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- Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Rules, 2025
- India's Road Safety System
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- New Policy Framework for Relocating Tribals
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Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2025

The Ministry of Power released the *Draft Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2025* to strengthen and reform the electricity sector in line with evolving industry needs and the vision of *Viksit Bharat @2047*. The Bill seeks to amend the *Electricity Act, 2003*

Objectives of the Bill

- Ensure **financial viability** of the power sector through cost-reflective tariffs and cross-subsidy reduction.
 - *Cross-subsidy in electricity is a pricing mechanism where one group of consumers pays a higher tariff than the cost of service to subsidize another group of consumers who are charged a lower tariff (industrial and commercial users vs residential and agricultural users)*
- Promote **competition and open access** to lower industrial power costs.
- Accelerate **clean energy and storage integration** for energy transition.
- Strengthen **regulatory accountability** and Centre-State coordination.
- Simplify **infrastructure development** and enhance **cybersecurity** in power systems.

Proposed Key Amendments

- **Financial Viability:** Distribution companies (DISCOMs) face chronic financial losses due to tariffs that do not reflect actual costs resulting in heavy borrowings, poor infrastructure investment, and unsustainable power supply. Thus, the bill proposes-
 - **Cost-Reflective Tariffs Made Mandatory:** Regulatory Commissions must fix tariffs that recover the real cost of supply, as directed by the Supreme Court (SC) in *BSES Rajdhani Power Ltd. vs UoI (2025)*.
 - **Advance Subsidy System:** State governments may continue subsidizing specific groups but must provide advance subsidies to avoid financial stress on DISCOMs.
 - **Suo Motu Tariff Determination:** Commissions can revise tariffs on their own even if the utilities are not filing the revision petitions, ensuring annual revisions by 1st April each year.

Impact: Improve DISCOM solvency, ensure timely tariff updates, and promote long-term sustainability in the power sector.

- **Economic Competitiveness:**
 - **Unlocking Electricity Demand:** High cross-subsidies and universal service obligations (USO- to supply electricity to all consumers, including those eligible for *open access (i.e., above 1 MW)*). This inflates industrial tariffs, undermining MSME competitiveness. The bill allows State Electricity Regulatory Commissions (SERCs) to exempt DISCOMs from USO for consumers above 1 MW who can opt for open access and designate one of the distribution licensees to supply power at a premium over the cost of supply, for uninterrupted supply.
 - **Reducing Logistics and Mass Transit Costs:** Exemption from cross-subsidy within 5 years for manufacturing enterprises, Railways, and Metro Rail systems.
 - **Promoting Captive Power Generation:** The *Electricity Act, 2003* permits **captive power generation** for self-consumption without paying open access surcharges. The Bill further **empowers Central and State Governments** to frame clear rules for such generation, ensuring **regulatory clarity, stability, and investment confidence**.

Impact: Promote cheaper power, industrial growth, and energy self-sufficiency.

- **Energy Transition:**
 - **Market-based Capacity Addition:** To achieve **500 GW of non-fossil capacity by 2030** and **2000 GW by 2047**, the Bill empowers the **CERC** to introduce **market-based mechanisms** for renewable energy expansion.

- **Non-fossil Energy Obligations:** To align with the **Energy Conservation Act, 2001** and advance clean energy goals, the Bill introduces provisions in the **Electricity Act** to enforce **minimum non-fossil energy obligations**.

Impact: Attract investment, promote competition, enable faster, more efficient capacity addition, ensure legal consistency and reliable, affordable, and sustainable power.

• **Ease of Living and Doing Business:**

- **Minimum Service Standards:** The Bill proposes **uniform national service standards** to ensure **reliable power supply**, enhance **accountability of distribution licensees**, and **improve service quality**, bringing performance closer to global benchmarks.
- **Consumer-Friendly Appeals:** The Bill **caps assessments for unauthorized electricity use to one year** to prevent excessive penalties and **reduces the appeal deposit from half to one-third** of the assessed amount. It also allows the **appellate authority to waive or reduce the deposit** in cases of undue hardship, making the process more **consumer-friendly and fair**.
- **Simplified Compliance:** The bill removes Central govt. no objection certificate (NOC) requirements for license areas covering defense establishments, even when no supply or infrastructure work is involved.

Impact: Improves service delivery, consumer trust.

• **Regulatory Strengthening:**

- **Accountability of Regulators:** Governments can act on complaints against CERC/SERC members for *willful violation or gross negligence*.
- **Time-Bound Adjudication:** Regulatory Commissions must dispose of cases within **120 days**.
- **Expanded APTEL:** Number of members in the Appellate Tribunal for Electricity (APTEL) to be increased from **3 to 7** to clear backlog and boost investor confidence.

• **Other Reforms:**

- **Right of Way (RoW):** The Bill incorporates **RoW** provisions into the **Electricity Act, 2003**, giving licensees clear legal authority to install and maintain electric lines. It also allows **State frameworks for fair land compensation**, with **unresolved disputes** appealable to the **District Judge**.

- **Cybersecurity:** The bill empowers the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) to frame regulations ensuring cybersecurity of integrated power system operations.

- **Distribution Network Sharing:** The Bill allows **distribution licensees** to use **shared networks** instead of maintaining separate ones, reducing duplication and costs, under the **regulatory oversight of SERCs**.

- **Electricity Council:** The Bill

proposes an **Electricity Council**, chaired by the **Union Power Minister** with **State Power Ministers** as

Concerns Raised Regarding the Bill	Way Forward
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federalism and Centre-State Relations: States fear erosion of autonomy, as several powers (tariff norms, renewable obligations, cybersecurity, Electricity Council) increase Central control and may weaken the role of SERCs in tariff and supply decisions. • Impact on Consumers and Subsidies: Cost-reflective tariffs and cross-subsidy removal could raise electricity prices for rural and low-income consumers. Dependence on advance State subsidies may burden fiscally weaker States, affecting affordability and inclusion. • Financial Risks to DISCOMs: Open access and USO exemptions allow large consumers to exit DISCOM networks, reducing revenue from high-paying users. This could worsen the financial imbalance of DISCOMs and risk their long-term viability. • Implementation and Institutional Capacity: Suo motu tariff revision by regulators may lead to disputes or politicization. Also, expanding APTEL without adequate capacity building may not ensure faster resolution. • Social and Environmental Concerns: RoW provisions may face land and local resistance. Market-based renewable mechanisms could favour large corporate players, sidelining smaller or local energy producers. • Transition Equity: The Bill's rapid push for market and tariff reforms may benefit industry more than common consumers unless carefully phased. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balanced Implementation: Phase tariff and subsidy reforms gradually to protect vulnerable consumers. • Strengthen Federal Cooperation: Empower the proposed Electricity Council as a true Centre-State coordination forum, not a control mechanism. • DISCOM Reforms: Focus on efficiency, smart metering, and financial restructuring before full open-access liberalization. • Consumer Protection: Ensure timely subsidy payments and targeted support for low-income users. • Regulatory Capacity Building: Strengthen SERCs and APTEL with resources, expertise, and accountability mechanisms. • Inclusive Energy Transition: Support MSMEs, small renewable producers, and local grids to ensure equitable clean energy growth.



Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Rules, 2025

The Government notified the **DPDP Rules, 2025**, operationalize the DPDP Act, 2023 by creating a clear, practical framework for safeguarding personal data in a rapidly growing digital ecosystem.

What are DPDP Rules, 2025?

The DPDP Rules, 2025 aim to strengthen citizen rights, ensure responsible data use by organizations, curb unauthorized commercial exploitation, reduce digital harms, and support a secure, trustworthy environment for digital innovation and economic growth.

Key Provisions of DPDP Rules:

- **Phased and Practical Implementation:** *Eighteen-month* phased compliance for core operational requirements;
 - Every Data Fiduciary must publish a separate, plain-language consent notice explaining the specific purpose(s) for which personal data is collected and used.
 - Consent Managers must be companies based in India and register with the Board; they must meet technical, financial and governance conditions.
- **Notice by Data Fiduciary (DF) to Data Principal:** should be self-contained & understandable independently of other materials, must include itemized description of personal data to be processed and provide communication link(s) (website/app) and describe other means so the Data Principal may withdraw consent, exercise statutory rights (access / correction / erasure / nomination) or file complaint with the Board.
- **Consent Manager- Registration & Obligations (Rule 4):** Consent Managers must be India-incorporated entities with certified platforms, adequate capacity, and a ₹2-crore net worth. The Board registers them after verification. They must enable user consent management, *avoid accessing data contents*, maintain consent records for seven years, ensure security, and undergo audits. The Board can seek information, order corrections, and suspend or cancel registration after a hearing.
- **Processing by State / State Instrumentalities (Rule 5):** Processing of personal data for subsidy, benefit, service, certificate, license or permit by State or its agencies must meet standards in **Second Schedule** like lawful processing, purpose, limitation, data minimization, accuracy, retention only as required, reasonable security safeguard, transparency (contact & means to exercise rights) and accountability.

About Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023

Enacted in **2023**, the DPDP Act provides a **complete legal framework** for protecting **digital personal data** in India. It follows the **SARAL (Simple, Accessible, Rational, and Actionable)** approach using clear language, so individuals and businesses can easily understand their obligations and rights.

Key Terms under the Act:

- **Data Fiduciary (DF):** Organization that decides why and how personal data is processed.
- **Data Principal:** The individual whose personal data is being processed (includes parents/guardians for children and persons with disabilities).
- **Data Processor:** Entity that processes data on behalf of a Data Fiduciary.
- **Consent Manager:** An interoperable platform allowing individuals to give, manage, or withdraw consent.
- **Appellate Tribunal:** The Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) hears appeals against decisions by the Data Protection Board (DPB).
- **Data Protection Board (DPB) of India:** established as an independent body that monitors compliance; inquires into breaches; ensures corrective actions; and enforces penalties. This strengthens trust and ensures an effective grievance-handling mechanism. The head office of the DPB shall be in New Delhi.

Core Principles of the Act:

- **Consent & Transparency.**
- **Purpose Limitation:** data must be used only for specified purposes.
- **Data Minimization:** collect only what is necessary.
- **Accuracy:** keep data correct and updated.
- **Storage Limitation:** retain only as long as needed.
- **Security Safeguards:** protect data using reasonable measures.
- **Accountability:** organizations must ensure compliance.



- **Reasonable Security Safeguards on data fiduciary (Rule 6):** include encryption or masking, strict access controls, monitoring with one-year log retention, continuity and backup measures, security clauses in processor contracts, and technical-organizational steps to ensure effective compliance.

- **Clear Protocols for Personal Data Breach (Rule 7):**

To Data Principals (without delay): Concise/plain notification via user account or registered channel that includes nature/extent/timing of breach; likely consequences for the individual; mitigation measures implemented/being implemented; safety steps the individual can take; business contact for queries.	To the Board: Immediate intimation of description, impact, timing, location. Detailed report within 72 hours (unless Board allows longer) with updated facts, causes, mitigation, identity of person responsible (if known), remedial & preventive steps, and report of intimations given to Data Principals.
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- **Time-periods, Retention & Erasure (Rule 8):** DFs in listed sectors (large e-commerce, gaming, social media) must erase personal data once the purpose ends (unless law requires retention). Many classes follow a three-year retention from last user interaction, with 48-hour prior notice before erasure. Personal data, traffic data, and logs must be kept at least one year for Seventh Schedule purposes (such as State functions related to sovereignty, security, legal duties), then erased unless legally required otherwise.
- **Transparency and Accountability Measures:** Every DF must prominently publish Data Protection Officer (DPO) or responsible contact on website/app and include it in responses to rights-exercise requests.
 - Significant DFs have enhanced duties, including annual (Data Protection Impact Assessment (**DPIA**), independent audits, algorithmic and technical due-diligence, stricter oversight for new or sensitive technologies, and possible local storage of specified personal or traffic data as directed by the Government.
- **Strengthening Rights of Data Principals:**
 - **Right to Give or Refuse Consent:** consent must be clear, informed; withdrawal at any time; withdrawal must be as easy as giving consent.
 - **Right to Know How Data is Used / Right to Access:** copy of personal data held, purpose and processing details.
 - **Right to Correct / Update Personal Data**
 - **Right to Erase:** request deletion in eligible cases; DF must act within permitted timelines.
 - **Right to Nominate:** appoint someone to exercise rights on one's behalf (useful in illness/disability).
 - **Mandatory Response:** DFs must respond to access/correction/update/erasure requests within 90 days.

- **Special Protection:**

Children (Rule 10): Verifiable parental consent required (except for essential services such as healthcare, education, real-time safety). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DF must verify parent via: reliable identity/age details already held; voluntarily provided details; or virtual token issued by an authorized entity (incl. Aadhar, Digital Locker). 	Persons with Disabilities (Rule 11): Where a person cannot act independently, DF must verify lawful guardianship (court appointment, designated authority under Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, or local level committee under National Trust).
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- **Significant Data Fiduciary- Additional Obligations (Rule 13):** Annual DPIA & audit; report significant observations to the Board. Algorithmic due diligence- verify technical measures/algorithms do not risk principals' rights. Government may require localization of specified personal & traffic data for certain categories (committee to recommend).
- **Cross-border Transfer (Rule 15):** Transfers outside India allowed subject to Central Government-specified requirements; additional restrictions where data is shared with a foreign State or foreign-state-controlled entity.
- **Research Exemption (Rule 16):** Processing for research, archiving or statistical purposes is exempt if done as per Second Schedule standards.

