Reduce post-harvest losses from 25% to around 10%;
- Generate about 55 lakh direct and indirect employment opportunities;
- Enhance fisheries exports from Rs 46,589 crore (2018-19) to Rs 1 lakh crore by 2024-25, Enhance per capita fish consumption from the current 5-6 kg to 12 kg;
- Encourage private investment and facilitate growth of entrepreneurship in the sector.

Impact of PMMSY

- Increase of annual fish production in the country from 141.6 lakh tonne during 2019-20 to an all-time record of 195 lakh tonne in 2024-25.
- India has emerged as the **second largest fish producer** in the world, contributing nearly **8% of global fish production**.
- Creation of direct and indirect **employment opportunities** of about **58 lakh** in fishing and aquaculture related activities and **empowerment of 99,018 women**.
- Increase in **fisheries export** from Rs 46662.8 crore in 2019-20 to **Rs 60524.89 crore in 2023-24**.
- Enhanced per capita fish consumption from 5-6 kg to 12-13 kg.
- Enhanced aquaculture productivity from 3 to 4.7 tonne per hectare; and
- Reduction of post-harvest losses to 10-15%.

UPI in Qatar

- NPCI International Payments Ltd, in partnership with Qatar National Bank (QNB), has enabled the acceptance of QR code-based Unified Payments Interface (UPI) across Qatar via point-of-sale terminals for merchants acquired by QNB.
- The acceptance of UPI in Qatar promotes interoperability and expands UPI's global reach.

- It will enable Indian travellers to make UPI payments seamlessly in Qatar, thereby reducing the need to carry cash and eliminating currency exchange hassles.
- Moreover, it is expected to benefit Qatar's retail and tourism sectors as UPI acceptance will increase transaction volumes of merchants.

Global Innovation Index 2025

- The Global Innovation Index (GII) 2025 has been released by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) reporting a global slowdown in innovation investments amidst rapid technological advances.
- GI was **launched in 2007** to find and determine methods that could **capture a picture of innovation in society**. WIPO started its association with the GI in 2011.
- A large number of countries use the GI to assess and improve their innovation ecosystems and use the index as a **reference in economic plans and/or policies**.
- The index evaluates **139 economies** on over 80 indicators that measure innovation inputs and outputs.
- GI 2025 evaluates economies on innovation based on **7 pillars** (*measuring both the inputs that enable innovation and the actual results of innovative activity*):
 - **Innovation Input Sub-Index (5)**: Institutions, Human capital and research, Infrastructure, Market sophistication, Business sophistication
 - **Innovation Output Sub-Index (2)**: Knowledge and technology outputs, and Creative outputs.

India's Performance

- Overall, India has climbed steadily from **48th position in 2020 to 38th position in 2025**, and importantly, holds the 1st position among lower-middle-income economies and in the Central and Southern Asia region.
- India performs best in Knowledge & Technology Outputs (22) and Market Sophistication (38), while its weakest rankings are in Business Sophistication (64) Infrastructure (61) and Institutions (58).

Key findings

- Global innovation systems are undergoing a shift. While cutting-edge technologies in AI and quantum computing are advancing rapidly, R&D growth has slowed down.
- **R&D growth** fell to 2.9% in 2024 and is projected to drop further to 2.3% in 2025. This marks a sharp decline from a 4.4% increase the previous year, which was already the lowest growth since the 2010 financial crisis.
- Technology advanced on almost every front in 2024, with only novel drug development moving backward.

Socio-economic impact of innovation

- It remains largely positive, with strong gains in productivity, health outcomes, and poverty reduction.
- Labor productivity rose 2.5% in 2024, exceeding its 10-year trend. Global life expectancy continues its upward trajectory to reach 73 years.
- Extreme poverty fell to 817 million people in 2024, less than half the total in 2004, representing sustained progress.

Rankings

- Switzerland (1st), Sweden (2nd), the United States (3rd), Republic of Korea (4th) and Singapore (5th).
- These top performers share common strengths: high R&D intensity, world-class institutions, a strong educational system and a strongly innovative private sector.
- Among other high performers that have improved their innovation ranking are Japan (12th) – its best result since 2011 – along with Israel (14th), and Hong Kong (15th).
- China (10th), India (38th) have climbed fastest in the ranking since 2013.
- Europe leads as the most innovative region, with 15 countries in the global top 25, including six in the top 10.
- North America remains strong, led by the United States and Canada (17).
- Meanwhile, Southeast Asia, East Asia, and Oceania (SEAO) continue to emerge as global innovation hubs, with six economies in the top 25.

World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) ■

- WIPO is one of the 15 specialized agencies of the United Nations (UN). It acts as the global forum for intellectual property (IP) services, policy, information and cooperation.
- It was created in 1967 with a mission to lead the development of a balanced and effective international IP system that enables innovation and creativity.
- WIPO currently has 193 member states and is headquartered in **Geneva**, Switzerland.
- The predecessor to WIPO was the United International Bureaux for the Protection of Intellectual Property, which had been established in 1893.

Scheme to Promote Critical Mineral Recycling

- The Union Cabinet, has approved a **Rs 1,500 crore incentive scheme** to boost India's capacity to recycle critical minerals from secondary sources. The Scheme will have a **tenure of six years from FY 2025-26**
- The scheme is **part of the National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM)**, which is aimed at building the domestic capacity of and supply chain resilience in critical minerals.
- **Eligible feedstock** is e-waste, Lithium Ion Battery (LIB) scrap, and other scrap e.g. catalytic converters in end-of-life vehicles.
- **Expected beneficiaries** will be both large, established recyclers, as well as small, new recyclers (including start-ups), for whom one-third of the scheme outlay has been earmarked.
- It will be applicable to investments in new units as well as expansion of capacity/modernization and diversification of existing units.

Incentive Structure

- The incentives will comprise **20% capex subsidy** on plant and machinery, equipment and associated utilities for starting production within specified timeframe, beyond which reduced subsidy will be applicable.
- **Opex subsidy will be an incentive on incremental sales** over the base year (FY 2025-26) viz. 40% of eligible Opex subsidy in the 2nd year and balance 60% in the 5th year.
- In order to ensure greater number of beneficiaries, total incentive (Capex plus Opex subsidy) per entity will be subject to an **overall ceiling of Rs 50 crore for large entities and Rs 25 crore for small entities**.
 - Within this, there will be a ceiling for Opex subsidy of Rs 10 crore and Rs 5 crore respectively.

Key Outcomes

- It is expected to develop at least **270 kilo ton of annual recycling capacity** resulting in around **40 kilo ton annual critical mineral production**.
- It will bring in about **Rs 8,000 crore of investment** and create close to **70,000 direct and indirect jobs**.

Large Ships Granted Infrastructure Status

The Indian government has granted infrastructure status to large ships.

- The change was effected by modifying the Harmonized Master List (HML) and inserting large ships as a new sub-sector under **Transport & Logistics**.
- The change is part of a wider push under Maritime India Vision 2030 and Maritime Amrit Kaal goal for 2047 to enhance India's shipbuilding and shipping capabilities.

Eligibility

- A large ship is defined as a commercial vessel having a **gross tonnage (GT) of 10,000** or more, which are under Indian ownership and Indian flag.
- Commercial vessels that are **built in India**, Indian-owned and flagged, with **GT of 1,500 or more** also qualify.

Significance of infrastructure status

- **Access to cheaper, long-term credit:** Shipping companies can now secure loans from banks at lower interest rates and with longer repayment tenures, better suited to the life cycle of a vessel.
- **Boost to domestic shipbuilding:** Easier financing encourages companies to purchase vessels from Indian shipyards, promoting growth in the domestic manufacturing sector.
- **Reduced logistics costs:** By strengthening India's own shipping capacity, the government aims to lower the country's logistics costs.
- **Increased fleet ownership:** India depends heavily on foreign ships for its international trade, with billions of dollars spent on foreign sea freight. The new status aims to reduce this dependence by incentivizing Indian companies to expand their own fleets.
- **Job creation:** Shipbuilding, supply chains, maintenance, and related industries will benefit from the move, as infrastructure status often enables faster scaling
- **Attracting private and foreign investment**

Concerns

- The high gross tonnage criteria has been criticized arguing that it favours larger vessels and disadvantages smaller, MSME-level shipyards and coastal shipping operators.
- Experts caution that its full success depends on effective policy execution and the modernization of Indian shipyards to meet increased demand.

- The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has released a report that provides a **decadal analysis on fiscal health of states**.
- As per the report, the **total public debt** (internal debt and loans and advances from the Centre) of all 28 states combined **has tripled (3.3 times) in 10 years** — from Rs 17.57 lakh crore in 2013-14 to Rs 59.60 lakh crore in 2022-23.
- Measured against Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP), debt went up from **16.66% in 2013-14 to nearly 23% by 2022-23**.
 - GSDP is the value of all finished goods and services produced within a state's geographical boundaries.
- States borrow in many ways, through market securities like bonds and treasury bills, loans from banks, Ways and Means Advances from the RBI, and funding from institutions like LIC and NABARD. Together, these form the public debt that CAG has mapped.

State wise Variation

- Not all states are equally indebted. At the end of FY23, Punjab recorded the highest debt-to-GSDP ratio at 40.35%, followed by Nagaland (37.15%) and West Bengal (33.70%).
- The lowest ratio was recorded in Odisha (8.45%), Maharashtra (14.64%) and Gujarat (16.37%).
- Overall, eight states had public debt above 30% of GSDP, six states below 20% and the rest between 20% and 30%.
- The states' combined debt was equivalent to 22.17% of India's GDP, which stood at Rs 268.9 lakh crore in FY23.
- As percentage of revenue receipts, the states' total debt ranged between 128% (FY 2014-15) and 191% (FY 2020-21).
- And as percentage of total non-debt receipts for the same period, it was between 127 and 190%.
- The report also flagged a breach of the so-called 'golden rule' of borrowing, which says governments should raise debt only for investment, not to fund operating costs.
- In FY23, 11 states, including Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, West

Reasons for increase in state public debt

- ✓ **Fiscal stress from the COVID-19 pandemic:** The pandemic caused a significant economic downturn, which limited states' revenues. At the same time, states were forced to increase their spending on healthcare and relief measures. This led to a large increase in borrowings, with the debt-to-GSDP ratio jumping from 21% in 2019-20 to 25% in 2020-21.
- ✓ **Populist welfare schemes:** Some states have adopted expensive social welfare policies, such as free power, farm loan waivers, and cash transfers. Funding these schemes through borrowings has worsened fiscal deficits and debt accumulation.
- ✓ **Uneven and volatile revenue sources:** Many states, particularly less industrialized ones, rely on volatile revenue streams like mineral royalties, lotteries, and land sales. States like Punjab and West Bengal struggle with structurally weak revenue mobilization.
- ✓ **Dependence on central transfers:** The implementation of the GST reduced states' autonomy over indirect taxes. While the Union government initially provided GST compensation, the end of this period in June 2022 left many states struggling with revenue gaps.
- ✓ **Inefficient spending:** A significant portion of state budgets is allocated to committed expenditures like salaries, pensions, and interest payments, crowding out productive capital investments.
- ✓ **Off-budget borrowings:** The report highlighted the risk of states using off-budget borrowings—loans taken by state public sector enterprises on behalf of the government—to bypass fiscal responsibility targets.
- ✓ These borrowings add to overall liabilities but are not always reflected in the budget.

Impact of rising state public debt

- ✓ **Higher interest payments:** Increasing debt results in higher interest costs, which consume a larger portion of state revenues. This reduces the funds available for essential development and welfare programs.
- ✓ **Risk to fiscal stability:** High debt levels increase the vulnerability of state finances to economic shocks and can lead to financial instability. This is especially true for states already struggling with low revenue generation and high committed expenditures.
- ✓ **Credit rating concerns:** Persistent deficits and high debt levels can prompt credit rating agencies to downgrade the state's creditworthiness. This can increase future borrowing costs and limit access to funds.
- ✓ **Burden on future generations:** Excessive borrowing transfers the burden of repayment to future citizens. In some states, costly populist schemes or bailouts of loss-making public sector enterprises represent a future liability.

Bengal, Kerala, Bihar, and Tamil Nadu, spent part of their borrowings on meeting revenue deficits instead of capital expenditure.

- In Punjab and Andhra Pradesh, capital spending was as low as 26% and 17% of net borrowings, respectively. In Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, only about half of the debt went into capital projects.

Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal

- In a major step towards dispute resolution, the Ministry of Finance has formally launched the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT).
- The GSTAT is a **statutory appellate body** established under the **Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017**.
- It has been constituted to hear appeals against orders passed by the GST Appellate Authorities and to provide taxpayers with an independent forum for justice.
- The Tribunal will function through a **Principal Bench in New Delhi** and 31 State Benches, thereby ensuring accessibility and nationwide reach.
- Each Bench of the GSTAT will comprise **two Judicial Members, one Technical Member (Centre), and one Technical Member (State)**, ensuring a balanced composition from both Central and State administrations.
- Ease of living for taxpayers extends beyond filing and refunds. It includes fair and efficient dispute resolution. The GSTAT is a natural extension of this reform arc and is an important advance for the ease of doing business and a vital forum for justice.
- It will **reduce ambiguity and bring uniformity** across the country. What began in 2017 as 'One Nation, One Tax, One Market', now evolves into 'One Nation, One Forum for Fairness and Certainty'.
- A key feature unveiled during the launch was the GSTAT e-Courts Portal, developed by Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) in collaboration with National Informatics Centre (NIC).
- This digital platform will enable taxpayers and practitioners to file appeals online, track the progress of cases, and participate in hearings through digital mode.

GST 2.0 Reforms

The 56th meeting of the GST Council has approved Next-Gen GST (GST 2.0) reforms, with focus on improving the lives of the common man and ensuring ease of doing business for all.

Key Changes

Tax slabs

- The reforms focused on a major **restructuring of GST slabs**. The multiple slabs – 5%, 12%, 18% and 28% – were replaced with a **broad two-slab structure – a merit rate of 5% and a standard rate of 18%**.
- In addition, there will be a special demerit rate of 40% for sin, demerit and luxury goods such as pan masala, tobacco, cigarettes, high-end cars, aerated drinks etc.

For consumers

- ❖ **Essential items are cheaper:** Many daily-use items like packaged food, personal care products, and household essentials have moved to the lower 5% slab.
- ❖ **Healthcare costs are reduced:** Individual health and life insurance premiums are now exempt from GST, making coverage more affordable. The tax on many life-saving medicines and hospital equipment has been reduced to 5% or nil.
- ❖ **Consumer durables are more affordable:** Large electronics, including air conditioners and TVs, have seen their tax rate drop from 28% to 18%.
- ❖ **Automobile prices are lower:** GST on small cars and two-wheelers up to 350cc has been reduced from 28% to 18%, increasing affordability for middle-class families.

For businesses

- ❖ **Simplified compliance:** The shift to fewer tax slabs is expected to reduce classification disputes and make compliance easier for businesses, particularly MSMEs.
- ❖ **Improved cash flow:** The reforms correct the **inverted duty structure (IDS)** in sectors like textiles and fertilizers, where input taxes were higher than output taxes. This reduces blockages in input tax credit (ITC) and improves working capital.
- ❖ **Faster processes:** For registration, returns and refund, GST 2.0 seeks to streamline the registration process by making it more technology driven and time bound especially for small businesses and startups.
- ❖ The return filing process will improve as the plan seeks to implement pre-filled returns to reduce manual intervention and mismatches.
- ❖ Similarly, the refund process will be automated for faster clearance and automated processing of refunds for exporters and those with inverted duty structure.

Note:

- 12% slab has been removed for most items but retained for bricks under a special composition scheme.
- **Tobacco products remain in the 28% slab with compensation cess**, not in the uniform 40% demerit slab. GST Council has decided to postpone the shift for tobacco products until loans taken by the central government to compensate states for revenue shortfalls are fully repaid.
- Section 54(6) amendment allows 90% provisional refund for **inverted duty structure (IDS)** cases, aligned with zero-rated supply refunds.