- **Appointment of Chairperson and Members of the DPB (Rule 17):** A Search-cum-Selection Committee recommends names to the Central Government.

- **For Chairperson:** Committee headed by the **Cabinet Secretary**, with Secretaries of Legal Affairs & MeitY + **two experts**.
- **For Members (Total 4):** Committee headed by **MeitY Secretary**, with Secretary of Legal Affairs + **two experts**.

Central Government makes final appointments based on recommendations. Committee proceedings remain valid even if there is any **vacancy or defect** in its composition.

- **Digital First DPB (Rule 20-22):** DPB will use techno-legal tools to conduct proceedings without requiring physical presence, while retaining the power to summon and examine individuals on oath. Any person aggrieved by a Board order can file a **digital appeal** before the Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) which guided by natural justice and not bound by the Civil Procedure Code (CPC), also functions as a digital office and can summon and examine individuals as needed.

Significance of DPDP Rules, 2025	Concerns Raised Regarding DPDP 2025 Rules
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthens user rights with clearer consent requirements, plain-language notices, strict breach notifications, and rights to access, correction, erasure. • Enhances accountability especially for Significant DFs through audits, DPIAs, algorithmic due diligence and possible data localization. • Creates a digital-first enforcement mechanism enabling faster adjudication and digital appeals via TDSAT. • Standardizes data processing by the State ensuring lawful, minimal, accurate and accountable use of personal data for subsidies and services. • Supports global interoperability by permitting cross-border transfers subject to government conditions, aiding India's digital economy. • Encourages privacy-by-design culture and proactive compliance in Indian industry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delayed implementation (12-18 months) slows delivery of core protections and allows Big Tech and large entities extended compliance time. • Ambiguities in rules such as undefined "techno-legal measures", emergency powers of the Chairperson, and unclear scope for Consent Managers. • High compliance costs particularly for SMEs and startups, due to upgraded security, parental verification systems, and documentation requirements. • Complexity of implementing strict parental-consent and verification procedures may burden organizations. • RTI concerns: Amendments narrowing disclosure of personal information may reduce transparency and weaken accountability. • Enforcement capacity remains uncertain about the ability of the Board to regulate Big Tech and public authorities effectively.

Way Forward

- **Strengthen regulatory independence** by ensuring the DPB functions autonomously and transparently.
- **Issue detailed guidelines** on techno-legal measures, emergency powers, Consent Manager accountability and breach-notification mechanisms.
- **Build enforcement capacity** through skilled personnel, technical infrastructure and faster grievance redressal systems.
- **Support SMEs and startups** with model templates, lower compliance costs and phased guidance.
- **Enhance public awareness** on consent, data rights and safe digital practices through nationwide campaigns.



India's Road Safety System

The Supreme Court (SC) took cognizance of two mass-casualty road crashes in Rajasthan (14 killed) and Telangana (19 killed). More than 1.7 lakh lives were lost in 2023 alone due to road crashes.

Initiatives Taken by Government to Prevent Road Accidents

- **Policy & Data Measures:** Adoption of National Road Safety Policy (2010) and a comprehensive strategy built around the "4Es"-Education, Engineering, Enforcement, and Emergency Care
 - To strengthen evidence-based policymaking, electronic Detailed Accident Report (e-DAR) system has been introduced, which creates a centralized digital platform for accurate reporting, management, and analysis of road crash data across States and UTs.
- **Licensing, Training & Public Awareness:** Financial support for the establishment of Institutes of Driving Training and Research (IDTRs), Regional Driving Training Centres, across the country to improve driver competence.

- Large-scale awareness programmes are being conducted through the Road Safety Advocacy Scheme and National Road Safety Month and Road Safety Week every year to sensitize road users.
- **Road and Vehicle Engineering: Mandatory Road Safety Audits (RSA)** at all National Highway (NH) project stages; black-spot identification & rectification.
- Stricter vehicle safety norms: **airbags, ABS, seat-belt reminders, reverse-parking alerts, speed-limiters, over-speed warnings.**
- Automated Inspection & Certification Centres; *Bharat New Car Assessment Program (BNCAP)* rating system to enable consumers to choose safer vehicles.
- Vehicle Scrapping Policy + Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facilities (RVSFs) to phase out unfit vehicles, complemented by new Environment Protection (End-of-Life Vehicles) Rules based on Extended Producer Responsibility.
- **Enforcement & Technology-Based Deterrence: Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019** provides for higher penalties, tech-driven enforcement.
- Rules requiring the installation of electronic enforcement devices on high-density corridors and major junctions have been issued.
- A massive shift towards digital enforcement has taken place, with more than 18.24 crore e-challans were issued between January 2019-December 2023.
- New Legal Metrology rules mandate the verification and stamping of radar-based speed measurement devices from July 2025 onward, ensuring that speed enforcement is accurate, transparent, and legally robust.
- **Emergency Care & Victim Protection:** Emergency care has been strengthened through legal protection for Good Samaritans, enhanced compensation for hit-and-run victims, and deployment of ambulances with trained medical staff at toll plazas. Additionally, a pilot scheme for cashless golden-hour treatment is being implemented in several States to ensure timely and lifesaving medical assistance.

Reasons for Rising Road Crash Casualties	What Can Be Done?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Faulty Licensing & Training: Licensing is treated as formality; tests often perfunctory. There is no structured or standardized training, especially for heavy commercial drivers. There are no periodic medical, vision, or fitness checks to assess continuing driving competence for drivers routinely operating heavy vehicles. ● Weak Enforcement: Over-speeding, overloading, drunk driving and wrong-side driving remain major killers. Enforcement relies on manual policing which is inconsistent, error-prone, and vulnerable to discretion. There is also limited adoption of technology (cameras, automated challans, integrated data systems). Penalty recovery remains weak, reducing deterrence. ● Unsafe & Poorly Designed Infrastructure: Roads are designed for speed, not safety; "unforgiving roads" magnify minor errors into fatal outcomes. Issues include- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ poor curves, lack of crash barriers, bad illumination, broken dividers, unmarked construction zones, encroachments. ○ Missing pedestrian facilities; unsafe mix of pedestrians, two-wheelers and heavy vehicles. ○ Highways are expanding faster than safety engineering standards and mitigation systems. ● Inadequate Medical Care: Huge variation in ambulance availability and response time. Many rural victims reach care after the "golden hour". Nearby facilities often lack trauma specialists, blood banks or equipment. Victims are frequently handled or transported by untrained bystanders, increasing the risk of complications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reform Licensing & Driver Training: Standardized, competency-based training and testing for all drivers. Periodic health, vision, and skill checks, especially for commercial drivers. Introduce digital/automated driving tests to eliminate subjectivity. ● Strengthen Enforcement through Technology: Universal adoption of automated speed detection, red-light cameras and e-challan systems. Real-time data integration across States; strict penalty recovery. Zero tolerance for drunk driving & wrong-side driving. ● Safer Road Engineering: Mandatory road safety audits; redesign black spots with evidence-based solutions. Install crash barriers, proper lighting, signage, and pedestrian/cycle infrastructure. Create dedicated truck lay-bys and rest areas to prevent roadside parking. ● Improve Trauma & Emergency Systems: Implement a Right to Trauma Care law with time-bound response standards. Expand ambulance networks and standardize equipment. Upgrade district hospitals along highways as trauma centres. ● Institutional Coordination: Integrate licensing, enforcement, engineering and trauma care under a unified safety framework. Regular monitoring and public reporting of crash data.



SC Strikes Down Vanashakti Judgment

The Supreme Court (SC) by a 2:1 majority recalled its famous 'Vanashakti' judgment, which barred grant of Post-Facto **Environmental Clearances (EC)**.

Case Background

- **Requirement of Prior EC:** Under the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006, any new project, or expansion/modernization beyond specified limits, must obtain prior EC.
- **Widespread Violations:** Many projects across India had already started operations or expanded capacity without obtaining prior EC. This led to a need for a mechanism to bring such violators into the regulatory framework.
- **2017 Notification (Violation Window):** Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEFCC) issued the 2017 Notification allowing ex post facto EC for projects operating without EC. Defaulting units had 6 months to apply. Conditions included:

heavy penalties

remedial action plans

community augmentation plans

mandatory closure/demolition if the project was illegal or environmentally unsustainable

- **2021 Office Memorandum (OM):** In compliance with NGT's order in *Tanaji B. Gambhire v Chief Secretary, Government of Maharashtra, 2020*, MoEFCC issued a 2021 OM with a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for identifying and processing violation cases. This SOP was operationalized in 2022.

- **Vanashakti vs Union of India (May 2025):** In 2023, environmental NGO Vanashakti and others challenged the legality of the 2017 Notification and 2021 OM. SC (two-judge bench) struck down the 2017 Notification and 2021 OM with following key findings:

- Ex post facto EC is alien to environmental jurisprudence.
- Allowing EC after construction defeats the precautionary principle.
- Violations occurring after the 2017 window were not protected.
- ECs already granted under these instruments were not disturbed.
- Centre barred from issuing any future circulars/OMs enabling post-facto EC or regularizing EIA violations.

- **Review Petition:** Filed by Confederation of Real Estate Developers of India (CREDAI), supported by the Union and several State governments sought review of the Vanshakti judgement. Main arguments made were-

- Vanshakti ignored binding SC precedents (per incuriam-"through



What did the SC Rule?

A 2:1 majority (CJI Gavai & Justice Vinod Chandran; Justice Bhuyan dissenting) recalled the Vanshakti judgment.

Majority View (CJI Gavai & Justice Chandran)	Dissenting View (Justice Ujjal Bhuyan)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vanshakti was Per Incuriam: The earlier Bench ignored coordinate bench rulings permitting limited ex post facto EC. Judicial discipline requires referring disagreement to a larger bench, not striking down the mechanism.• Ex Post Facto EC Allowed in Rare, Exceptional Cases: Prior EC remains the norm under the EIA 2006. But the EPA, 1986 does not expressly prohibit retrospective EC. Past precedents show that post-facto EC can be granted with penalties when:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ the project is otherwise permissible in law,○ environmental concerns can be mitigated,○ shutting down/razing the project would be disproportionate.• Proportionality Must Guide Environmental Enforcement: Rigid enforcement may harm public interest. Demolition of completed public projects (hospitals, airports) wastes public funds and generates more pollution. The Court relied on <i>Bindu Kapurea v Subhashish Panda (2025)</i> to reaffirm a balanced approach, even in cases of violations.• Findings on the 2017 Notification & 2021 OM: They are restored for fresh consideration but not upheld. Their final constitutional validity will now be determined afresh.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strict Prior EC Requirement: Precautionary Principle is the backbone of environmental law. Grant of EC must always precede project activity; otherwise, the EIA process becomes meaningless.• Polluter Pays ≠ Legalisation: The principle allows compensation, not retrospective validation. Post-facto EC "normalizes illegality".• Prior SC Judgments do Not Legitimize Post-Facto EC: Decisions cited by the majority relied on Article 142 (complete justice) and thus do not create binding precedent. Therefore, Vanshakti was correct in holding that ex post facto EC is alien to environmental jurisprudence.

Implications of the Verdict:

- ✓ **Immediate Relief for Ongoing Projects:** The demolition/closure threat for projects that began without prior EC is removed, allowing stalled projects to resume the EC process.
- ✓ **"Prior EC" Remains the Core Principle:** The Court has not diluted the EIA framework- prior environmental clearance continues to be the legal default for all new projects.
- ✓ **Regulatory Continuity Restored:** The decision averts a regulatory vacuum and allows authorities to continue processing violation cases under the 2021 SOP until final judgment.
- ✓ **Emphasis on Proportionality:** The Court discouraged blanket demolition of completed public projects, stressing that it may cause more pollution and waste public resources.
- ✓ **Environmental Jurisprudence Remains Unsettled:** The core question whether post-facto EC is legally permissible remains open and will now be decided afresh.
- ✓ **Stronger Compliance Expectations for Future Projects:** The Court makes clear that future developments must strictly obtain prior EC; post-facto mechanisms should remain rare and exceptional.

lack of care"): Earlier coordinate benches had already accepted limited post-facto EC in: *Pahwa Plastics* (2022), *Electrosteel Steels* (2021), *D. Swamy* (2023), *Alembic Pharmaceuticals* (2020)- penalties but regularisation. Vanshakti never considered these decisions.

- **Massive economic and public interest harm:** AIIMS Odisha (962-bed hospital), Vijayanagar airport, major steel plants, highways, etc. were in **final stages** but could not obtain EC due to Vanshakti. Demolition would waste taxpayers' money/resources and disrupt essential public services.
- **Environmental cost of demolition:** Demolition and re-construction would cause more pollution.
- **The Environment (Protection) Act (EPA), 1986 does not explicitly prohibit post-facto EC:** Government argued it has power to create a limited mechanism to bring violators into compliance.



New Policy Framework for Relocating Tribals

The Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) prepared a new policy framework titled "Reconciling Conservation and Community Rights: A Policy Framework for Relocation and Co-existence in India's Tiger Reserves" detailing the procedures for implementing existing laws related to the relocation of forest-dwelling communities from tiger reserves.

What Does the Framework Propose?

- **National Framework for Community-Centered Conservation and Relocation (NFCCR):** Jointly issued by MoTA and MoEFCC to standardize procedures, set timelines and accountability, establish rights-based protocols for coexistence and relocation.
- **National Database on Conservation-Community Interface (NDCCI):** A real-time database to track relocation processes, compensation payments, post-relocation outcomes and compliance with laws.
- **Mandatory Independent Audits:** Annual audits by empaneled agencies to check adherence to FRA, 2006, Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA), 1972 and human rights norms.
- **Strong Consent Procedures:** Consent must be "free, prior, and informed" (FPIC) and must be obtained before notifying an area

What is the New Policy Framework?