Benefits

- The reforms are designed not just to reduce tax rates, but to create a virtuous cycle of growth.
- **Lower Prices, Higher Demand:** Cheaper goods and services increase household savings and stimulate consumption.
- **Ease of Living:** A two-rate structure means fewer disputes, quicker decisions, and simpler compliance.
- **Wider Tax Net:** Simpler rates encourage compliance, expanding the tax base and improving revenues.
- **Support for Manufacturing:** Correcting inverted duty structures boosts domestic value addition and exports.
- **Social Protection:** Exemption of GST on insurance and essential medicines strengthens household security and access to healthcare.
- Together, these reforms ensure that GST is citizen-centric, business-friendly, and aligned with India's global growth ambitions.

France Recognises Palestine

- At the UN General Assembly, France joined the UK, Canada, Australia, and several European nations in recognising Palestine statehood.
- Palestine enjoys wide international recognition, has diplomatic missions, and competes in global events. Yet, it lacks agreed borders, a capital, and full sovereignty due to Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.
- Recognition is thus **symbolic**, signaling moral and political support rather than immediate change on the ground.
- The growing recognition of Palestinian statehood adds diplomatic pressure but has little effect on the Gaza war.

Question of Palestinian Statehood

- Under the **1933 Montevideo Convention**, statehood requires defined territory, a permanent population, a government, and capacity for international relations.
- For Palestine, these pillars remain contested under Israeli occupation.
- **Territory**
 - Palestinian lands — West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza — are effectively under Israel's control.
 - Settlement expansion and annexation efforts further erode prospects of territorial sovereignty.
- **Permanent Population**
 - The Gaza war has devastated the population, with over 65,000 deaths estimated and widespread famine. Such conditions threaten the very survival of Palestinians as a people.
- **Government**
 - The Palestinian Authority (PA) governs limited West Bank areas, while Hamas controls Gaza under blockade.
 - Calls for PA reform and Hamas' disarmament highlight governance challenges, leaving sovereignty curtailed.
- **International Recognition**
 - Global recognition strengthens Palestine's ability to engage diplomatically, even as effective control of land, population, and governance remains compromised.
 - Recognition thus primarily boosts Palestine's lobbying capacity on the world stage.



India's Stand on Palestine



- India has long supported the Palestinian cause as part of its foreign policy.
- In 1974, India became the first non-Arab state to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).
- In 1988, India was among the first to recognize the State of Palestine.
- In 1996, India opened its Representative Office in Gaza, later moved to Ramallah in 2003.
- **Support at Multilateral Fora**
 - ✓ India has actively supported Palestine at global platforms.
 - ✓ Backed UN resolutions affirming Palestinians' right to self-determination and urging Israeli compliance with international law.
 - ✓ Supported Palestine's status as a UN non-member state and, in 2011, voted for its full membership in UNESCO.
- **Policy Approach**
 - ✓ India advocates a negotiated **Two-State solution**, seeking a sovereign, independent, and viable Palestinian state coexisting peacefully with Israel.
 - The Two-State solution refers to establishing a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on pre-1967 borders.
 - It emphasizes diplomacy, dialogue, de-escalation, and early resumption of peace talks.

Israel's Attack on Doha

- Israeli jets struck a target in **Doha**, reportedly hitting a gathering of **Hamas** leaders who were meeting to discuss a U.S. ceasefire proposal.

- This marked the **first direct Israeli strike on a Gulf Arab state** during the conflict, striking at a country that is a **U.S. partner and hosts the major U.S. base at Al-Udeid**, with potentially wide regional and diplomatic repercussions.

India's Response

- India called Israel's strike in **Doha** a "**violation of sovereignty**", saying such actions "threaten peace, stability and security" and urging avoidance of escalation.
 - The statement was delivered at the UN Human Rights Council.
- **Why this response stands out?**
 - **Stronger than before:** India's wording marked a clearer rebuke compared with its largely muted reactions to earlier Israeli strikes in Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, Iran and other places.
 - **Not purely normative:** Experts argue the tone reflects practical ties with Qatar (large Indian diaspora, energy links, trade, close leadership contacts) rather than a sudden principled pivot on sovereignty.
- **Implications for India's West Asia policy**
 - **Balancing act intensifies:** New Delhi seeks to preserve close ties with Israel (security, defence, tech) while safeguarding critical relationships in the Gulf and with Qatar.
 - **Risk of strained Arab ties:** India's relative silence on Gaza and its calibrated responses have raised concerns in parts of the Arab world; stronger statements on Doha are arguably aimed at repairing credibility with Gulf partners.
 - **Regional connectivity with Pakistan factor:** Recent regional moves (e.g., Saudi-Pakistan dynamics) add complexity to India's West Asia calculus, making Gulf relations even more strategically important.

UN Snapback Sanctions on Iran

- U.N. sanctions on Iran were **reimposed** via the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) "**snapback**" mechanism after France, Germany and the UK declared (August 2025) that Iran was not complying with the 2015 nuclear deal.
 - The objective of the JCPOA, signed in 2015, was to constrain Iran's nuclear program and provide confidence that it was not continuing progress toward a nuclear weapon
- Snapback is a **veto-proof trigger built into the 2015 agreement**: if participants declare non-compliance, a 30-day clock starts and U.N. sanctions can automatically be restored without requiring Security Council consensus.
- The mechanism freezes Iranian assets, halts arms deals and targets ballistic-missile development, among other measures. It would have become

U.S. revokes Chabahar waiver

- Recently, U.S. Secretary of State announced revocation of the **2018 sanctions waiver** that had exempted activities at Iran's **Chabahar port** from certain U.S. penalties.
- This revocation is tied to the **Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act (IFCA)**. It is described as part of the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" campaign on Iran.
- Once effective, **operators of Chabahar** and entities engaged in activities covered by IFCA **may be exposed to U.S. sanctions**, affecting banks, shippers, insurers, equipment suppliers and third-party contractors.
- This move complicated India-Iran ties: India signed a **10-year lease** on Chabahar in **May 2024** and has been developing the terminal as a connectivity alternative to routes via Pakistan.

Economic exposure and on-ground facts for India

- **Indian spending:** The Shipping Ministry reported ~**₹200 crore** spent of a **₹400 crore** allocation (since 2016) on Chabahar infrastructure.
- **Traffic trends:** The port reportedly saw a **43% rise in vessel traffic** and **34% increase in container traffic (2023-24)** — indicators of growing commercial use that sanctions could disrupt.

Wider geopolitical & commercial implications

- **Trade & connectivity:** Sanctions threaten India's plans to use Chabahar as a corridor to **Afghanistan and Central Asia** and as a node on the **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)**.
- **Operational risks:** Carriers, insurers and suppliers may withdraw or avoid Chabahar work to limit sanctions exposure, potentially stalling projects and investments.
- **Diplomatic cost:** Compliance with the U.S. demand to cease operations would damage India-Iran ties and regional strategic interests; non-compliance risks secondary sanctions or trade penalties from the U.S.

unusable after mid-October had the Europeans not acted in time.

- Snapback reimposition tightens legal and financial constraints on Iran, may affect oil exports and regional partnerships

Saudi Arabia-Pakistan Defence Pact

- Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have signed a landmark mutual defence pact, formalising a security partnership rooted since the 1960s.
- The agreement declares that “**any aggression against either country shall be considered aggression against both.**” It aims to deepen defence cooperation and strengthen joint deterrence in the region.
- The pact, finalised after Israel’s recent strike in Qatar and amid waning US defence assurances, marks the first major defence agreement between an Arab nation and a nuclear-armed state.
- While Saudi Arabia maintains close ties with India as well, this development signals a significant strategic shift in regional security dynamics.

India’s Cautious Response to Saudi-Pakistan Defence Pact

- India reacted carefully to the Saudi Arabia-Pakistan mutual defence agreement, with MEA spokesperson noting that the government was aware of the long-standing arrangement.
- The Ministry of External Affairs said it will study its implications for national security and regional stability, reaffirming India’s commitment to protecting its interests.

Deepening Pakistan-Saudi Arabia Defence Ties



- ♦ Pakistan and Saudi Arabia share a long history of military cooperation, beginning with **Pakistani troop deployments in the 1960s** and special forces support during the 1979 **Mecca Grand Mosque crisis**.
- ♦ Their ties were institutionalised in 1982 through a Bilateral Security Cooperation Agreement, enabling training, advisory roles, and arms sales.
- ♦ Pakistani personnel have played a key role in training the Saudi Air Force, while Saudi Arabia has been a major buyer of Pakistan made arms.
- ♦ Recent meetings have pledged expanded training and exchanges.
- ♦ The latest defence pact marks Pakistan’s most significant formal commitment in decades, securing Saudi investment during its fiscal crisis and reinforcing its pan-Islamic security role.
- ♦ Analysts suggest **Pakistan may now access U.S. weapons through Saudi funding**.
- ♦ For Riyadh, the pact strengthens defences against Iran, Houthi militias, and instability triggered by Israel’s actions.

Declining Investor Sentiment Towards India

- India has been the world’s fastest-growing major economy (average **8.2% GDP** growth, 2021–24) and posted **7.4%** and **7.8%** growth in the first two quarters of 2025.
- Yet foreign portfolio investment (FPI) flows have been weak: only **\$25.3 bn** net inflow in 2023–24; other recent years saw net outflows (**–\$18.5 bn** in 2021–22, **–\$5.1 bn** in 2022–23, **–\$14.6 bn** in 2024–25, and **–\$2.9 bn** in 2025–26 till Sept).

Foreign-Capital Paradox

- Strong GDP growth has **not** translated into steady foreign capital inflows.
- **Net capital flows into India** (*foreign investment, commercial borrowings, external assistance and non-resident Indian deposits*) plunged to **\$18.3 bn** in 2024–25 (lowest since 2008–09).
- BoP indicators show net foreign investment fell from **\$80.1 bn** (2020–21) to **\$4.5 bn** (2024–25)
 - FDI was low (**\$959m**) and FPI inflows modest (**\$3.6 bn**, largely debt).

Why Capital Flows have Declined?

- **PE/VC monetisation:** Early-wave private equity and VC investors (active in retail, e-commerce, fintech, green energy, healthcare, real estate) are exiting mature bets — exits valued at **\$24bn** (2022), **\$29bn** (2023) and **\$33bn** (2024).
- **FPIs selling:** Portfolio investors have reduced exposure; domestic buyers have often offset selling, keeping local valuations elevated.
- **Investor caution:** Concerns over geopolitical risk, policy unpredictability, and external shocks weigh more on capital flows than headline GDP growth.

Conclusion

- India's strong growth story coexists with cautious foreign investors. Structural factors — PE/VC exits, volatile FPIs, widening trade deficits and geopolitical/policy risks — have dented foreign capital flows.
- Restoring steady inflows will require persistent policy clarity, export resilience and reforms that bolster investor confidence beyond GDP headlines.

India Announces Economic Package For Mauritius

- India announced a special economic package worth \$680 million for Mauritius, combining infrastructure, healthcare, defence preparedness, and maritime security.
- The announcement came after a bilateral meeting between the PM Modi and Mauritius PM Navinchandra Ramgoolam in Varanasi, further strengthening India-Mauritius ties.

Significance of These Developments in India-Mauritius Ties

• Soft Power Diplomacy

- **Academic collaborations:** IIT Madras and Indian Institute of Plantation Management signed agreements with University of Mauritius.
- **Mission Karmayogi training modules:** To be launched in Mauritius for civil service capacity building.
- **Healthcare:** 500-bed Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital, AYUSH Centre of Excellence, Veterinary School and Animal Hospital. **First** Jan Aushadhi Kendra outside India inaugurated in Mauritius.
- **Financial connectivity:** Building on last year's launch of **UPI and RuPay** services in Mauritius. Both nations to work towards **trade in local currencies**.

• Strategic and maritime security dimension:

- **Hydrography agreement:** Joint surveys, navigation charts, and hydrographic data collection for Mauritius' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) over the next five years.
- **Maritime domain awareness in the Indian Ocean:** India to assist Mauritius in maritime surveillance, resource exploitation, and capacity building.
- **Chagos archipelago** Agreements for development and surveillance of the Chagos Marine Protected Area and expanded EEZ after sovereignty treaty with the UK.

\$680 MN ECONOMIC PACKAGE

GRANT-BASED PROJECTS (USD 215 million)

- Construction of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital
- Establishment of AYUSH Centre of Excellence
- Setting up of a veterinary School and animal hospital
- Provision of helicopters

GRANT-CUM-LOC PROJECTS (USD 440 million)

- Completion of the Air Traffic Control tower at SSR International Airport
- Development of the Motorway M4
- Expansion of the Ring Road (Phase II)
- Procurement of port-related equipment

\$25 MN BUDGETARY ASSISTANCE TO MAURITIUS

STRATEGIC COOPERATION

- Redevelopment and restructuring of the Mauritius port
- Development and surveillance of Chagos Marine Protected Area

MoUs INKED: 7

From cooperation in the field of science and technology to cooperation in power sector. The two countries also signed an MoU Cooperation for Establishment of Telemetry, Tracking, and Telecommunications Station for Satellites and Launch Vehicles, and for cooperation in the fields of space research, science and application.

- **Geopolitical significance:**
 - **India backed Mauritius' sovereignty over Chagos**, aligning with its anti-colonial stance.
 - UK retains Diego Garcia for US-UK military operations, but **India's role ensures strategic leverage in the Indian Ocean.**
- **Symbolic and cultural aspects:**
 - **From partnership to family:** Indian PM emphasised that India and Mauritius are “not just partners but a family”. Indian culture and traditions became part of Mauritian daily life centuries ago.
 - **Symbolic spiritual connect:** The Mauritius PM witnessed the Ganga Aarti, and he is scheduled to offer prayers at Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham before leaving for Ayodhya.

China Declares Scarborough Shoal a Nature Reserve

- China has approved the creation of a "national nature reserve" to preserve the area's coral reefs and marine ecosystem.
- The Philippines has declared China's plan "illegitimate and unlawful," asserting its sovereignty over the shoal.
- The action is viewed as part of China's broader "grey-zone" strategy in the South China Sea to change facts on the water without open conflict.

About Scarborough Shoal

- **What it is:** A triangular coral atoll with a fish-rich lagoon and abundant shellfish.
- **Where:** In the South China Sea, about 200 km off the Philippines — inside the Philippines' EEZ.
- **Why it matters:** Valuable fishing grounds and a strategic position near major shipping lanes

H-1B Visa Fee Hike

- The White House has introduced a **\$100,000 entry fee for H-1B visa holders** starting September 21, 2025, causing concern among Indian tech workers and students, the largest H-1B user group.
- The fee applies only to new entrants to the US, while those already in the country extending or changing status are exempt. Without proof of payment, consular stamping will be denied, blocking entry.
- Those who already hold H-1B visas and are currently outside of the country right now will NOT be charged \$100,000 to re-enter.
- The Secretary of Homeland Security may **waive the restriction for individuals, companies, or industries if deemed in the US national interest.**
- The measure will last for 12 months, after which agencies will review it before the White House decides on an extension.

[Also refer the topic “**H-1B Visa Changes**” from The Recitals – August 2025]

Ethiopia Inaugurates Africa's Largest Hydropower Dam

- Ethiopia inaugurated the **Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD).**
- Standing 170 meters tall and nearly 2 km wide, the dam on the Blue Nile can store 74 billion cubic metres of water and generate 5,150 megawatts of electricity, doubling Ethiopia's power capacity.
- Many hailed GERD as a symbol of African pride and progress, promising it would not harm downstream nations.
- However, **Egypt — reliant on the Nile for 97% of its water — protested at the UN**, labelling the inauguration a “unilateral measure” and an “existential threat” to its water security.

- While Ethiopia insists the hydroelectric design won't reduce water flow, Egypt sees it as a national security issue.

UK To Make a Digital ID Mandatory For Work

- The British government will introduce a digital identity (ID) document that will be mandatory to prove the Right to Work in the UK.
- The ID will be held on people's mobile phones (like the NHS app) and provided free of charge.
- The system will borrow features from established digital-ID schemes (Estonia, Denmark, Australia, India).
- **Main aim:** curb illegal immigration by removing a route for undocumented work (reduce "pull factors").
- Prime Minister Keir Starmer framed it as tackling people-smuggling gangs and under-the-table employment that attract migrants.

India on the U.S. Blacklist on Fentanyl

- In the latest **Major's List** sent to the U.S. Congress, President Donald Trump identified 23 countries, including **India**, Pakistan, China, and Afghanistan, as major sources or transit hubs for illicit drugs, particularly **fentanyl**, posing a threat to the U.S. and its citizens.
 - The Major's List, compiled annually, identifies countries where geography, trade, or industry enable significant narcotics or precursor chemical flows into global markets.
 - Inclusion does not reflect counternarcotics performance but highlights drug production or transit roles.

China to Forgo Special & Differential Treatment at the WTO

- China has announced that it will **not seek Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT)** in current and future World Trade Organization negotiations.
 - SDT refers to provisions within WTO agreements that grant developing countries and Least-Developed Countries (LDCs) special rights and more favorable treatment.
 - These include longer implementation periods, preferential access to markets, and support for capacity building to help them participate in global trade and economic development.
- Beijing will **retain its developing-country status** formally but will refrain from claiming S&DT benefits in new WTO agreements.
- The change addresses long-running pressure from some wealthy nations (notably the U.S.) that China should no longer claim developing-country privileges.
- While the WTO lauded it as a breakthrough for reform, sceptics see it as symbolic window-dressing, allowing China to deflect criticism without dismantling its agricultural and industrial advantages.

Why Regulating Fentanyl Is Difficult?



- ✓ Unlike plant-based drugs like heroin or cocaine, fentanyl is lab-made using chemical precursors such as **N-phenethyl-4-piperidone (NPP)** and **4-anilino-N-phenethylpiperidine (4-ANPP)**.
- ✓ These compounds have legitimate industrial and pharmaceutical uses, making regulation tricky.
- ✓ In counterfeit labs, traffickers can convert these precursors into fentanyl with basic glassware, solvents, and moderate heat, using common organic chemistry reactions.
- ✓ Since small amounts of precursors yield large fentanyl quantities and can be discreetly shipped, controlling their diversion into illicit networks has proven extremely challenging.

Fentanyl: A Deadly Synthetic Opioid

- ✓ Fentanyl, a synthetic opioid developed in the 1960s for severe medical pain relief, is now the leading cause of overdose deaths in the U.S.
- ✓ Illicit fentanyl is nearly **50 times stronger than heroin**, with just **2 mg proving fatal** by suppressing brainstem respiratory centres.
- ✓ Though overdoses can be reversed with **naloxone**, rapid administration is crucial to prevent brain injury or death.

China's New K Visa

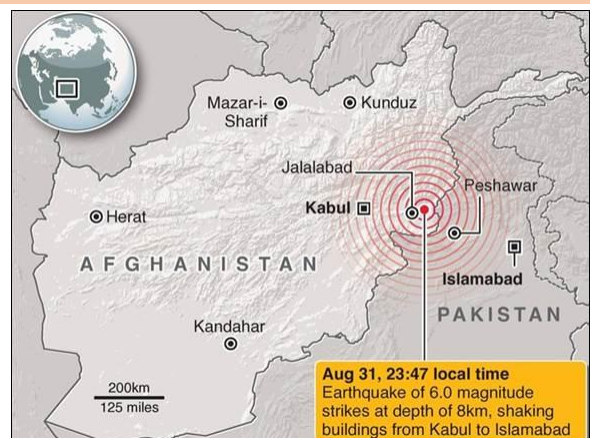
- China is rolling out a new **K visa** to attract foreign STEM talent as the US tightens access by imposing curbs on H-1B visa.
- **About K visa?**
 - A new Chinese visa category (effective **Oct 1**) targeting **young foreign STEM graduates and researchers** from renowned universities and institutions.
 - Promises **greater entry flexibility, longer validity, broader permitted activities** (education, research, entrepreneurship) and **no requirement for local corporate sponsorship**.
 - Seen as an extension/compliment to China's existing R-visa for high-level talent.
- **Why China is pushing it?**
 - To **compete globally for scientific and tech talent**, boost R&D, and accelerate industries such as AI and biotech.
 - Politically and economically, it fits China's goal of becoming a **science & technology superpower** and helps Beijing capitalise on US visa restrictions.
- **Takeaway**
 - Policymakers in the US, India and other countries will need targeted reforms—in education, immigration and R&D policy—to retain and attract high-end talent.

Landslide in Sudan's Darfur

- A massive **landslide** wiped out the village of **Tarasin** in Central Darfur's **Marrah Mountains** after days of heavy rain, killing an estimated **~1,000** people.
- **Geographic position**
 - **Region:** Central Darfur, western Sudan.
 - **Local feature:** Marrah (Jebel Marra) Mountains — a rugged volcanic chain famed for higher rainfall and cooler temperatures than the surrounding plains.
 - **Extent:** The mountain chain runs roughly 160 km southwest of el-Fasher.
 - Distance from capital: The area lies about 900+ km west of Khartoum.
 - **Terrain notes:** High-altitude volcanic peaks (summits exceeding 3,000 m) and narrow valleys — terrain that concentrates runoff and can amplify landslide risk after heavy rains.

India Rushes Relief Aid to Quake-Hit Afghanistan

- A series of powerful earthquakes, including a 6.3-magnitude tremor, **struck eastern Afghanistan's Nangarhar Province** and surrounding regions across Kunar, Laghman and Nuristan.
- India responded swiftly by dispatching truckloads of relief material through its mission in Kabul. It had already delivered 1,000 family tents and was moving 15 tonnes of food supplies from Kabul to Kunar, with more aid to follow.
- Although **India has not formally recognized the Taliban administration**, it continues to maintain working relations



and provide humanitarian support, often using Iran's Chabahar port as a transit route.

- Survivors in eastern Afghanistan and parts of northern Pakistan now face urgent humanitarian needs amid the rubble.

India–Bhutan Cross-Border Rail Links

- The Centre approved two India–Bhutan cross-border railway projects:
 - Kokrajhar (Assam) – Gelephu (Bhutan) — 69 km, cost ₹3,456 crore.
 - Banarhat (West Bengal) – Samtse (Bhutan) — 20 km, cost ₹577 crore.
- These will be **Bhutan's first railway links** and mark nearly two decades of India–Bhutan cooperation on cross-border lines (first formalised in a **2005 MoU**).
- These lines are expected to strengthen bilateral ties, boost trade and connectivity for Bhutan and India's northeast, and reinforce regional integration amid strategic competition in the neighbourhood.
- **Gelephu** and **Samtse** are major Bhutanese trade hubs (Gelephu is being developed as a "Mindfulness City"; Samtse as an industrial town).
- Lines will carry passengers and freight (potential exports: dolomite, ferrosilicon, quartzite, stone chips) and are expected to boost trade, jobs and people-to-people ties, while deepening India–Bhutan strategic partnership.

India – Morocco Defence Cooperation

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated Tata Advanced Systems Ltd. (TASL)'s defence manufacturing plant in Berrechid, Morocco— India's **first overseas defence manufacturing facility**.
 - This facility will manufacture India's Wheeled Armoured Platform (WhAP), jointly designed by TASL and India's DRDO.
 - WhAP is a modular combat platform offering high protection, mobility and adaptability.
- **Strategic Rationale**
 - **Morocco as a gateway to Africa:** Officials see Morocco as a launchpad for Indian defence exports across the continent.
 - **Market demand:** Africa's security challenges (terrorism, insurgency, internal conflict) create demand for armoured vehicles, small arms, MRO services, helicopters and protective equipment.
 - **Geopolitical opportunity:** Disruption of Russian supply chains (post-Ukraine) opens space for Indian suppliers having experience maintaining Russian-origin platforms.
- **Other Defence Collaboration**
 - Both sides signed an MoU in **Rabat** to create an institutional framework for expanded defence ties.
 - Indian Defence Minister announced the opening of a **Defence Wing** at the Indian Embassy in Rabat to drive and coordinate cooperation.
 - India offered its defence-industry capabilities — notably in **drones and counter-drone systems** — and signalled readiness for **co-development and co-production** to meet Moroccan requirements.

Oju (Subansiri) Hydroelectric Project

- Union Environment Ministry's Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) has **recommended environmental clearance** for the **Oju hydroelectric project** on the Subansiri river at Taksing (Upper Subansiri district), near the China border.

- Recommendation for clearance by the EAC is a key procedural step; final environmental clearance will follow standard ministry clearance procedures.
- **Capacity & layout:** Total capacity 2,220 MW — 2,100 MW main power plant + 120 MW dam-toe plant.
- **Position in basin:** Oju is the uppermost project in a planned cascade on the Subansiri and would be the largest by capacity.
 - Planned projects in the basin include Niare, Naba, Nalo, Dengser, upper Subansiri and Lower Subansiri.

Sawalkote (Chenab) Hydel Project

- The stalled Sawalkote dam on the Chenab, in Jammu and Kashmir, is back at the centre of India's strategy to tap the river's hydropower potential. The project is before the **Environment Ministry's Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC)** for environmental clearance.
- **Scale:** A very large western-river scheme — often described as ~1,856 MW “run-of-river” Project (Stage-I 1,406 MW; Stage-II 450 MW).
- The project has been fast-tracked following the **Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)** being put in abeyance after the April 2025 Pahalgam attack.

Fast Track Immigration — Trusted Traveller Programme (FTI-TTP)

- Union Home Minister launched the **FTI-TTP** to fast-track immigration for pre-verified **Indian nationals** and **OCI cardholders**.
- Rolled out at **five more airports:** Lucknow, Thiruvananthapuram, Tiruchirappalli, Kozhikode and Amritsar.
 - Earlier it was rolled out at IGI Delhi, and later to Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Cochin and Ahmedabad.
- FTI-TTP is a technology-driven, scalable scheme to speed immigration for low-risk, pre-vetted travellers, reduce queues, and improve both traveller experience and national security.
- **Purpose & benefits**
 - Cut queueing and manual checks; provide immigration clearance in about **30 seconds** via e-gates.
 - Planned expansion to **21 major airports**, including integration with upcoming Navi Mumbai and Jewar airports.

BRICS Virtual Summit on Trump Tariffs

- Recently, a BRICS virtual meeting convened by Brazilian President Lula da Silva to discuss tariffs imposed by the U.S.
- India, represented by EAM S. Jaishankar, called for fair and transparent economic practices, opposing the linkage of trade measures with non-trade issues amid rising US tariff disputes.

India's Position at the Summit

- **Concerns on Tariff Wars**
 - India raised concerns over the United States' imposition of **50% tariffs on Indian and Brazilian exports**, citing penalties for oil trade with Russia.
 - It strongly objected to linking trade measures with non-trade matters, arguing that such practices destabilise the global economic order.
- **Call for Fair and Transparent Economic Practices**
 - India emphasised that the international trading system must remain **open, fair, transparent, non-discriminatory, and rules-based**.
 - It stressed that increasing barriers and protectionism would not help developing economies, especially when global food, energy, and fertiliser security is already strained.
- **Need for Resilient Supply Chains**
 - Highlighting vulnerabilities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical conflicts, and climate disruptions, India called for **resilient and diversified supply chains**.
 - It advocated democratizing manufacturing across geographies to prevent overdependence on specific regions.
- **Global South and Multilateralism**
 - India noted that the **Global South** has been disproportionately affected by conflicts in Ukraine and West Asia, experiencing shortages in food, fuel, and fertilisers.
 - He pressed for a **diplomatic resolution to conflicts** and reformed multilateralism, particularly within the United Nations system.

Understanding BRICS



- ▶ BRICS, an acronym for **Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa**, is an influential intergovernmental grouping that represents ~ **42% of the world's population** & ~**37.3% of global GDP**.
- ▶ **Historical Background**
 - ▶ The concept of BRICS was first introduced in **2001** by economist Jim O'Neill to describe emerging economies shaping the global order.
 - ▶ The first BRIC Summit was held in 2009 in Russia, and South Africa joined in 2010, transforming it into BRICS.
- ▶ **Objectives**
 - ▶ Reform of global financial and political institutions to reflect emerging economies.
 - ▶ Enhanced trade, investment, and sustainable development among member states.
 - ▶ Cooperation on security, technology, and climate change.
 - ▶ Advocacy for a multipolar world order to counter Western dominance.
- ▶ **Achievements**
 - ▶ Over the years, BRICS has launched initiatives like the **New Development Bank (NDB)**, which finances infrastructure and sustainable projects, and the **Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)** to stabilise economies during crises.
 - ▶ It has also served as a forum for discussing counter-terrorism, energy security, digital innovation, and global governance reforms.
- ▶ **Challenges**
 - ▶ **Internal divisions** - particularly between India and China due to border tensions.
 - ▶ **Economic asymmetry** - China's overwhelming dominance compared to other members.
 - ▶ **Geopolitical contradictions** - diverging interests in Ukraine, West Asia, and trade policies.
 - ▶ **Limited integration** - trade among BRICS members is often constrained by deficits and protectionist measures.

- **India's Trade Deficits within BRICS**

- o India pointed out that it faces some of its **largest trade deficits with BRICS partners**, especially China.
- o It urged member states to review trade flows and adopt more cooperative mechanisms that can reduce imbalances and boost intra-BRICS trade.

[For detailed discussion on **BRICS Summit 2025**, refer The Recitals – July 2025.]

World Food India 2025

- World Food India (WFI) 2025 (held at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi) was the largest edition yet — a global platform to showcase India's food value chain, attract investment, deepen trade links and accelerate food-processing-led rural growth.
- During the summit, PM Modi met Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Patrushev and both sides discussed creating a **BRICS grain/food exchange** to boost agricultural trade among BRICS members.

11th CPA India Region Conference

- The **11th Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) — India Region** was held at **Vidhana Soudha, Bengaluru**. It was hosted by the Karnataka Legislative Assembly (CPA Karnataka Branch).
- **Theme** - "Debates & Discussions in the Houses of Legislature: building people's trust, meeting people's aspirations."
- **Four-point resolution — highlights**
 - o **Restore public trust & safeguard decorum** - Reduce disruptions and deadlocks in Parliament and state legislatures so more time is available for substantive debate on public welfare. MPs/MLAs urged to raise political issues outside the House to preserve its dignity.
 - o **Strengthen legislative support & research** - Boost research and reference branches of state legislatures and create a **comprehensive database** on key legislative issues to improve the quality of debates.
 - o **Harness digital technology** - Adopt digital tools to communicate proceedings better to citizens and improve the efficiency and transparency of legislative work.
 - o **Improve inclusiveness and clarity of lawmaking** - Promote greater participation of **youth and women** in legislatures. Improve drafting of bills using **simpler language** so laws are easier for the public to understand.

About Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Conference

- It is the largest annual gathering of Commonwealth Parliamentarians, where they discuss global and parliamentary issues to strengthen parliamentary democracy.