It lays down **procedures, safeguards, and institutional mechanisms** to ensure that relocation of forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes (STs) and other traditional forest dwellers from tiger reserves is voluntary, a measure of last resort, scientifically justified, and compliant with FRA, while upholding equity and dignity. Crucially, it also affirms their right to continue living inside tiger reserves wherever coexistence is feasible.

Why Has This Policy Been Released Now?

- **Concerns Over Non-Implementation of Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006:** Multiple representations from State governments, Gram Sabhas (GSs), Civil society organizations to MoTA highlighted "serious concerns" about poor implementation of FRA inside tiger reserves and protected areas.
- **Backlash To NTCA's 2024 Directive:** In June 2024, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) directed States to prioritize relocation of villages from core tiger habitats. This triggered widespread protests by GSs, complaints to the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST), requests for the directive to be withdrawn.
- **Rising Relocation Numbers:** As per the Environment Ministry (Aug 2024)- 5,166 families from 56 villages relocated since January 2022, 591 villages and 64,801 families still live within core tiger reserve areas. Concerns were raised about forced or induced relocation, non-recognition of rights before displacement and absence of basic services for those opting to stay.
- **Judicial and Administrative Disputes:** Examples like the Jenu Kuruba community case in Nagarhole National Park, Karnataka show ongoing conflicts over rights recognition. Because of these persistent problems, MoTA asserted the need for a clear national framework that harmonizes conservation objectives with community rights.

Key Challenges in Relocating Forest Dwellers

- **Incomplete recognition of FRA rights:** before relocation, leading to disputes over land, livelihood, and community forest rights.
- **Coercive or induced relocation:** where consent is not truly free, prior, or informed.
- **Poor Quality of Rehabilitation Sites:** with inadequate housing, water, healthcare, education, and livelihood opportunities.
- **Loss of Cultural and Spiritual Ties:** to ancestral forests, affecting identity and social cohesion.
- **Livelihood Insecurity:** as traditional forest-based occupations cannot be easily replicated post-relocation.
- **Weak Institutional Coordination** between MoEFCC, MoTA, State Forest Departments, and district authorities.
- **Lack of Transparent Monitoring:** leading to misuse of funds, incomplete support, and non-compliance with guidelines.
- **Conflict with Conservation Priorities:** where wildlife protection is prioritized without exploring coexistence options.
- **Undermines Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** Poorly planned relocations undermine SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 3 (Good Health and Well-being), 4 (Quality Education), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 8 (Decent Work) and 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

as a tiger reserve or Critical Tiger Habitat (CTH). It must be verified at both GS and household levels, and independent Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) must facilitate the process.

- **Affirmation of the Right to Remain:** Communities may choose to stay inside the reserve and exercise Individual Forest Rights (IFR), Community Forest Rights (CFR) and Habitat rights. In such cases, authorities must provide *in-situ* developmental services, include GS members in Tiger Conservation Foundations and Eco-Development Committees (EDCs) and develop coexistence models for replication.
- **Strengthening Governance and Grievance Redressal:** It suggests appointment of Compliance and Safeguards Officer in each tiger reserve; establishing a three-tier grievance mechanism: District - State - National. SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 can apply for illegal dispossession.
- **Voluntary Relocation Safeguards:** If relocation is chosen, it must be scientifically justified, must follow FRA Section 4(2) procedures. Compensation must match current guidelines (₹15 lakh), with transparency. Long-term livelihood restoration and monitoring is mandated.

- FRA Section 4(2) provides that forest rights in Critical Wildlife Habitats (CWHs) can be modified/ resettled only if:
 - rights recognition is fully completed;
 - scientific evidence proves that human presence causes irreversible harm to wildlife;
 - coexistence is not feasible;
 - a livelihood-secure rehabilitation package is prepared;
 - the Gram Sabha gives 'free, informed, written consent (FPIC)'; and
 - resettlement sites are fully ready before relocation. Further, any CWH cleared of rights holders cannot be diverted for other uses.

Way Forward

- **Strengthen GSs:** through capacity building, legal-aid cells and access to scientific data.
- **Transparent Implementation of FPIC:** Use third-party facilitators; publish consent proceedings.
- **Develop Coexistence Models:** Pilot projects showing how communities can support prey-base conservation and traditional ecological knowledge can enhance biodiversity outcomes.
- **Ensure Long-Term post-relocation support:** Relocation should focus on **livelihood security**, not just compensation.
- **Fix accountability:** Penalize coercive relocation and enforce SC/ST Act where necessary.

Significance of the Framework	Concerns and Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthens Rights-Based Conservation: by reaffirming that FRA grants legally enforceable rights, making relocation permissible only after full rights recognition and only on overwhelming ecological necessity. • Empowers Community Self-Determination: by placing Gram Sabhas at the center of decisions on coexistence or relocation, in line with PESA and 5th Schedule provisions. • Ensures Equity and Non-regression: mandating that relocation must not worsen living standards and must guarantee like-for-like or improved livelihood, infrastructure, and cultural continuity. • Promotes Scientific and Transparent Decision-Making: requiring independent ecological evidence to prove irreversible harm and mandating public scrutiny of assessments before relocation is considered. • Enhances Accountability and Governance: through independent audits, public dashboards, and oversight mechanisms to prevent coercion or misuse of conservation laws. • Provides Community-Led Pathways: Coexistence, representation in conservation bodies, livelihood diversification, and integration of traditional knowledge; and Voluntary relocation, with comprehensive compensation, long-term livelihood restoration, cultural safeguards, and GIS-based monitoring. • Shifts India Away from 'Fortress Conservation': towards a participatory, rights-based conservation model where communities are recognized as partners and frontline custodians of biodiversity. • Creates a Unified National Protocol: for rights-compliant conservation by promoting joint MoTA-MoEFCC standards, ensuring consistency, justice, and ecological integrity across tiger reserves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-Ministerial Friction: MoEFCC and NTCA may resist increased oversight by MoTA. • Implementation Capacity: GSs often lack administrative support. State Forest Departments may not fully accept community rights. • Possibility of Procedural Dilution: Consent processes can be manipulated without proper safeguards. • Lack of Independent Oversight at Ground Level: Ensuring unbiased ecological assessments and audits may be difficult. • Challenge of Balancing Wildlife Science with Community Presence: Tiger biologists and conservationists sometimes argue that coexistence is not compatible with reproductive success in tigers.



SC Strikes Down Provisions of Tribunals Reforms Act, 2021

In a major ruling affirming the judiciary's role as the ultimate interpreter of the Constitution, the Supreme Court (SC) struck down the *key provisions* of Tribunals Reforms Act, 2021, stating that Parliament cannot re-enact a law previously declared unconstitutional.

Background of the Current Case:

- **The 2020 Tribunal Rules (under Finance Act, 2017):** gave the Union government major control over **appointments, tenure, and service conditions**- including a **4-year tenure**, reappointment by the executive, and **executive-heavy selection committees**.
 - SC struck down rules in *Madras Bar Association (MAB) versus Union of India, 2020* for **violating judicial independence**, and reiterated a **5-year tenure**, **uniform retirement age**, and **judicial dominance** in the selection process.
- **April 2021 Ordinance:** Despite clear judicial directions, the Centre issued an Ordinance restoring the **4-year tenure** and **minimum age 50**. The SC struck down these provisions again as **arbitrary and violative of separation of powers**.

- **Parliament's Re-enactment:** In August 2021, Parliament passed the **Tribunals Reforms Act, 2021** re-enacting the **same provisions** previously declared unconstitutional-triggering the current challenge by MAB. Its most contentious provisions were-

- **Minimum age of 50 years** for appointment of tribunal members; and
- **Four-year tenure** (with possibility of reappointment).

These provisions directly contradicted earlier SC directions recommending **five-year minimum tenure** and rejecting short terms as detrimental to independence.

What did the SC Rule?

- **Declared the Act Unconstitutional:** The Court held that Parliament cannot re-enact provisions already declared unconstitutional, and that the Tribunals Reforms Act, 2021 amounted to an impermissible legislative override because it simply reproduced the same defects earlier struck down-particularly concerning tenure, minimum age limits, and excessive executive control over appointments.

- **Rejected the Government's Arguments:** The Court refused the request to refer the matter to a larger Bench, calling it a delaying tactic; emphasised that tribunal independence is a constitutional mandate, not a mere policy choice; and noted that the Act was a verbatim restatement of previously invalidated provisions, thereby violating the doctrine of constitutional supremacy.
- **Directions Issued by the Court:** **National Tribunals Commission** to be established within **four months** to oversee appointments, administration, and functioning of tribunals. Government must ensure **timely appointments** and avoid repeating unconstitutional provisions in future laws. Until new compliant legislation **earlier judicial norms to continue i.e.- Five-year tenure; No minimum age of 50 years and Judicial majority** in selection committees.

Significance of the Judgment

- **Reasserts Constitutional Supremacy:** Reinforces that Parliament cannot circumvent judicial rulings by re-enacting provisions already struck down thereby preventing Legislative Override

What is a Tribunal?



A **tribunal** is a quasi-judicial body created by law to adjudicate specialized disputes such as those related to **administration, taxation, environment, corporate law, telecom, and foreigner determination**. They function as an **alternative to regular courts**, offering speedy, expert, and cost-effective dispute resolution. Its key functions include adjudicating disputes; determining rights/liabilities; making administrative decisions; and reviewing earlier administrative actions.

Salient Features of Tribunals

- **Natural Justice:** Follow fair hearing and impartiality; flexible procedures.
- **Not bound by Civil Procedure Code (CPC):** Can adopt simple, informal procedures to ensure speed.
- **Subject Expertise:** Include technical members (e.g., environmental scientists, company law experts).
- **Quasi-Judicial Powers:** Examine evidence, summon witnesses, and give binding decisions.
- **Appellate Structure:** Tribunals in India function either as substitutes for High Courts (HCs) where appeals go directly to the SC or as bodies subordinate to HCs, where their decisions are appealed before the concerned HC.
- **Time-efficient:** Designed to reduce court burden and provide faster justice.

Constitutional Basis: Originally absent from the Constitution, tribunals were added through the **42nd Amendment (1976)** by inserting Part XIV-A with two articles:

- **Article 323A:** Empowers Parliament to establish Administrative Tribunals (at Centre and State) for adjudicating disputes related to recruitment and service conditions of public servants.
- **Article 323B:** empowers Parliament or state legislatures to create tribunals for issues like taxation, land reforms, etc.

Legal Basis: In line with Article 323A, **Parliament enacted the Administrative Tribunals Act, 1985**, empowering the Centre to establish Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) and State Administrative Tribunals.

Evolution of Tribunals

- **1941: First tribunal- Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) set up** to reduce court pendency.
- **1976: 42nd Amendment inserts Articles 323A & 323B**, enabling administrative and sectoral tribunals based on Swaran Singh Committee recommendations.
- **1980s-2010s:** Rapid expansion- CAT, SAT, National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), National Green Tribunal (NGT) etc.
- **2017: Finance Act, 2017** merged tribunals; reduced number from 26 to 19 while giving the Centre power to frame rules on appointments and service conditions.
- **2021: The Tribunals Reforms Act, 2021** sought to abolish nine tribunals and shift their functions back to HCs and existing bodies.

- **Strengthens Judicial Independence:** Protects tribunals from excessive executive control by upholding judicial primacy in appointments and tenure.
- **Upholds Separation of Powers:** Clarifies that key aspects of tribunal structure- tenure, age criteria, selection are constitutional requirements, not executive policy choices.
- **Stabilises Tribunal Functioning:** Restores consistent rules (five-year tenure, no minimum age bar) ensuring continuity and predictability in tribunal administration.
- **Pushes Structural Reform:** Mandates the creation of a **National Tribunals Commission**, enabling long-term independence and better oversight of tribunals.
- **Addresses Vacancies and Delays:** Indirectly compels the government to fill posts promptly, improving access to justice and reducing pendency.
- **Reaffirms Judicial Review:** Strengthens HCs supervisory jurisdiction as part of the Constitution's basic structure.



The Seeds Bill, 2025

The Union Agriculture Ministry released the draft **Seeds Bill, 2025** and invited public comments.

Objective of the Bill

Aimed at updating the **Seeds Act, 1966** and the **Seeds (Control) Order, 1983**.

- ✓ It seeks to regulate sale, import, export, and distribution of seeds.
- ✓ It seeks to regulate quality, promote **ease of doing business**, reduce compliance burdens.

Key Provisions of the Bill

- **Applicability:** It will apply to seed producers (other than farmers), dealers and distributors. Farmers' rights to save, use, exchange and sell farm-saved seeds remain intact, except for sale under a brand name.