About WFI

- The Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) launched World Food India (WFI) in 2017 as its flagship international platform to promote India's food sector and attract global investment.
- After successful editions in 2023 and 2024, the WFI 2025 was the 4th edition.
- **Purpose**
 - o Position India as a global food hub and boost agricultural & processed-food exports.
 - o Promote investment, innovation and market linkages across the food processing value chain.
 - o Advance farmer incomes, rural jobs and reduced post-harvest loss, aligned with the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision.
 - o Showcase India's progress on sustainability, food safety, cold-chain and value-addition.
- **National Achievements**
 - o **Processed food exports** rose from 13.7% (2014–15) to 20.4% (2024–25) of agricultural exports. Total agri & processed exports: USD 49.4 billion (2024–25).
 - o **FDI into food processing**: USD 7.33 billion (last decade).
 - o **Infrastructure built**: 24 mega food parks, 22 agro-processing clusters, 289 cold-chain projects, 305 processing/preservation units.
 - o **Employment**: ~2.23 million in registered units; 4.68 million in unregistered units.
 - o **PLISFPI** (Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industry): outlay ₹10,900 crore (2021–22 to 2026–27). separate PLI for millet products.

- Hosted by a different Commonwealth Parliament each year, the conference includes a General Assembly, workshops, and networking opportunities, and provides a platform for sharing knowledge and good practices among legislative bodies.

UNGA Debate: India Urges Major UN Reforms

- India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar addressed the 80th session of the UN General Assembly.
- During this speech, he emphasised that the UN must be reformed and member states — led by active Global South contributors like India — must strengthen cooperation, confront terrorism, and restore multilateral credibility to meet 21st-century challenges.

Key Highlights of the Speech

- **State of the world — where the UN is falling short**
 - **Major conflicts:** Cited Ukraine and the Middle East as evidence that the UN's conflict-resolution role is under strain.
 - **Development shortfalls:** Slow progress on the SDGs; resources and delivery lag.
 - **Climate credibility at risk:** "If climate action itself is questioned, what hope is there for climate justice?" — concern over hollow commitments and creative accounting.
 - **Economic friction:** Rising tariff volatility, technology controls, supply-chain grip, and restricted labour mobility undermine open trade and require multilateral responses.

UN General Assembly

- ✓ UNGA is the main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations.
- ✓ All **193** UN member states are members (each with one vote). The **Holy See** and **Palestine** are permanent observers.
- ✓ **Working**
 - ✓ It holds an annual **Regular Session** (High-Level Week in September) plus **Special** and **Emergency Special Sessions** when required.
 - ✓ **President & Bureau:** A President (**elected for one year**) chairs sessions and sets procedural priorities; elected from different regional groups on rotation.
- ✓ **Decision-making & voting:**
 - ✓ **Important questions** (admission of members, budget, peace & security recommendations) normally require a **two-thirds majority**.
 - ✓ **Other questions** require a **simple majority**.
 - ✓ **Nature of GA decisions:** Most resolutions and declarations are **non-binding** politically influential instruments; binding enforcement is typically the Security Council's domain.
- ✓ **Key powers & functions**
 - ✓ Approve the UN budget and apportion member contributions.
 - ✓ Elect non-permanent members of the Security Council, members of other UN bodies and the judges of the ICJ (in conjunction with the Security Council).
 - ✓ Recommend appointment of the Secretary-General to the Security Council.
 - ✓ Create subsidiary organs and specialised agencies; convene world conferences.
- ✓ **Key achievements & historical impact**
 - ✓ Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): Adopted by UNGA — foundational text in international human rights.
 - ✓ Decolonization: Adopted the 1960 Declaration on Granting Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and guided a major wave of decolonization through UN support and membership expansion.
 - ✓ Development agendas: Endorsed the Millennium Declaration (MDGs) and later the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs (2015)

The General Debate

- ✓ The general debate is part of the General Assembly session and is held at the beginning of each regular session in September.
- ✓ **Purpose:** Heads of state/government and ministers present national views and priorities and respond to global issues under a chosen theme.
- ✓ **Speaking order & practice:** Traditionally Brazil speaks first, then the United States, followed by other states in order of request and protocol.
- ✓ **Theme of 80th session** - Better Together: 80 years and more for peace, development and human rights.
- ✓ **Presidency of 80th session (held in New York)** - Annalena Baerbock of Germany

- **Terrorism — an urgent, shared threat**

- Terrorism synthesises **bigotry, violence, intolerance and fear** and remains a priority.
- **India's experience:** living next to a state that is a **centre for global terrorism** underlines the urgency.
- **Required measures:** choke terrorism financing, sanction prominent terrorists, and deepen international cooperation against sponsors and sympathisers.

- **India and the Global South — readiness to lead**

- **India stands ready to assume greater responsibilities,** and the Global South must contribute more actively.
- Cited India's international role: **development projects, crisis response, safe commerce, and security assistance.**

- Call for countries that can engage all sides (e.g., in Ukraine and the Middle East) to step up mediation and search for solutions.

Polymetallic Sulphides and Their Importance for India

- ✓ PMS are rich seabed deposits containing **copper, zinc, lead, gold, silver,** and trace amounts of rare and precious elements.
- ✓ Found near hydrothermal vents on the ocean floor, these deposits form when seawater seeps into cracks, interacts with magma beneath the Earth's crust, and resurfaces as mineral-rich hot water that solidifies on the seabed.
- ✓ For India, PMS exploration is vital as land-based reserves of such minerals are limited.
- ✓ Securing these resources is crucial for **strategic industries, renewable energy systems, high-technology applications, and green technologies,** thereby enhancing the country's **resource security and self-reliance.**

India's Experience in PMS Exploration

- ✓ Since signing its first PMS exploration contract with the ISA in 2016, India's NCPOR has carried out extensive surveys in the central and southwest Indian Ocean ridges, building significant expertise and infrastructure.
- ✓ The government's **Deep Ocean Mission** has strengthened these efforts by adding deep-sea vessels, advanced tools like **Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUVs).**
- ✓ The upcoming Matsya submersible under the Samudrayaan mission, which will further expand exploration capacity.

India's Plans for Additional Mineral Exploration in the Indian Ocean

- ✓ As part of its **Blue Economy initiatives,** India is pursuing more seabed mineral exploration rights in the Indian Ocean.
- ✓ Beyond its existing contracts for **Polymetallic Sulphides (PMS),** India has applied to the ISA for rights to explore **cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts** on the **Afanasy-Nikitin Seamount** in the Central Indian Ocean. This application is currently under review.
- ✓ Securing such rights would further strengthen India's access to **strategic and critical minerals** vital for technology, renewable energy, and long-term resource security.

The Carlsberg Ridge

- ✓ The Carlsberg Ridge, part of the **mid-ocean ridge system** in the Indian Ocean, was formed by seafloor spreading between the **Indian Plate and Somali Plate** about 40 million years ago.
- ✓ With a slow spreading rate of 2.4–3.3 cm per year, it features rugged flanking topography and a **median valley typical of slow-spreading ridges.**
- ✓ The ridge hosts hydrothermal vent systems, making it a potential hotspot for Polymetallic Sulphide (PMS) deposits. India has been studying these systems for over three decades.
- ✓ Strategically, its proximity — located near 2°N latitude, much closer to India than the Central and Southwest Indian Ridges at 26°S — makes it highly significant for resource security and scientific exploration.

India Secures Second Deep-Sea Mineral Exploration Contract in Indian Ocean

- India has signed a new contract with the International Seabed Authority (ISA) granting exclusive rights to explore **Polymetallic Sulphides (PMS)** in the **Carlsberg Ridge** of the Indian Ocean.
 - ISA was established under the UNCLOS framework. It manages mineral exploration in international waters.
 - Countries, through their governments, public sector bodies, or sponsored entities, apply to the ISA for exploration rights.

- With this, India has become the **first country in the world to hold two such ISA contracts**, commanding the largest seabed area allocated internationally for PMS exploration.
 - Earlier, in 2016, India secured the contract for exploration in the Central and Southwest Indian Ridges.
- The **National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), Goa**, will begin exploration in 2026 through geophysical and hydrographic surveys.

UN Backs New York Declaration as Roadmap for Two-State Solution

- The UN General Assembly endorsed the **New York Declaration**—the outcome of a July conference at UN Headquarters organized by France and Saudi Arabia—by a vote of **142 in favour, 10 against and 12 abstentions**.
 - 10 countries opposing the declaration - Israel, United States, Argentina, Hungary, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Tonga.
- Declaration sets out a roadmap aimed at reviving the **two-state solution for Israel and Palestine**.
- **Core demands of the Declaration:** immediate ceasefire in Gaza; release of all hostages; creation of a viable, sovereign Palestinian state; disarmament of Hamas and exclusion of the group from governance in Gaza; normalization between Israel and Arab states; and collective security guarantees.

Global South Urges UN Reform

- Recently, India hosted meet of **20 'like-minded' Global South countries** (10 represented at ministerial level) on sidelines of UNGA. EAM S. Jaishankar represented India at the summit.
- Attendees included countries from Asia (e.g., Indonesia, Qatar, Vietnam), Africa (e.g., Nigeria, Morocco, Chad), and the Americas/Caribbean (e.g., Trinidad & Tobago, St. Lucia, Cuba).
- India has previously hosted the larger Voice of Global South summits; this was a focused ministerial-level outreach.
- During the summit, EAM Jaishankar warned that the **concept of multilateralism is “under attack”** as international organisations are being rendered ineffective or starved of resources.
- **Key demands & priorities**
 - **Urgent UN reform** and expanded consultations among developing countries.
 - **Faster resolution of conflicts** that threaten **food, fertiliser and energy security**.
 - Stronger Global South coordination to push for credible, accountable multilateral action.

India Successfully Tests Agni-P Missile from Rail-Based Launcher

- DRDO successfully test-fired the **Agni-Prime (Agni-P)** missile from a **rail-based mobile launcher**.
- This launch has placed India among a **select group of nations** — Russia, US, China, and possibly North Korea — with the capability to launch long-range ballistic missiles from railway platforms using **canisterised launch systems**.

Agni-P: The Next-Generation Upgrade to Agni-I

- India's Agni missile series began with the **Agni-I medium range ballistic missile** (700–1,000 km range) tested in 1989.
- While Agni-I remains in service, defence planners sought upgrades, leading to the development of **Agni-P (Agni-Prime)**.
- Agni-P combines Agni-I's range with advanced **propulsion and navigation technologies** from Agni-IV and Agni-V.
 - It is the sixth missile in the Agni series.
- Weighing 11,000 kg, it is a **two-stage, solid-fuel missile** with an operational range of **1,000–2,000 km**, capable of carrying **high explosive, thermobaric, or nuclear warheads**.

Advantages of Rail-Based Missile Launchers

- ➔ Mobile launch systems are vital to a nation's **second-strike capability**, enabling it to retaliate after a nuclear attack.
- ➔ For India, which follows a "**no first use**" **nuclear doctrine**, such survivability is critical.
- ➔ Rail-based missile platforms offer distinct advantages over road or sea systems.
- ➔ While road-based launchers are constrained by road width and quality, India's **70,000-km railway network** enables nationwide mobility without major preparation.
- ➔ The **numerous railway tunnels** provide natural hiding spots, allowing launchers to evade enemy satellite surveillance and remain concealed until deployment.
- ➔ Compared to **submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs)**, rail-based platforms are also **cheaper to build and maintain**, making them a more efficient and scalable option for strengthening strategic deterrence.

Agni Series of Missiles

- The Agni series is India's family of nuclear-capable ballistic missiles, developed under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP) by DRDO.
- They are a key element of India's strategic deterrence capability.
- **Agni-I (1989)**: A medium-range ballistic missile (MRBM) with a range of 700–1,000 km. It was India's first in the series and is road- and rail-mobile.
- **Agni-II (1999)**: A two-stage solid-fuel missile with a range of 2,000–3,000 km, capable of carrying nuclear warheads.
- **Agni-III (2006)**: An intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) with a range of 3,500+km, providing wider regional coverage.
- **Agni-IV (2011)**: Improved navigation and accuracy, range of 3,500–4,000 km.
- **Agni-V (2012)**: An intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) with a range of 5,000–8000 km, extending India's deterrence to cover much of Asia and parts of Europe and Africa.
- **Agni-P (Agni-Prime, 2021)**: A next-generation variant with a range of 1,000–2,000 km, combining advanced technologies from Agni-IV and V, lighter, more accurate, and canisterised.
- **Agni-VI (under development)**: Expected range of 8,000–10,000 km, with potential multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicle (MIRV) capability.

Combined Commanders' Conference (CCC) 2025: Transforming for the Future

- The **Combined Commanders' Conference (CCC) 2025** was held in Kolkata, West Bengal.
- As the apex forum of the Armed Forces, CCC (held biennially) brought together the top military leadership and Ministry of Defence officials to shape the future roadmap.
- **Theme**: "*Year of Reforms – Transforming for the Future.*"
- **Focus areas**: Reforms, Transformation & Change, and Operational Preparedness.

Key Highlights

• Joint Military Stations to Enhance Integration

- At the conference, it was decided to set up the country's first **three joint military stations**.
- These will combine facilities of the Army, Navy, and Air Force — including logistics, infrastructure, repair, maintenance, and supplies — under a common lead service.
- Locations under discussion include Mumbai, Bengaluru, Ahmedabad, Gwalior, Pune, and Secunderabad.

• Tri-Services Education Corps for Unified Training

- The conference also approved the **merger of the education branches** of the Army, Navy, and IAF into a single **Tri-Services Education Corps**.
- This aims to rationalise manpower, optimise infrastructure, and better integrate personnel training across services.

• Broader Push Towards Theaterisation

- The new measures build on past steps such as joint logistics nodes, cross-postings, and joint procurement.
- Theaterisation — integrating all service resources into unified theatre commands — remains under debate.
 - While the Army and Navy chiefs view it as inevitable, the IAF has voiced caution, arguing scarce assets could be further divided, and instead favours a joint planning centre in Delhi under the Chiefs of Staff Committee.

• Release of the Joint Military Space Doctrine

- One of the major highlights of the conference was the **release of the Joint Military Space Doctrine**, institutionalising space as a core element of national security.
- CCC 2025 marked a decisive step towards building a **future-ready, integrated, and multi-domain capable military** to safeguard India's security and contribute to global peace.

Existing Radar Capabilities



- **IAF Assets:** Operates most **High- and Medium-Power Radars (HPRs & MPRs)** to detect high-altitude threats like fighter jets and AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System)
- **Army Assets:** Uses **Flycatchers (upgraded Super Fledermaus)** and **AD tactical control radars**, alongside limited LLLRs, to track low-altitude aerial objects.

Urgent Need for Upgrades

- Operation Sindoor exposed the risk posed by **swarms of low-cost drones** that can overwhelm older AD systems.
- Globally, such drones have been used in **modern conflicts**, including by Hamas against Israel.
- New systems will enhance detection of **low Radar Cross Section (RCS)** objects and enable identification of friend-or-foe in cluttered airspace.

Capabilities of New Radars

- **Enhanced LLLRs:** Detect low-RCS drones, including swarms, and feed target data to weapons up to 10 km away.
- **ADFCR-DDs:** Advanced fire control radars capable of **detecting, classifying, and guiding weapons** to destroy even the smallest surveillance and attack drones.

Army Strengthens Air Defence with New Radars

- The Indian Army has initiated procurement of **45 Enhanced Low Level Light Weight Radars (LLLR)**, **48 Air Defence Fire Control Radar-Drone Detectors (ADFCR-DD)**, and **10 LLLRs (Improved)** to plug gaps in its air defence (AD) network along northern and western borders.
- The move follows **Operation Sindoor**, where Pakistani drones breached Indian airspace, highlighting vulnerabilities.

India's Current AD Infrastructure

- Assets include **S-400s**, **Akash missile systems**, AD guns, and supporting radar systems.
- **Army's Akashteer system** integrates real-time air pictures across radars and AD guns for coordinated defence.
- **IAF's Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS)** automates detection, identification, interception, and offensive operations.

- Under **Mission Sudarshan Chakra**, India aims to build a comprehensive AD shield; DRDO recently tested an **Integrated Air Defence Weapon System (IADWS)**.

National Conference of Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) Conference 2025

Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated the 2nd National Conference of Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) heads in New Delhi.