- **National Register of Seed Varieties:** A Central Registrar will maintain the register; only registered seeds may be sold (except farmers' and export-only varieties). Existing varieties get provisional registration for up to 3 years. The RSC evaluates applications based on multi-location Value for Cultivation and Use (VCU) trials, and the CSC approves, defers or revokes registration for misrepresentation, poor performance or public interest.
 - ➔ CSC may accredit Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Central Agricultural Universities (CAU), State Agricultural Universities (SAU) and other organizations for VCU trials; foreign organizations may also be recognized for this purpose.
- **Registration:** Seed producers, processing units, dealers, distributors and plant nurseries (nurseries within one year) must all be **registered with the State Government**, maintain prescribed records, furnish periodic information, and comply with the Act's standards, with registrations liable to **suspension or cancellation** for misrepresentation or violations. A **Central Accreditation System** will allow accredited companies to be **deemed registered** across States, while small nurseries may be exempted.
- **Regulation of Seed Sale & Certification:** Registered seeds may be sold only if they meet minimum quality standards and carry correct labels and a QR code under the Central Traceability Portal; misbranded seeds are banned, and the Centre may regulate prices in emergencies. States may set up Seed Certification Agencies, and other domestic or foreign agencies can be accredited. Certification is voluntary but must meet IMSCS standards, and certificates can be cancelled for violations.
- **Review and Appeals:** The CSC may **review its own decisions once** on limited grounds on new evidence, apparent error, or other recorded reasons. Appeals against decisions of the **RSC** can be made to the CSC, which may confirm, modify or set aside the order. Appeals against **State Government decisions** or penalties may be filed within 30 days before an **Appellate Authority** of 1-3 members, following the prescribed procedure.
- **Seed Analysis & Testing:** Government may set up Central/State Seed Testing Labs with qualified analysts. Seed Inspectors, appointed by States, can take samples, inspect records, search premises, and seize stock, following Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023 procedures.
- **Seed Import:** must comply with **Plant Quarantine rules**, meet **minimum germination, purity, trait and seed health standards**, and be **registered** based on multi-location trial data from the exporting country. The Centre may allow limited import of **unregistered varieties** for research and trials.
- **Offences and Penalties:** The Bill sets **graded penalties**:
 - ➔ **Trivial:** warning and ₹50,000
 - ➔ **Minor:** ₹1-2 lakh
 - ➔ **Major:** ₹10-30 lakh + possible registration cancellation or **up to 3 years' jail**
 - ➔ Penalties can be **compounded** and revised by the Centre.
 - ➔ **Farmers are exempt** for selling seed from their own holdings.
 - ➔ An **Adjudicating Officer** imposes penalties; courts act only on Seed Inspector complaints. Seeds involved may be **forfeited**, and company officials are liable unless they prove due diligence.
- **Miscellaneous:** The Centre can issue directions to States and CSC, grant exemptions, and make rules; CSC can make regulations. Actions in good faith are protected, the Act overrides other laws, and seed officials are public servants. Rules/notifications must be placed before Parliament, existing committees continue until replaced, and the Centre may issue limited orders to remove difficulties.

- **Central Seed Committee (CSC):** Centre will set up a CSC based in New Delhi consisting of a Chairman (Secretary of Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare) and 27 members. It will advise the government on **seed planning, production, quality standards, certification, testing** and registration of varieties.
 - Centre, on CSC's recommendations, will notify **Indian Minimum Seed Certification Standards (IMSCS)**-conforming minimum limit of germination, purity, seed health, traits), and **QR-code labelling/traceability norms**.
 - CSC will create **Registration Sub-Committees (RSC)** to examine applications and recommend varieties and may form other sub-committees as needed.
- **State Seed Committees (SSC):** Each State must constitute a **SSC** with a Chairperson and up to **15 members to advise on registration of State varieties**, and registration of **seed producers, processing units, dealers, distributors, and nurseries**.
 - Maintain **district-wise lists** of all seed-related entities.
 - Collect information on **seed stocks, prices and sales**, and advise the State Government and CSC on implementation of the Act.
- **Mandatory registration of seed varieties:** All varieties (except farmers' varieties and varieties produced exclusively for export) must be registered.

Changes from the 2019 Draft:

- **Penalties Strengthened:** Earlier penalties (₹25,000-₹5 lakh + 1 year jail) under consumer protection laws are replaced with a **graded system up to ₹30 lakh and 3 years' imprisonment**, with clearer categorization of offences.
- **Farmers' rights clarified:** The new draft explicitly aligns farmers' rights with the **Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act (PPVFR Act)**.
- **Stricter quality norms:** Minimum standards for **germination, purity, seed health and trait expression** have been tightened.
- **Liberalized imports:** Import provisions made more flexible, allowing **VCU-based registration** and easier entry of foreign varieties for trials and cultivation.

Concerns Raised Regarding the Bill:	Way Forward:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rising Costs & Corporate Control: Farm unions fear the Bill favours large seed corporations, enabling predatory pricing and threatening seed sovereignty. Mandatory registrations, VCU trials and traceability may increase seed costs and marginalize small farmers. • Weak Protection and Compensation: The Bill provides no simple or fast mechanism for compensation in cases of seed failure. Farmers must still approach courts, which is impractical for small and marginal farmers. • Threat To Farmers' Rights & Biodiversity Laws: Critics say the Bill may conflict with the PPVFR Act, 2001, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the ITPGRFA (<i>International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture</i>), weakening farmer-centric safeguards and biodiversity protection. • Exclusion of Community Seed Networks: FPOs, women's seed groups and traditional seed-saving collectives are treated as commercial entities, bringing heavy compliance burdens and discouraging grassroots conservation. • Corporate Bias & Digital Burden: VCU trials favour uniform, corporate-bred hybrids over diverse indigenous varieties. Requirements like QR codes, digital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a simple, time-bound compensation system for seed failure. • Ease compliance for small producers, FPOs and community seed groups. • Strengthen oversight of VCU trials and foreign seed entry to prevent biopiracy. • Improve digital access and training for meeting traceability requirements.

traceability and continuous reporting are cumbersome for those having limited digital access.

- **Risk of Foreign/GM Seed Entry:** Recognition of foreign VCU testing centres may create a **loophole** for genetically modified or patented seeds to enter India without adequate domestic scrutiny.

- **Promote conservation and registration of indigenous, climate-resilient varieties.**



SC Judgement on Seniority Criteria in HJS

A five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court (SC) while determining “the criteria for determining seniority in the cadre of **Higher Judicial Services (HJS)**, delivered significant directions while rejecting demands for a separate quota for promotee judges.

SC Directions in the Case

- **No Quota for Promotee Judges:** The SC held that “**perceived discontentment or heartburn**” cannot justify creating a new classification or quota. No evidence of a nationwide “common malady” of disproportionate representation was found to warrant judicial intervention.
- **Merit-cum-Seniority as the Basis:** Fixation in **Selection Grade** and **Super Time Scale** shall be based strictly on **merit-cum-seniority within the HJS, not on length of service or performance in lower courts.**
- **Advancement Opportunities Are Sufficient:** The Court observed that in-service officers already have **adequate avenues for advancement** under the existing structure.
- **Introduction of an Annual Four-Point Roster:** The SC prescribed a **new annual roster system** to determine seniority within the HJS filled by officers appointed in the particular year in the **repeating sequence** of two regular promotes (RPs), one promoted through Limited Departmental Competitive Examinations (LDCEs), and one direct recruit.