Key Highlights

- **Online Drug Disposal Campaign**
 - The minister released the NCB (*Narcotics Control Bureau*) Annual Report-2024 and launched the **Online Drug Disposal Campaign**.
 - He also stressed that the vision of a **drug-free India by 2047** requires joint resolve by NCB, MHA, state governments, and ANTFs.
- **Scaling Up the Fight Against Drug Cartels**
 - Action should target **three levels of cartels**:
 - At entry points.
 - Distributors from entry points to states.
 - Local sellers within states.
 - Use of **darknet analysis, crypto tracking, metadata, ML models, and financial flow analysis** was emphasised.
 - Synthetic drug labs pose growing threats; ANTFs must remain vigilant.
- **Three-Pronged Strategy**
 - Ruthless approach to break supply chain.
 - Strategic approach to reduce demand.
 - Humane approach for harm reduction.

Current Campaigns and Initiatives

- **Drug-Free India campaign** active in **372 districts**, with **10 crore people** and **3 lakh educational institutions** involved.
- **Mission Drug-Free Campus** underway across universities.
- NCB's **drug network chart** shared with states.
- **MANAS helpline (1933)** promoted for public reporting.

Strengthening Coordination and NCORD Mechanism

- **NCORD (National Narcotics Coordination Portal)** and district-level sensitisation are decisive.
- He flagged that **272 districts have not held any NCORD meetings**, urging ANTF chiefs to fix accountability.

Seizures, Destruction, and Land Eradication

- In recent years, **1.37 lakh kg drugs worth ₹4,800 crore** destroyed at 11 locations.
- Advocated **quarterly scientific destruction** of seized drugs.
- Between **2014–2025**, seizures rose to **1 crore kg (₹1.65 lakh crore)**, far higher than 2004–2013.
- **Land eradication** from 10,700 acres (2020) to **31,761 acres (2023)** for drug cultivation; cannabis cultivation destruction rose from 21,000 to 34,000 acres.

Defence Procurement Manual (DPM) 2025 Unveiled

India released the Defence Procurement Manual (DPM) 2025 to streamline, simplify, and rationalise the ₹1 lakh crore revenue procurement process for the armed forces.

- Approved by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, it replaces the 2009 version.

Key Highlights

- **Objectives and Key Features**
 - Timely resource availability at appropriate cost.
 - Expeditious decision-making to maintain high preparedness.
 - Jointness among the three Services.
 - Ease of doing business with stronger emphasis on fairness, transparency, and accountability.
 - Alignment with updated Finance Ministry procurement rules.

- **Boost to Aatmanirbhar Bharat**
 - New chapter promoting **self-reliance, innovation, and indigenisation**.
 - Focus on in-house design and development in collaboration with **industry and academia**.
 - Relaxed provisions for development contracts to encourage private/public participation.
- **Industry-Friendly Provisions**
 - No **Liquidity Damages (LD)** during development phase.
 - Post-development LD: **minimum 0.1%, maximum 5%, and 10% only for inordinate delays**.
 - **Assured guarantee of orders** in terms of quantity.
- **Empowering Field-Level Decision Making**
 - More powers delegated to **competent financial authorities** at lower formations/ field levels.
 - Reduction in file movement between higher and lower levels.
 - Provisions for **timely supplier payments**.
- DPM 2025 strengthens **ease of doing business**, encourages **private sector and MSME participation in defence manufacturing**.
- It balances transparency with flexibility while safeguarding fairness and competition.

Sonam Wangchuk Held Under NSA

- Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, leading the movement for Ladakh's statehood and Sixth Schedule protections, was detained under the **National Security Act (NSA)** and shifted to Jodhpur jail.
- The Centre blamed him for allegedly instigating violent protests in Leh.
- The case has drawn attention to the NSA, one of India's toughest preventive detention laws, used in the past against separatists, gangsters, and radical preachers.
- The law allows governments to pre-emptively detain individuals deemed a threat to public order or national security.

Key Provisions of NSA

- Under the NSA, detention orders function like warrants of arrest, allowing authorities to hold individuals in designated places, transfer them across states, and impose conditions.
- Grounds of detention must be communicated within 5 to 15 days, and detainees can submit a representation to the government.
- An Advisory Board of High Court judges must review the case within 3 weeks and order release if there is "no sufficient cause."
- Detention can last up to 12 months, though it may be revoked earlier.
- However, safeguards are limited:
 - detainees cannot have legal representation before the Advisory Board, and
 - the government may withhold facts citing public interest, leaving significant powers in official hands.

All-Women Sailing Expedition Flagged Off

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh virtually flagged off **Samudra Pradakshina**, the world's first tri-service all-women circumnavigation sailing expedition, from the Gateway of India, Mumbai.

- During the ceremony, the minister also recalled the recent feat of Lieutenant Commanders Dilna K. and Rupa A., who circumnavigated the globe on INSV Tarini.
- **Expedition Details**
 - **Participants:** 10 women officers from the **Army, Navy, and Air Force**.
 - **Vessel:** **Indian Army Sailing Vessel (IASV) Triveni**, a 50-foot indigenously built yacht from Puducherry.
 - **Route:** 26,000 nautical miles over 9 months.
 - **Highlights:** Crossing the **Equator twice** and rounding the **Capes of Leeuwin, Horn, and Good Hope**.

Indigenous Patrol Vessel Adamya Commissioned

- The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) commissioned *Adamya*, the **first of eight Adamya-class fast patrol vessels**, at Paradip Port, Odisha.
- Built by Goa Shipyard Limited with over 60% indigenous content, the 51-metre ship enhances maritime strength under the Make in India initiative.
- The vessel carries 39 personnel, displaces 320 tonnes, and can reach 28 knots with a 1,500-nautical-mile endurance.
- It is the first ICG ship equipped with indigenously developed controllable pitch propellers (CPP) and gearboxes, boosting manoeuvrability and flexibility.

Microsoft Azure Used as a Mass-Surveillance Tool

- Israel's military intelligence Unit 8200 moved vast volumes of intercepted Palestinian phone traffic into a **custom, dedicated Azure environment**.
- This step effectively turned the cloud into an enormous, searchable archive of calls and messages.
 - Israel controls most telecom switches used by Palestinian networks in Gaza and the West Bank.
 - Intercepts from field listening posts were routed into the Azure instance where they were uploaded continuously.
 - This enabled near-complete capture of local phone traffic.
- **Azure is Microsoft's cloud computing platform**, providing a global network of data centers with a vast array of services for building, deploying, and managing applications, data, and infrastructure.
- It offers on-demand access to computing resources, helping businesses innovate faster, optimize operations, and scale AI-powered solutions without managing physical hardware.

New Chiefs of ITBP and CISF Appointed

- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) approved the appointment of two 1993-batch IPS officers as heads of central forces.
- Praveen Kumar will take over as Director General of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP).
- Praveer Ranjan has been appointed Director General of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF).
- **The ITBP**, with over 1.03 lakh personnel, secures the 3,488 km **Indo-China frontier** through high-altitude posts (9,000–18,700 feet) and **provides Amarnath Yatra security**.
- The CISF, with 2.2 lakh strength, **guards 369 key installations, including Parliament, airports, and vital hydropower projects near the LoC in Jammu & Kashmir**.

Joint Exercise 'Cold Start'	Tri-Service	- The Army, Navy, and Air Force will hold a large-scale joint exercise, <i>Cold Start</i>, in Madhya Pradesh in early October to test drones and counter-drone systems. - This will be the biggest such drill since <i>Operation Sindoor</i>, focusing on assessing air defence readiness against evolving aerial threats. Industry, academia, R&D partners will also participate.
21st Edition of Exercise Yudh Abhyas 2025		- The 21st edition of Exercise Yudh Abhyas, the annual Indo–US military drill, concluded after two weeks of intensive training at Fort Wainwright and the Yukon Training Area, Alaska. - The exercise included command post planning, field training in sub-Arctic terrain, sniper and reconnaissance drills, counter-IED training, obstacle laying, demolitions, and counter-drone operations. - Despite recent strains, the exercise underlined steady defence ties between India and the US, with senior officers from both sides expressing satisfaction at operational synergy and interoperability.
India–Italy Exercise	Naval	- INS Surat, India's latest indigenous guided missile destroyer, carried out a passage exercise (PASSEX) with Italian Navy destroyer ITS Caio Duilio in the north Arabian Sea. - The exercise featured complex tactical manoeuvres, aircraft tracking, seamanship evolutions, communication drills, and flying operations, including cross-deck helicopter landings.

ENVIRONMENT AND GEOGRAPHY

Revised Methodology for Calculating Green Credit for Tree Plantation

A revised mechanism for calculating **Green Credit** in **tree plantation** activities has been notified by the Environment Ministry.

Old vs New Provisions

Aspect	Old Methodology	Revised Methodology
Type of land eligible	Degraded forest land or identified degraded / wasteland parcels managed via forest departments	Same type of land (degraded forest/wasteland etc.), but with stricter criteria on survival & canopy cover
Time after which Green Credit awarded	Earlier: after 2 years of plantation/restoration (Planting at least 1,100 trees per hectare)	Revised: 5 years minimum restoration period required before claiming credit 1 Green Credit = 1 new tree (over 5 years old).
Criteria / parameters for credit	Based largely on number of trees planted / density, less emphasis on survival/canopy density. <u>Vegetation status was less decisive</u>	Multi-parameter: includes survival of trees, <u>vegetation status change</u> , and achievement of a minimum canopy density of 40 % after five years
Tradability / Transferability of credits	Allowed trading / market-based trading of green credits (open/tradable) as part of the scheme	New rules make credits non-tradable and non-transferable, except for intra-corporate transfers (holding company ↔ subsidiary).

Extra Mile: Green Credit Programme (GCP)

- The Green Credit Programme (GCP) is a market-based mechanism notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 (**rules issued in 2023; revised in 2024–25**).
- Objective:** incentivize environmental positive actions by individuals, companies, and local bodies through the award of "green credits," somewhat analogous to **carbon credits** but broader in scope.
- Activities** like planting trees, restoring mangroves, saving water, practising sustainable farming or managing waste in an eco-friendly way.
- Nodal Agency:** Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).
- Administered by:** Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE)

Two New Ramsar Sites in India

Two new wetlands from Bihar were added to the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance, totaling to 93 Ramsar Sites in India.

- ✓ This elevates Bihar's Ramsar tally to 5 (from 3 prior; (previously Kabar Jheel, Nagi, Nakti))

Site-wise Details

Gokul Reservoir (Buxar district, Bihar)	Udaipur Lake (West Champaran district, Bihar)
Flood Buffer Function: Acts as a natural buffer during the monsoon season, absorbing excess water and reducing flood damage in nearby villages. Avifaunal Diversity: Home to 50+ bird species, including important migratory birds such as the Bar-	Type: Oxbow Lake – formed from an abandoned meander of a river. Hydrological Role: Stores excess monsoon water, helps in groundwater recharge, and sustains water availability in dry seasons.

headed Goose and resident species like the Kingfisher. Serves as a key stopover for Central Asian Flyway migrants.	Biodiversity & Eco-Significance: Acts as a natural climate regulator in a flood-prone region. ✓ Provides nesting and resting grounds for resident and migratory bird species
---	---

Extra Mile: Ramsar Sites in India: History & Progress

- First Ramsar sites in India (1981):** Chilika Lake (Odisha); Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan)
- Growth trajectory:** 2012: Only **26 sites**; 2025: Now **93 sites** (an addition of 67 in just 13 years)
- State-wise lead:** Tamil Nadu → **20 sites (highest in India)**; Uttar Pradesh → **10 sites**; Odisha & Punjab → **6 each**
- Global standing (as of October 2025):** India = **93 Ramsar sites**
 - ✓ Ranks **1st in Asia** and **3rd in the world**.
 - ✓ Ahead of India: **UK (176 sites)**; **Mexico (144 sites)**

National Policy on Geothermal Energy 2025

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) unveiled India's **first ever** national policy on geothermal energy 2025 for harnessing geothermal resources.

- ✓ Geothermal energy, derived from the Earth's internal heat, is positioned as a clean, reliable, and baseload renewable source to complement intermittent renewables like solar and wind.
- ✓ Aligns with SDGs 7 (Affordable Energy) and 13 (Climate Action)

Background and Rationale for this Geothermal Policy

- India's renewable energy sector has grown exponentially, with installed capacity exceeding 200 GW by 2025, but **geothermal remains underdeveloped** despite geological advantages.
- Historically, exploration was limited to surveys by the **Geological Survey of India (GSI)** and pilot initiatives in states like Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir.
- The policy emerges amid global energy transitions, where *countries like Iceland (90% geothermal in heating) and the US (leading in installed capacity)* demonstrate its viability.
- Domestically, it addresses challenges like fossil fuel dependency (over 70% of energy mix), grid instability from renewables, and the need for baseload power in remote areas.
- The rationale includes **diversifying energy sources**, reducing import bills (India imports 85% of oil), and **leveraging co-benefits like mineral extraction** (e.g., lithium from geothermal brines).
- India's assessed shallow and deep geothermal potential is significant (estimates often cited ~10.6 GW of power-equivalent resource in initial surveys), with promising provinces in the Himalaya (Puga, Ladakh), parts of Northeast, Deccan Rift zone, and some central/peninsular regions. The new policy aims to move from scattered pilots to planned, scalable deployment.

Key Provisions of National Policy on Geothermal Energy

- Key Objectives:**
 - Enhance energy security by providing 24/7 baseload power and reducing GHG emissions.
 - Support Net Zero 2070 by integrating geothermal with hybrids (e.g., solar-geothermal) and advanced systems like Enhanced Geothermal Systems (EGS).

- **Institutional framework:** MNRE designated as the nodal ministry with an inter-ministerial coordination mechanism and state-centre linkages (state nodal agencies to be involved).
- **Resource mapping and exploration:** National mapping, geoscientific surveys, and phased exploration (geophysical, geochemical, exploratory drilling).
 - ✓ 381 hot springs identified by GSI and categorized in 10 geothermal provinces including Himalayas, Cambay Graben, Godavari Basin, Aravalli, Mahanadi Basin.
 - ✓ Additional areas include Sohana, West Coast, Son-Narmada-Tapti, and South India Cratons
 - ✓ Priority mapping of Himalayan geothermal province, Puga (Ladakh), Tattapani (Chhattisgarh), Dirang (Arunachal) and other identified sites.
- **Financial & fiscal support:** Provisions for concessional finance, viability gap funding / grants for expensive exploration drilling, concessional loans, and attraction of 100% FDI where applicable.
- **Tenure & project life:** Long-term project contracts (support for up to 30 years with extensions tied to resource life) to provide certainty for capital-intensive projects.

Extra Mile: Geothermal Potential and Applications

The country largely falls within a medium- to low-heat enthalpy zone, making it particularly suitable for a wide range of applications beyond traditional electricity generation. These include:

- **Direct-Use Applications:** Geothermal heat can be used for district heating and cooling, agricultural activities like *greenhouse heating and produce drying*, cold storage, and even geo-tourism.
- **Ground Source Heat Pumps (GSHPs):** The policy promotes the use of GSHPs, which leverage the earth's shallow, constant temperatures for energy-efficient space heating and cooling.
- **Innovative Technologies:** The policy encourages the development of cutting-edge technologies like Enhanced Geothermal Systems (EGS) and the retrofitting of abandoned oil and gas wells for geothermal production, leveraging the expertise and infrastructure of the oil and gas industry.

India's First Bamboo-Based Ethanol Plant

The Prime Minister inaugurated **India's first bamboo-based ethanol plant at Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL)**, Golaghat, Assam, along with laying the foundation stone of a polypropylene plant.

- ✓ **Polypropylene** is a versatile polymer used in packaging, textiles, automotive, and consumer goods.

Key Features of the Bamboo-Based Ethanol Plant

- **Zero-Waste Technology:** Described as the world's first zero-waste 2G bioethanol plant, it utilizes *all parts of bamboo* to produce high-value industrial chemicals (e.g., green furfural, acetic acid, bio-coal), ensuring no waste.
 - ✓ **Second-Generation (2G)** using cellulosic feedstock (bamboo) instead of food crops.
- **Capacity:** Produces 60,000 KL of ethanol annually for blending with petrol.

Extra Mile: Related Policy & Institutional Framework for Biofuels

- **National Policy on Biofuels (2018, amended 2022):** Allowed use of **agricultural residues, forestry waste, bamboo, algae** as feedstock for 2G biofuels.
 - ✓ Categorizes biofuels into **Basic Biofuels** (1G: ethanol, biodiesel) and **Advanced Biofuels** (2G: ethanol from lignocellulosic biomass, 3G: algae-based fuels, bio-CNG).

- ✓ Amendment *advanced the 20% ethanol blending (E20) target from 2030 to 2025–26*, achieved ahead of schedule in 2024–25.
- ✓ *Expanded feedstocks* to include sugarcane juice, sugar beet, sweet sorghum, corn, cassava, damaged food grains (e.g., wheat, broken rice), and rotten potatoes unfit for human consumption.
- **SATAT Scheme (2018):** Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation, promoting CBG (Compressed Bio-Gas) and biofuels.
- **Biodiesel Blending Programme (BBP):** Targets 5% biodiesel blending in diesel by 2030.
- **GOBAR DHAN Scheme:** Launched under the Swachh Bharat Mission, it converts cattle dung and agricultural waste into bio-CNG and compost, promoting rural cleanliness and income.
- **Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA):** Launched by India along with USA & Brazil at **G20 Summit 2023** to promote international cooperation in biofuels.
- **North-East Bamboo Development Mission:** Supports cultivation, processing, and marketing of bamboo products.

Environment Audit Rules, 2025

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) recently brought into effect a set of rules called the Environment Audit Rules, 2025, under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

What are the Environment Audit Rules, 2025?

- The new rules establish a framework for environmental auditing by creating a new category of accredited environment auditors (private agencies or professionals) who can inspect, verify, and certify compliance of industries and projects with environmental laws.
- **Objective:** To strengthen environmental monitoring and compliance by addressing capacity gaps (shortage of manpower, infrastructure, and resources) in CPCB/SPCBs, and to promote transparency, accountability, and credibility in enforcement.

Key Provisions of Environment Audit Rules, 2025

- **Certification and Registration of Auditors:** A new category of Certified Environment Auditors (CEAs-for five years & renewable) will be created. Auditors will be certified through:
 - ✓ **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** based on prior experience (for a limited time).
 - ✓ **National Certification Examination (NCE)** a structured exam for new entrants
- **Two-Tier Audit System:**
 1. **Tier-1:** Government-led reviews by CPCB, SPCBs, or regional offices.
 2. **Tier-2:** Independent audits by REAs (*Registered Environment Auditors*), ensuring objective verification.
- **Roles and Responsibilities of Auditors**
 - ✓ Conduct systematic audits of projects, activities, and processes under environmental laws.
 - ✓ Collect samples, inspect sites, and evaluate pollution control and waste management systems.
 - ✓ Report violations or non-compliance and compute environmental compensation.
 - ✓ Verify self-compliance reports of industries and prepare audit reports as per regulations
 - ✓ Act as verifiers for Green Credit Rules, 2023, Ecomark Rules 2024, E-Waste (Management) Rules, 2022, Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016 and Battery Waste Management Rules, 2022
- The Green Credit Rules, 2023 allows individuals and organizations to earn tradeable credits for eco-friendly actions like afforestation, water conservation, and waste management, incentivizing sustainability and supporting climate goals.

- Ecomark Rules certify eco-friendly products with a government-approved label to promote sustainable consumption and production.
- **Environment Audit Designated Agency (EADA):** The Central Government will notify one or more agencies as EADA. Responsibilities include
 - ✓ Framing eligibility criteria and conducting exams.
 - ✓ Certifying, registering, and monitoring auditors.
 - ✓ Maintaining an online register of auditors (publicly accessible).
 - ✓ Publishing annual reports on performance
- **Site Visits and Access:** Registered auditors have the authority to enter premises, collect samples, access documents, and gather audit evidence as required for effective audits.
- **Conflict of Interest Safeguards:** Auditors cannot audit projects where they have financial, professional, or personal interests. They cannot audit entities for whom they have prepared EIAs (Environmental Impact Assessments), Environmental Management Plans (EMPs), or related reports. Any links to project proponents (employment, business, family ties) are prohibited. Mandatory undertaking of independence must be submitted before taking up an assignment.
- **Random Assignment of Auditors:** To ensure impartiality, auditors will be allocated to projects through a random assignment mechanism, reducing chances of collusion between auditors and industries.
- **Fee and Financials:** Certification, registration, and audit fees will be prescribed through government guidelines. Both auditors and agencies must comply with this standardized fee structure.
- **Oversight through Steering Committee:** A Steering Committee, chaired by an Additional Secretary, MoEFCC, with members from CPCB, MoEFCC divisions, and regional offices, will oversee implementation of these rules. It will review performance and ensure the scheme functions transparently.

'Swachh Vayu Survekshan' (Clean Air Survey) 2025

The MoEF&CC launched the fourth edition of 'The Swachh Vayu Survekshan (SVS) 2025'.

About Swachh Vayu Survekshan

- SVS is an **annual competitive assessment of cities** under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) that ranks cities on actions taken to improve air quality (planning, implementation, monitoring, awareness, and outcomes).
 - ✓ **NCAP (Launched in 2019)** is India's flagship air pollution control mission, targeting a 20-30% reduction in PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ concentrations by 2024 (extended to 40% by 2026) from 2017 baseline levels.
- **Who runs it:** MoEFCC (policy), CPCB (methodology & verification) in coordination with state urban bodies and municipal corporations.
- **Categories:** Cities grouped by population (Category-I: >10 lakh; Category-II: 3–10 lakh; Category-III: <3 lakh).
 - ✓ Covering **131 cities** (122 non-attainment cities identified by CPCB in 2018, plus 9 others)
- **Data sources:** City self-assessment, documentary evidence, CPCB field verification, monitoring data from Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Stations (**CAAQMS**)/manual stations.

Key findings — SVS 2025

- **Coverage:** SVS 2025 assessed 130 NCAP cities (three population categories).
- **Top performers:** Indore topped the million-plus category (Category-I) in SVS-2025; other high scorers included Jabalpur, Agra and Surat in top slots across categories.
- **Notable lower ranks:** Delhi ranked much lower (mid-table; reported ~32nd) among the large cities in terms of implementation performance.
- **SVS 2025 reveals incremental progress:** 103 of 130 cities reduced PM₁₀ levels since 2017-18.
- However, only 22 cities met NAAQS (PM₁₀ <60 µg/m³ annually), underscoring persistent challenges in northern India.

GROUNDWORK WINS CLEAN POINTS

Ranking under 'Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan' (clean air survey) 2025

Category 1

Population of over 10 lakh | 47 cities

- 1 Indore
- 2 Jabalpur
- 3 Agra and Surat

'Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan' is a central initiative to rank cities on the basis of implementation of approved activities to improve air quality in 130 cities under National Clean Air Programme



Cities are ranked on the basis of their actions under following activities:

Category 2

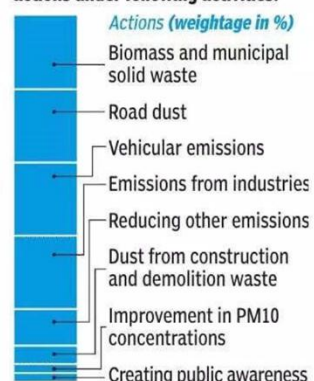
Population between 3 and 10 lakh | 43 cities

- 1 Amravati
- 2 Moradabad and Jhansi
- 3 Alwar

Category 3

Population under 3 lakh | 40 cities

- 1 Dewas
- 2 Parwanoo
- 3 Angul



The Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve (CDBR)

UNESCO included The Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve (CDBR- Himachal Pradesh) in World Network of Biosphere Reserves (**WNBR**) during the 37th session of UNESCO's International Coordinating Council for the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme in Hangzhou, China.

- ✓ This makes CDBR India's **13th site** in the global network, out of 18 national biosphere reserves.
- ✓ It is the **first high-altitude cold desert ecosystem** in India to get this status.

Key Facts & Features of the Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve (CDBR)

Feature	Details
Location	Trans-Himalaya region, Lahaul-Spiti district, Himachal Pradesh. Spans Spiti Wildlife Division and adjoining parts of Lahaul Forest Division (including Baralacha Pass, Bharatpur, Sarchu)
Area & Altitude	Total ≈ 7,770 sq. km; altitude range: 3,300 m to 6,600 m.
Ecological Profile	As part of the Trans-Himalaya biogeographic zone, it lies in the rain shadow, fostering unique endemism
Protected Areas Inside It	Pin Valley National Park, Kibber Wildlife Sanctuary, Chandratat Wetland, Sarchu Plains are included/integrated.
Human Communities and Livelihoods	- Their livelihoods include pastoralism (yak, goat herding), farming (barley and peas), gathering/using medicinal herbs, and practicing traditional healing (Sowa Rigpa). - Biodiversity hotspots like Kibber (4,270 m) sustain trophic chains resilient to extremes.
Ecosystem Services	Carbon sinks via alpine wetlands ; water regulation for Indus River; cultural keystone species like Caragana versicolor for fodder.

UNESCO and Seven New Natural Heritage Sites in India

Seven new natural heritage sites from India were included in the UNESCO Tentative World Heritage List.

- ✓ With this, the number of Indian sites on the tentative list has increased **to 69** (49 cultural, 17 natural, and 3 mixed).
- ✓ The UNESCO Tentative List is a **preliminary inventory of sites**, from which future full **World Heritage recognition** may be granted.

Brief Description & Significance of the Seven Sites

Site	State	Features / Key Aspects	Importance / Reason
Deccan Traps (Panchgani & Mahabaleshwar)	Maharashtra	Extensive layered basalt lava flows, over 2,000 m thick lava sequences	These sites are located within the Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary—already a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
St. Mary's Island Cluster	Karnataka	Columnar basalt formations with hexagonal jointing	It dates back to the Late Cretaceous period, offering a geological snapshot from around 85 million years ago.
Meghalayan Age Caves	Meghalaya	Cave systems, especially Mawmluh Cave, marking Holocene Epoch transitions	Provides stratigraphic proof for Meghalayan Age; evidence of prehistoric human settlement
Naga Hill Ophiolite	Nagaland	Ophiolite rocks (remnants of ancient oceanic crust uplifted onto land)	Crucial for understanding plate tectonics and oceanic crust processes
Erra Matti Dibbalu (Red Sand Hills)	Andhra Pradesh	Red sand dunes along the coast.	Evidence of past climatic and sea-level changes
Natural Heritage of Tirumala Hills	Andhra Pradesh	Eparchaeon Unconformity, Silathoranam (natural rock arch)	Represents 1.5 billion-year-old geology; also of cultural & spiritual significance
Varkala Cliffs	Kerala	Coastal erosional cliffs, Warkalli Formation (Mio-Pliocene age)	Unique coastal geomorphology; indicators of marine stability & sediment history

Environmental Accounting on Forest 2025

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) released the 8th consecutive issue of environment accounts titled “Environmental Accounting on forest -2025” during Inaugural session of 29th Conference of Central and State Statistical Organizations (CoCSSO) held in Chandigarh.

About Environmental Accounting on forest 2025

- This is the **first dedicated publication on forest accounting** compiled with the objective of presenting comprehensive information on forest accounts at both the national and state levels, in accordance with the **SEEA framework**.
 - ✓ MoSPI adopted the UN System of Environmental Economic Accounts (SEEA) Framework in 2018 which is an agreed international framework for the compilation of the Environment Economic accounts since.
- The **biennial national assessment** “India State of Forest Report (ISFR)” serves as one of the primary data sources for the aforementioned publication.
- The report is **Volume I** (national level data + methodology) and **Volume II** (state/UT level data, decadal changes & case studies).

- It addresses gaps in **traditional GDP by valuing 'non-market' services** like carbon sequestration, supporting the Natural Capital Accounting agenda under the Biological Diversity Act 2002 and National Forest Policy 1988.

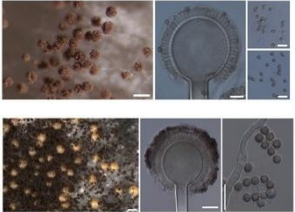
Highlights from the report

- Physical Asset account:** From 2010-11 to 2021-22, India's forest cover grew by 17,444.61 sq. km (22.50%), reaching 7.15 lakh sq. km (21.76% of geographical area), indicating effective regeneration and conservation efforts.
 - ✓ Major state-wise increases: Kerala (4,137 sq. km), Karnataka (3,122 sq. km), and Tamil Nadu (2,606 sq. km).
- Extent Account:** Between 2013 and 2023, India's forest extent account recorded a net increase of 3,356 sq. km, mainly due to reclassification and boundary adjustments.
 - ✓ States with notable rise in Recorded Forest Area (RFA) share: Uttarakhand (6.3%), Odisha (1.97%), and Jharkhand (1.9%).
- Condition Account:** Growing stock, a key indicator in the forest condition account, reflects the volume of usable wood in living trees. Between 2013 and 2023, India's growing stock rose by 305.53 million cum (7.32%) during 2013-2023.
 - ✓ Biggest contributors: Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Telangana; among UTs, Andaman & Nicobar Islands.
- Services Account**

Provisioning services	Regulating services
- The forest service account of India shows that provisioning services (timber and non-timber products) increased from ₹30.72 to ₹37.93 <i>thousand crore</i> between 2011-12 and 2021-22, about 0.16% of GDP at current price in year 2021-22. - Top states: Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Kerala	- The forest service account of India reports a 51.82% rise in carbon retention regulating services, from ₹409.1 to ₹620.97 <i>thousand crore</i> between 2015-16 and 2021-22, emphasizing forests' vital role in climate change mitigation and national goals. - The value in 2021-22 is equivalent to 2.63% of GDP at current price. Leading contributors: Arunachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Assam

Species in News

Pallas's Cat 	The recent WWF-India survey captured the first photographic evidence of Pallas's cat (also known as the manul) in the Arunachal Pradesh. Physical Characteristics: a stocky build, thick fur, a flattened face, and low-set ears. Habitat: Found in high-altitude steppes, grasslands, and rocky terrains at elevations of 3,000–5,000 meters. ✓ Global Range: Native to Central Asia, including Mongolia, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, and parts of the Tibetan Plateau ✓ Presence in India: Previously recorded in Ladakh and Sikkim. Behavior: Solitary and nocturnal, primarily active during dawn and dusk.
Black Aspergilli	Indian scientists from the MACS-Agharkar Research Institute (ARI), Pune, have identified two novel fungal species of black aspergilli from the Western Ghats.

	• Aspergillus dhakephalkarii: Rapid growth, produces brown spores and orange sclerotia (resting structures), with smooth, oval-shaped spores. • Aspergillus patriciawiltshireae: Fast-growing, abundant sclerotia, modest spore production, with spiny spores and branching structures. • They are ecologically significant as decomposers and industrially vital (“workhorses of biotechnology”) for applications <i>like citric acid production, fermentation, and enzyme synthesis</i>.
The Giant African Snail (GAS) 	The Giant African Snail, one of the world's worst <u>invasive species</u> and a known carrier of parasites that can cause brain inflammation in humans, has infested parts of the Chennai city. • Morphology: They are air-breathing hermaphrodites, capable of self-fertilization. • Diet and Habitat: Omnivorous, feeding on <i>over 500 plant species</i> (e.g., vegetables, ornamentals, and even decaying matter), plus calcium sources like plaster and stucco in buildings.

Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy

The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, observes World Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy Day every year on 7th September.

What is Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD)?

DMD is a **rare, genetic (X-linked recessive) disorder** caused by the absence of **dystrophin protein** (a protein that protects muscle fibers from breaking down when exposed to enzymes), leading to **progressive muscle weakness and degeneration** with symptoms starting in early childhood.

✓ It was first described by the French **neurologist Guillaume Benjamin Amand Duchenne** in the 1860.

Who it affects: Mainly **boys** (1 in 3,500–5,000 births); girls are usually **carriers**.

Symptoms: Muscle weakness (hips, thighs, shoulders), difficulty walking/climbing, calf enlargement, waddling gait; later affects **heart and lungs**.

Life expectancy: Now into **30s–40s** with better care.

Treatment: Steroids, exon skipping drugs, gene therapy, supportive multidisciplinary care.

International Earth Sciences Olympiad

The student winners comprising the Indian team at the 18th "International Earth Science Olympiad" (IESO-2025) held at Jining (China) were felicitated by the Government.

About International Earth Sciences Olympiad (IESO):

- **Nature:** Annual global competition for secondary school students (*Class IX–XII*).
- **Aim:** To promote awareness and interest in Earth system sciences through teamwork, collaboration, and competition, focusing on climate change, natural disasters, and environmental challenges.

India's Participation in the Event:

- **Since:** 2007 ; **Hosted:** 10th edition at Mysore (2013).
- **Selection Process:** Through the **Indian National Earth Science Olympiad (INESO)**, organized by the Geological Society of India with support from the *Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)*.
- **Subjects Covered:** Geology, meteorology, oceanography, and environmental sciences.
- **Government Initiatives:** MoES facilitates INESO under the **REACHOUT scheme**, now part of the **PRITHVI (PRITHvi Vigyan) scheme** to build scientific temperament, enhance Earth science education, and prepare youth to address environmental and climate challenges.

- **PRITHVI:** MoES scheme (2021-26), approved in Jan 2024,
- Covers **5 sub-schemes**:
 - **ACROSS** (Atmosphere & Climate Research, Modelling, Observing Systems & Services)
 - **O-SMART** (Ocean Services, Modelling, Application, Resources & Technology)
 - **PACER** (Polar Science & Cryosphere Research)
 - **SAGE** (Seismology & Geosciences)
 - **REACHOUT** (Research, Education, Training & Outreach)
- **Focus:** 5 Earth components - atmosphere, hydrosphere, geosphere, cryosphere, biosphere.
- **Aim:** Better Earth science research & reliable services (weather, ocean, climate, disasters).

WHO Model Lists of Essential Medicines

World Health Organization (WHO) released updated editions of its Model Lists of Essential Medicines (EML), adding new treatments for various types of cancer, diabetes, and obesity associated with comorbidities.

About WHO Model Lists of Essential Medicines:

- **Purpose:** A guide to minimum medicine needs for every health system, ensuring access to safe, effective, and affordable drugs.
- **Updates:** Revised every two years by WHO's Expert Committee on Selection and Use of Essential Medicines.
- **History of EML:** Tanzania created the first national EML in 1970. Later, on World Health Assembly's request to help nations in selecting & procuring medicines- WHO published the first Model List with **186 medicines in 1977**.
- **Selection Criteria:** Public health relevance, efficacy, safety, affordability, and cost-effectiveness.
- **Global Impact:** Over **150 countries** base their national lists on WHO's model.
- **Goal:** Medicines should be available in adequate amounts, appropriate dosage forms, and assured quality to meet priority health needs.

Methandienone Long-Term Metabolite

India has successfully developed Methandienone Long-Term Metabolite (LTM) for enhanced Anti-Doping Testing in sports.

What is Methandienone LTM?

It is a rare, high-purity **Reference Material (RM)** used to detect the long-term presence of **Methandienone**, an anabolic steroid banned by **World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)**.

- ✓ **Reference Materials (RMs)** are highly purified, scientifically characterized forms of drugs/metabolites essential for accurate anti-doping tests. They are crucial for the **detection of over 450 substances prohibited by WADA**.

Developed By: National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER) **Guwahati** in collaboration with **National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL), New Delhi**.

- ✓ NDTL is India's only laboratory for human sports dope testing. Accredited by National Accreditation Board for Testing & Calibration Laboratories (NABL) and WADA (since 2008).

Why is it important?

- It enables detection of the steroid **months or years after usage**, improving the chances of catching violators.
- Helps **increase positive detections**, deter doping, and protect clean athletes.
- Not commercially available worldwide; India's development is a **major contribution** to the global anti-doping community.

P-47 Protein

Researchers at the S. N. Bose National Centre for Basic Sciences (SNBNCBS) highlighted protein p47's unexpected ability to act as a "mechanical chaperone."

What is P-47 Protein?

P47 is a cofactor protein linked with **p97** (plays a major role in moving and degrading proteins), traditionally seen only as a helper in protein trafficking, degradation, and membrane fusion.

Recent Discovery: It acts as a "**mechanical chaperone**", directly stabilizing proteins under mechanical stress.

Function: It enhances **protein extraction from endoplasmic reticulum (ER) to cytoplasm**, reduces misfolding, and improves translocation.

Evidence: First **single-molecule proof** of a cofactor having autonomous, force-dependent chaperone-like activity.

Significance: Potential therapeutic target for **cardiomyopathies, laminopathies, and neurodegenerative diseases** linked to protein instability.

HealthAI Global Regulatory Network

India joined Health AI Global Regulatory Network (GRN) to strengthen oversight of AI in healthcare.

What is HealthAI Global Regulatory Network?

A Geneva-based nonprofit organization, it is a global network of health regulators promoting equitable access and safe use of AI in healthcare. It provides members with a global directory of registered AI health tools for transparency and collaboration.

Focus: Building trust, improving safety, and accelerating responsible innovation through shared learning, joint standards, and early risk alerts.

Indian Collaboration: The **Indian Council of Medical Research -National Institute for Research in Digital Health and Data Science** (ICMR - NIRDHDS), and **IndiaAI** will work with HealthAI.

✓ IndiaAI (under MeitY through the Digital India Corporation) is India's flagship initiative to build a comprehensive, inclusive AI ecosystem and position India as a global leader in AI innovation and development.

Solar Orbiter Mission

According to a new study the European Space Agency's (ESA) Solar Orbiter Mission has traced the origin of Solar Energetic Electrons (SEEs) emerging from the Sun.

About Solar Orbiter Mission (SOM):

- **Launch:** 2020 (ESA-NASA partnership, vehicle- Atlas V)
- **Objective:** Study Sun & heliosphere up close including first-ever polar images of Sun.
- **Orbit:** Comes as close as 42 million km from the Sun; uses Venus flybys to tilt orbit out of ecliptic plane (up to 33°).
- **Special Feature:** Special heatshield protects spacecraft from up to **500°C**.

What are Solar Energetic Electrons (SEE)?

- **High-energy particles** accelerated by the Sun nearly to light speed.
- **Sources:** 1) *Solar flares* → impulsive bursts; 2) *Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs)* → gradual, high-energy swells.
- **Impact of SEE:** Cause **space weather disturbances**, threaten spacecraft & astronauts
- **Significance of Findings:** Improves **space weather forecasting**, protects satellites/astronauts, builds major SEE database; complements **Parker Probe**

Graphite Spyware

Trump administration has unfrozen a stalled Biden-era contract with Paragon Solutions, a Graphite spyware company founded in Israel.

What is Graphite Spyware?

It is a zero-click, state-grade spyware that can fully hijack a smartphone, bypass encryption, and covertly monitor users.

Key Features

- **Zero-click attack** (no user action needed).
- Access to photos, contacts, call logs, GPS.

- Reads **encrypted chats** (WhatsApp, Signal).
- Activates microphone/camera → acts as **listening device**.

PRATUSH Telescope

Scientists at the Raman Research Institute (RRI) have proposed a pioneering mission called PRATUSH designed to unlock the Cosmic Dawn.

What is PRATUSH Telescope?

PRATUSH Telescope (Probing ReionizATIOn of the Universe using Signal from Hydrogen) is a proposed **lunar-orbit radiometer** to detect faint 21-cm hydrogen signals from the Cosmic Dawn. It is being funded by ISRO.

Objectives

- Study the **first stars and galaxies** and the **Epoch of Reionization (EoR)**.
- Understand *when and how the Universe was reionized*.
- Observe from **lunar far side** to avoid Earth's radio interference and ionospheric distortion.

Key Features

- **Compact payload:** Single-Board Computer (SBC- based on Raspberry-Pi, a low-cost credit card sized SBC) for size, weight, and power efficiency.
 - ✓ SBC acts as the master controller of the radiometer, coordinating the antenna, receiver, while handling data recording, calibration, and preliminary processing.
- **Digital receiver + Field Programmable Gate Array (FPGA)** for high-resolution data processing.
- **Lunar far-side orbit** (radio-quiet zone) and **High sensitivity** to detect weak cosmological signals.
- **Two-year nominal mission**, wide sky coverage, high spectral resolution (100 kHz).

Mira Stars

Recently, the most precise determination of the expansion rate of the universe was made using cool, giant variable stars 'Mira' by the scientists from Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA).

What are Mira Stars?

Mira Stars ("the wonderful" in Latin) **also known as Omicron Ceti** are the stars that remarkably **changes its brightness over time, in a regular pattern**.

- ✓ Mira, discovered in the 17th century, was the first known **variable star** and became the prototype for **Mira variables**- stars whose brightness changes regularly.

<u>Characteristics of Mira Stars</u>	<u>Significance of Mira Stars</u>
• Type: Pulsating red giants in late stellar evolution. • Brightness Change: Varies periodically (10-1,000 days) due to expansion and contraction of outer layers. • Temperature: ~3,000 K (cool compared to Sun). • Size: Much larger and luminous than the Sun.	• Serve as standard candles for measuring cosmic distances. • Help build the extragalactic distance ladder. • Contribute to determining the Hubble constant (universe's expansion rate). • Provide insights into late stages of stellar evolution.

Clopidogrel

Doctors now believe that clopidogrel, a well-known antiplatelet medication, could be more effective than aspirin for long-term prevention of heart attacks—especially in those at high risk.

About Clopidogrel:

- **Type:** Antiplatelet drug (prevents blood clots).
- **Uses:** Prevents heart attacks and strokes; Treats peripheral artery disease, Prevents clots after medical procedures
- **Administration:** Taken orally, usually once daily (with or without food), at the same time each day.

Vikram 3201

India unveiled its first fully indigenous 32-bit microprocessor, the Vikram 3201, at Semicon India 2025 conference.

About Vikram 3201:

Designed by Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) and fabricated at Semi-Conductor Laboratory (SCL) in Chandigarh.

- ✓ Upgraded from **Vikram 1601 (16-bit)** used in ISRO launch vehicles since 2009.

Features:

- **Architecture:** 32-bit, 152-instruction set, 32×32-bit registers, microprogrammed control, two bus interfaces for reliable communication.
- **Memory:** Can address up to 4096 million words.
- **Durability:** Built on **180 nm Complementary Metal-Oxide-Semiconductor (CMOS) process**, ensuring radiation and extreme-condition resilience (**temperature tolerance:** –55°C to +125°C).
- **Language Support:** Supports **Ada programming language**, with C compiler in development.

Applications: Handles **launch vehicle navigation, guidance, and control**. Foundation for **future satellites, planetary missions, and AI-enabled space processors**.

Isobutanol

The Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI) is working to explore the possibility of blending 10% isobutanol with diesel.

About Isobutanol (also called isobutyl alcohol):

- **Chemical formula:** C₄H₁₀O (one of the four isomers of butanol).
- **Physical properties:** Clear, colorless liquid, moderately soluble in water, highly flammable (flash point near room temperature), vapors heavier than air.
- **Health hazards:** Causes skin irritation, severe eye damage, respiratory issues if inhaled, and toxic if ingested.
- **Industrial & Commercial Applications**
 - **Solvent:** Used in **paints, coatings, inks, pharmaceuticals, pesticides, flavors, and fragrances**.
 - **Food additive:** Naturally present in some foods and alcoholic beverages.
- **Biofuel Potential:** Bio-isobutanol (produced from biomass via fermentation) is a promising biofuel with higher energy density, less corrosion, and better transport compatibility than ethanol, while also offering a high-octane rating.
 - In India, it is being promoted as a diesel substitute under the biofuel diversification strategy, supporting clean energy, reduced crude imports, and rural economy linkages.

Sarcoidosis

A peer-reviewed study published recently provides an in-depth analysis of sarcoidosis, highlighting its variable course and the factors that influence disease severity.

What is Sarcoidosis?

It is an inflammatory disease where immune system overreact and form **granulomas** (clumps of immune cells), mainly in **lungs & lymph nodes**, sometimes skin, eyes, heart.

Cause: Unknown; likely **genetic + environmental triggers** (bacteria, dust, chemicals).

Treatment: No cure; many resolve on their own. Severe cases need **immunosuppressants (steroids)**.

Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB)

Scientists at CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) discovered how white blood cells can adapt their internal skeletons to combat pathogens.

About Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB):

- **Established:** 1977, Hyderabad; part of **CSIR** under Ministry of Science & Technology.
- **History:** Started as semi-autonomous centre; became full-fledged national lab in 1981–82; led by **Dr. P.M. Bhargava**.
- **Objective:** Conduct high-quality research & training in modern biology; provide national facilities for advanced techniques.
- **Research Areas:** Genetics, biotechnology, immunology, molecular medicine, genomics, proteomics, cellular mechanisms.
- **Applications:** Medicine, disease management, agriculture, environment.
- **Recognition:** 'Center of Excellence' by the Global Molecular and Cell Biology Network, UNESCO.

Ion Chromatography

Scientists recently devised a way to perform ion chromatography in the field.

What is Ion Chromatography (IC also known as ion exchange chromatography)?

It is a powerful **analytical technique** used to **separate and quantify ions in a sample**.

Types: Cation Exchange: Na^+ , K^+ , Ca^{2+} , Mg^{2+} ; Anion Exchange: F^- , Cl^- , NO_3^- , SO_4^{2-}

Working Principle: Works by passing sample through a **column with ion-exchange resin**; ions separate based on **charge and size**. **Eluent** displaces absorbed ions; **retention time** determines ion concentration.

Sensitivity: Can detect ions in **parts-per-billion (ppb) range**, including organic acids.

Applications: Water quality analysis, food chemistry, protein isolation, and educational lab experiments.

Nightmare Bacteria

According to scientists at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), drug-resistant 'nightmare bacteria', driven by NDM gene are spreading faster than ever in the United States.

What are Nightmare Bacteria?

They are carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae (CRE), such as *E. coli* and *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, that are resistant to most antibiotics, including last-resort carbapenems (usually reserved for severe infections).

Symptoms of Infection

- **Urinary Tract:** Burning sensation, frequent urge to urinate, cloudy urine.
- **Bloodstream:** High fever, rapid heartbeat, low blood pressure.
- **Lungs (Pneumonia):** Cough, shortness of breath, chest pain.

Causes of Rising Infections

- **Antibiotic Overuse:** Excessive or unnecessary use in humans and livestock.
- **Post-Pandemic Vulnerability:** Long hospital stays and heavy antibiotic use post-COVID.

NDM (New Delhi Metallo-beta-lactamase-1) gene makes bacteria produce an enzyme (NDM-1) which blocks many strong antibiotics, including last-resort drugs like carbapenems.

Aflatoxin

Indian exporters are disputing Indonesia's delayed process in **notifying** the presence of **aflatoxins** in their groundnut shipments

What are Aflatoxins?

They are toxic chemicals (mycotoxins) produced by fungi **Aspergillus flavus** and **A. Parasiticus**.

Sources: Contaminate crops like **groundnuts, maize, rice, tree nuts, spices, and cocoa**, before or after harvest.

Exposure: Humans get exposed by **eating contaminated food** or **animal products**; farmers may inhale contaminated dust.

Health Impacts: This toxin is **reported to be genotoxic, carcinogenic**, and pose risks to **human and animal health**.

NE-SPARKS Programme

Recently, the union Minister of Development of Northeastern Region and Communications virtually interacted with school students from the Northeastern states who visited ISRO under NE-SPARKS program.

What is NE-SPARKS Programme?

NE-SPARKS (Northeast Students' Programme for Awareness, Reach, and Knowledge on Space) is a flagship initiative by Ministry of Development of North-East Region (MDoNER) in collaboration with **8 North Eastern States** to promote **awareness of space science & technology** and encourage interest in **STEM fields** among Northeastern students.

Key Features:

- **Exposure Visits:** 800 meritorious students (100 from each state) visit **ISRO Centres in Bengaluru**.
- **Learning Experience:** Students witness satellite integration, interact with ISRO scientists, and learn about India's space achievements (Chandrayaan-3, Aditya-L1, Gaganyaan).
- **Impact:** So far, **394 students** have completed the program, gaining clarity in academic aspirations and inspiration for scientific careers.
- **Support & Funding:** Funded jointly by **MDoNER and state governments** in a **60:40 ratio**.

International Electrotechnical Commission

India hosted the 89th General Meeting (GM) of the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.

✓ It is the **fourth time India** is hosting the prestigious IEC General Meeting, after 1960, 1997 and 2013.

About International Electrotechnical Commission: Established in **1906** and headquartered in **Geneva**, develops **international standards for electrical, electronic, and related technologies**. Its standards, created by a **consensus of global experts**, are used in over **150 countries** to harmonize technical requirements. IEC works closely with **International Organization for Standardization (ISO)** and the **International Telecommunication Union (ITU)**.

Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis

Recently, Indian Immunologicals (IIL) has launched **Raksha-IBR** which is India's first indigenously developed glycoprotein E (gE) deleted DIVA marker vaccine against infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR).

About Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis (IBR)

Cause & Spread: Caused by Bovine Herpes Virus-1 (BHV-1); endemic in India.

Transmission: aerosol route and infected semen.

Impacts: Respiratory & reproductive disease in cattle. Leads to infertility, abortions, and reduced milk yield.

Prevention: No specific treatment available. **Raksha-IBR**, India's first gE-deleted DIVA (differentiate between infected and vaccinated animals) marker vaccine, launched by IIL & National Dairy Development Board (NDDB in Anand, Gujarat).

AstroSat

Recently, India's first dedicated Space Astronomy Observatory, AstroSat completed a decade of operations.

About AstroSat- India's First Space Observatory

- **Launch:** In 2015, by PSLV-C30 from Sriharikota.

Objectives	Payloads
• Study high-energy processes in binary star systems, neutron stars, black holes. • Estimate magnetic fields of neutron stars. • Explore high-energy processes in extragalactic star systems. • Detect new bright X-ray sources. • Conduct deep UV survey of the Universe	• Ultra Violet Imaging Telescope (UVIT) • Large Area X-ray Proportional Counter (LAXPC) • Cadmium–Zinc–Telluride Imager (CZTI) • Soft X-ray Telescope (SXT) • Scanning Sky Monitor (SSM)

- **Operations:** Managed by ISRO Telemetry, Tracking and Command Network (ISTRAC), Bengaluru.
- **Significance:** First dedicated Indian astronomy mission; minimum life 5 years, still operational.

Syphilis

Sexually transmitted disease rates for U.S. adults dropped last year, but syphilis in newborns continued to rise, according to new government data recently.

What is Syphilis?

It is a preventable and curable bacterial sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by *Treponema pallidum*.

Transmission: Spread via sexual contact, mother-to-child (pregnancy), rarely through breastfeeding.

Symptoms (Stages):

- **Primary:** Painless sore on genitals, rectum, or mouth; may involve swollen lymph nodes.
- **Secondary:** Non-itchy rash (hands, feet), fever, malaise.
- **Latent/Hidden:** No symptoms but bacteria remain.
- **Tertiary:** Damage to brain, heart, and other organs; can be life-threatening.

Impact in Pregnancy: If untreated/late treated → **50–80% adverse birth outcomes** (stillbirth, neonatal death, congenital infection).

Treatment: Penicillin is the cure (best in early stages).

Gaia Telescope 3D Map

Recently, a new 3D map created using data from the **Gaia Telescope** shows stellar nurseries (star-forming regions) within 4,000 light-years of the Sun in all directions.

Gaia (Global Astrometric Interferometer for Astrophysics) Telescope

- **Launch:** 2013 by the **European Space Agency (ESA)**.
- **Location:** Lagrange Point 2 (L2)
- **Goal:** Create precise 3D map of Milky Way (using astrometry).
- **Instruments:** Astrometer (positions); Photometer (brightness & temperature); and Spectrometer (composition & motion)
- **Latest Finding:** Produced most detailed map of glowing hydrogen clouds, aiding study of **star formation** and **turbulent interstellar gas**.

AONEUM-04

The Technology Development Board (TDB- under Department of Science and Technology (DST)) extended its support to Hyderabad-based Aodh Lifesciences to develop **AONEUM-04**.

What is AONEUM-04?

It is an indigenous antibiotic nebulization suspension for pneumonia and antimicrobial resistance. It will provide **direct lung delivery** via nebulization for higher local concentration and fewer systemic side effects.

Features: Sustained release, mucoadhesion, biofilm disruption for improved efficacy & reduced antibiotic resistance.

Target: pneumonia (major child mortality cause in India) and antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Current Status: Cleared pre-clinical trials; entering Phase III clinical trials before commercialization.

SpaceX's Starship Completes Critical Test Flight

Starship, the world's largest rocket, succeeded on its 10th attempt recently, with the booster splashing down in the Gulf of Mexico and the spacecraft reaching the Indian Ocean.

✓ Previous flights faced failures: Flight 7 & 8 exploded over the Caribbean, Flight 9 exploded in space, and June's (2025) ground test of the upper stage also failed.

About Starship

- Starship is a two-stage, fully reusable heavy-lift launch vehicle developed by SpaceX.
- **Dimensions:** Approximately 120 meters tall, making it the largest rocket ever flown, surpassing the Saturn V rocket which took Neil Armstrong to the Moon.
- **Components:** Super Heavy Booster (33 Raptor engines) and Starship Spacecraft Intended to carry crew and cargo to destinations like Earth orbit, the Moon, and Mars.

Significance:

- Reusability reduces space access costs.
- Advanced heat shield and booster recovery.
- Potential for deep-space missions and NASA's Artemis program.

350th Martyrdom day of Guru Tegh Bahadur

- Indian Railways to commemorate the 350th Martyrdom Day of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji to increase awareness among younger generation about his teachings and sacrifices.
- Guru Tegh Bahadur was born in Amritsar in 1621 to Mata Nanki and Guru Hargobind, the sixth Sikh guru, who raised an army against the Mughals and introduced the concept of warrior saints.
- As a boy, Tegh Bahadur was called Tyag Mal because of his ascetic nature. He spent his early childhood in Amritsar under the tutelage of Bhai Gurdas, who taught him Gurmukhi, Hindi, Sanskrit, and Indian religious philosophy, while Baba Budha trained him in swordsmanship, archery, and horse-riding.
- He was married to Mata Gujri at Kartarpur in 1632, and he subsequently left for Bakala near Amritsar.
- He traveled extensively to preach the teachings of Nanak and contributed many hymns to the Guru Granth Sahib including the Saloks, or couplets.
- He is regarded as the **saviour guru**, as during the reign of the Mughals, there were oppressions in which people were forced to convert to Islam under the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb.
- And in that period of time, he resisted the forced conversions of non-Muslims to Islam.
- Later, Guru Tegh Bahadur was executed on the orders of Aurangzeb in Delhi in 1675. His martyrdom is remembered as the **Shaheedi Divas** every year on November 24.

Rosh Hashanah

- The Prime Minister greeted Rosh Hashanah to the Jewish community.
- Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year festival that marks the beginning of the High Holy Days, also called the “Ten Days of Repentance,” which culminate with Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.
- Spiritually, it is a time of reflection, repentance, and renewal. As per Jewish tradition on Rosh Hashanah, God opens the “Book of Life,” where each person’s deeds of the past year are recorded, and judgments are made for the coming year.

Self-Respect Movement

- The year 2025 marks the centenary of the Self-Respect Movement.
- The **Self-Respect Movement** is a popular human rights movement launched in **Tamil Nadu in 1925** by social reformer **E.V. Ramasamy (Periyar)**.
- Its primary aim was to achieve **equal rights and social justice** for marginalized communities, especially the non-Brahmin sections of society, in the face of entrenched caste hierarchies and social inequalities.
- The movement emphasized on:
 - Abolition of caste discrimination and social inequalities.
 - **Rationalism and critical thinking, encouraging people to question religious orthodoxy, superstitions, and social customs.**
 - Women’s rights, including widow remarriage, equal status, and opposition to the dowry
 - Self-respect marriages, conducted without priests or religious rituals, symbolizing equality and rationality.

Langkhun Festival

- The Tiwa tribesmen celebrated the Langkhun festival in Umsowai village in **Karbi Anglong district of Assam**.
- It is an annual harvest festival celebrated to offer gratitude to **Ramsa Devta**. The festival reflects the agrarian lifestyle of the community and their close relationship with nature.
- The festival features **bamboo worship** over four days and is typically celebrated between October and December.

Tiwa Tribe

- Also known as **Lalung**, it is a **Tibeto-Burmese ethnic group** primarily inhabiting the states of **Assam, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh**.
- The community is broadly divided into **Hill Tiwas** and **Plains Tiwas**.
- While the Hill Tiwas live in the hilly regions of Assam and Meghalaya, maintaining traditional governance systems and close-knit village councils, the Plains Tiwas are more integrated with Assamese culture and language.
- Despite these differences, both groups share a common ethnic identity.
- The founder of Tiwa community is **Pha Poroi “Indrosing Dewri”** who has contributed a lot to the construction of Tiwa society. He also wrote the Tiwa national anthem called - **O Angé Tiwa Tosima**.

National Archives of India

- The 50th Golden Jubilee Meeting of the National Committee of Archivists (NCA) was recently organized by the National Archives of India (NAI).
- **Established in 1953**, the National Committee of Archivists serves as an all-India forum of professional archivists. Its first meeting was held in Hyderabad in 1954.
- It is **chaired by the Director General of Archives, NAI**, and has representatives from all State/UT archives.

National Archives of India (NAI)

- NAI functions under the **Ministry of Culture** and is the **storehouse of all non-current government records**, holding them for the use of administrators and scholars.
- Originally established as the **Imperial Record Department in 1891 in Calcutta**, the capital of British India, the NAI is now located in Delhi.
- It keeps and conserves records of the government and its organisations only, and **does not receive classified documents**.
- Holdings in NAI are in a regular series starting from the year 1748. The languages of the records include **English, Arabic, Hindi, Persian, Sanskrit and Urdu**.
- NAI has also made efforts to make available all the records digitally — on the newly created **Abhilekh Patal portal**.
- As per the **Public Records Act, 1993**, various central ministries and departments are supposed to transfer records more than 25 years old to the NAI, unless they pertain to classified information.

Concerns

- However, it is up to the respective ministries and departments to decide what is classified information, which leads to **subjective opinions**.
- Various ministries and administrations come up with their own definitions of what is classified and what is non-current.
- **Opacity and lack of accessibility** are issues regularly faced by researchers at the archives

Dadabhai Naoroji

- The 200th anniversary of Dadabhai Naoroji, also known as the Grand Old Man of India was observed.
- **Dadabhai Naoroji (1825–1917)** was a pioneering nationalist leader, reformer, and intellectual whose ideas laid the foundation for India's freedom movement.
- He was the first Indian professor at Elphinstone College, co-founder of the Indian National Congress, and founder of organisations like the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe.
- He founded the East India Association (1867), uniting Indians and British supporters.
- He was the **first Indian elected to the British House of Commons (1892)** and used this platform to expose the economic exploitation of India by Britain through his famous **"Drain Theory"**, later compiled in his book **Poverty and Un-British Rule in India (1901)**.
- As Congress President in 1906, he declared Swaraj as the ultimate goal of the nationalist movement. As a **social reformer**, he worked for women's education, simplified Parsi customs, and equality in daily life. He also supported Indians' access to the Civil Services and other professions.

AWARDS/PERSONALITIES IN NEWS

Dadasaheb Phalke Award

- Legendary actor, director, and producer **Mohanlal** has been conferred the Dadasaheb Phalke Award for the year 2023.
- Mohanlal has worked in Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Hindi films.
- He has been previously honoured with Padma Shri in 2001 and Padma Bhushan in 2019.
- Dadasaheb Phalke Award is India's **highest award in the field of cinema**.
- It is presented annually at the **National Film Awards ceremony** by the **Directorate of Film Festivals**, an organization set up by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- The award comprises a Swarna Kamal (Golden Lotus) medallion, a shawl, and a cash prize.
- Presented first in **1969**, the award was introduced by the Union Government to commemorate Dadasaheb Phalke's contribution to Indian cinema. The **first recipient** of the award was actress **Devika Rani**.

Dadasaheb Phalke

- Dhundiraj Govind Phalke was an Indian producer-director-screenwriter, known as the **Father of Indian cinema**.
- His debut film, **Raja Harishchandra**, was the first Indian movie released in **1913**, and is now known as **India's first full-length feature film**.

Kalaimamani Awards

- The Tamil Nadu government has announced the Kalaimamani Awards for the years 2021, 2022 and 2023.
- Kalaimamani literally means **gem of art**, and the awards are considered to be the **highest civilian honour in the state of Tamil Nadu**.
- The awards not only celebrate individual excellence but also serve as a means of preserving and promoting Tamil Nadu's diverse and vibrant cultural traditions for future generations
- The awards are handed by the **Tamil Nadu 'Iyal Isai Nataka Mandram'** (literature, music, and theatre), a unit of the Directorate of Art and Culture, Government of Tamil Nadu.
- The **categories** of the awards include music (vocal), Thevaram recital, performing mridangam, harmonium, religious discourse, Bharathanatyam teaching, drama artist, folk singer, Valli Oyil Kummi, small screen actor, painter, etc.
- The awardees will be honoured with a gold medal and a shield, while the awardees at the national level will be honoured with Rs 1 lakh and a gold medal.

National Geoscience Awards 2024

- The President of India recently presented the National Geoscience Awards 2024 for outstanding contributions in the field of Geoscience.
- **Instituted in 1966** by the **Ministry of Mines**, the National Geoscience Awards (formerly known as the **National Mineral Awards until 2009**) are among the country's oldest and most prestigious honors in the field of geosciences.
- The objective is to honour individuals and teams for extraordinary achievements in various fields of geosciences i.e. mineral discovery & exploration, mining technology & mineral beneficiation, fundamental/applied geosciences.

- The awards are presented annually under **three categories**:
 - National Geoscience Award for Lifetime Achievement;
 - National Geoscience Award; and
 - National Young Geoscientist Award.

SCOPE Eminence Awards

- The President of India presented the SCOPE Eminence Awards for the year 2022-23 in New Delhi.
- The SCOPE Eminence Awards are instituted by the **Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE)**.
- The Awards is conferred to honour and recognize the significant contributions and achievements of Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs) as nation builders.

SCOPE

- **Formed in 1973**, SCOPE is an **apex body of Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs)**.
- It aims to promote competitiveness and excellence amongst its members by enhancing their efficiencies and operational capacities with the help of conducive policies and strategies.
- It operates on **four pillars** of Policy Advocacy, Programs & Workshops, Capacity Building & Skill Development and Brand Building.
- Internationally, SCOPE represents the employers' organization on the International Labour Organization (ILO); United Nations (UN); Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and International Organization of Employers (IOE).