Case Background:

- **Two Entry Routes in the District Judge Cadre:**
 - ➔ **Promotion (75% quota):** Officers rise from the lower judiciary and typically reach the District Judge level in their mid-40s after years of service.
 - ➔ **Direct Recruitment (25% quota):** Candidates appointed directly from the Bar. Usually younger, joining in their mid-30s.
- **Framework Laid Down by the SC (2002):** In the All India Judges Association case (2002), the SC standardized HJS recruitment:
 - ➔ **75% promotion**, divided into:
 - ✓ 50% merit-cum-seniority + suitability test
 - ✓ 25% Limited Departmental Competitive Examination (LDCE) (fast-track promotion)
 - ➔ **25% direct recruitment** from the Bar.

The Court introduced the **40-point roster**, based on R.K. Sabharwal v. State of Punjab (1995), to ensure balanced seniority irrespective of date of joining.

- **Seniority Criteria and Implementation Issues:** Seniority is largely determined by **Date of Entry** into the cadre, and **Roster slot** under the 40-point system. Many High Courts (HCs) either **failed to implement the roster correctly** or applied it inconsistently, causing widening disparities. Because direct recruits join younger, the roster often places them higher in the **gradation/seniority list**, giving them longer tenure and faster progression.
- **Resulting Problem:** Promotees reach senior posts only close to retirement. This delays or limits eligibility for:
 - ➔ **Principal District & Sessions Judge**, and
 - ➔ **Elevation to the HC (Article 217(2)).**

The amicus curiae terms this an “**unintended structural disadvantage**” against promotee judges.

- **Few Evidence of Disparity**
 - ➔ **Bihar:** 86 direct recruits vs. 5 promotees among 91 Principal District Judges.
 - ➔ **Uttar Pradesh:** 58 direct recruits vs. 12 promotees.
 - ➔ **Bombay HC (2020–2025 elevations):** 16 direct recruits, 3 promotees.
- **Structural Consequence:** Younger direct recruits cluster at the top of the seniority list as promotees retire earlier. This **disproportionate representation** at senior levels heavily affects career progression and elevation chances for promotees.

Why the Issue Matters & What's at Stake?

- **Impact on HC Appointments:** Officers from the service stream (civil judges) form one of the two main sources of HC appointments. Eligibility for elevation depends on reaching the **District Judge level with adequate years of service**. Delayed promotions mean many promotees reach this stage too late, reducing their realistic chances of High Court elevation.
- **Loss of Trial-Court Expertise in Higher Judiciary:** Civil judges bring decades of experience in **evidence, procedure, and grassroots justice delivery**. If they retire before elevation, the High Courts and Supreme Court lose judges with rich trial-court grounding.
- **Effect on Morale and Institutional Strength:** Skewed promotions demotivate civil judges and deter talented lawyers from joining the service, weakening recruitment and retention.
- **Diversity in the Higher Judiciary:** Overrepresentation of direct recruits at senior levels may narrow the judiciary's experiential diversity and reduce the presence of judges in HCs and SC with deep trial-court exposure.

- ✓ This 2:1:1 ratio roster system, provides uniform and binding guidelines to address long-standing disputes over inter se seniority among officers recruited from the three different sources.
- ✓ If DR or LDCE positions remain vacant due to lack of suitable candidates, they may be filled by RPs—but only on RP roster points, ensuring no distortion of cadre structure.

Earlier Steps Taken by SC to Address the Issue (May 2025)

- **Restoration of LDCE Quota:** Reaffirmed that **25% of promotional posts** must be filled through the **LDCE**. Corrected the practice in several states that had reduced this quota to **10%**, limiting fast-track promotions.
- **Faster Pathway for Meritorious Officers: Reduced qualifying service** for LDCE eligibility from **5 years to 3 years**, enabling quicker advancement for efficient civil judges.
- **Ensuring Experienced Entry-Level Judges:** Restored the requirement that candidates for **entry-level civil judge posts** must have **at least 3 years of legal practice**. Based on feedback from High Courts about inexperienced recruits lacking courtroom maturity.
- **Prevention of Quota Distortions:** Directed that **all promotion quotas** must be calculated based on **total sanctioned cadre strength**, not existing vacancies. This prevents undercounting of promotional posts and maintains the intended balance between streams.



Labour Codes Notified

- The government has announced the implementation of four labour codes by consolidating the earlier 29 labour laws.
- The four Labour Codes include the Code on Wages, 2019, the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, the Code on Social Security, 2020 and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020.
- This historic reform ensures that workers gain easier access to security, dignity, health, and welfare measures, reinforcing India's commitment to a fair and future-ready labour ecosystem.

Rationale Behind Codification of Existing 29 Labour Laws

- The codification of 29 existing labour laws into 4 Labour Codes was undertaken to address long-standing challenges and make the system more efficient and contemporary.
- **Simplifying compliance:** Multiplicity of laws leads to difficulty in compliance.
- **Streamlining enforcement:** Multiplicity of authorities in different labour laws led to complexity and difficulty in enforcement.
- **Modernizing outdated laws:** Most labour legislations were framed during the pre-Independence era, necessitating alignment with today's economic realities and technological advancements.

Code of Wages, 2019

It aims to strengthen workers' rights while promoting simplicity and uniformity in wage-related compliance for employers.

Key Points

- **Universal Minimum Wages:** The Code establishes a **statutory right to minimum wages** for all employees across **both organized and unorganized sectors**.
 - Earlier, the Minimum Wages Act applied only to **scheduled employments** and those below the monthly wage of Rs 24,000 covering only around 30% of workers.

- **Introduction of Floor Wage:** A statutory floor wage shall be set by the Government based on minimum living standards, with scope for regional variation. No state can fix minimum wages below this level, ensuring uniformity and adequacy nationwide.
- **Uniform Definition of Wages:** Wages now include **basic pay, dearness allowance, and retaining allowance**; At least 50% of the total remuneration shall be used to compute wages, ensuring consistency in calculating gratuity, pension, and social security benefits.
- **Gender Equality:** Employers cannot discriminate on the basis of gender, including transgender identity, in recruitment, wages, and employment conditions for similar work.
- **Overtime Compensation:** Employers must pay all employees overtime wages at least twice the normal rate for any work done beyond the regular working hours.
- **Decriminalization of Offences:** The Code replaces imprisonment for certain first-time offences with monetary fines (up to 50% of the maximum fine), making the framework less punitive and more compliance-oriented.

Industrial Relations Code, 2020

The Code acknowledges the fact that survival of worker depends upon survival of industry. It simplifies laws related to trade unions, conditions of employment in industrial establishment or undertaking, investigation and settlement of industrial disputes.

Key Points

- **Broader Definition of Industry:** Includes all systematic employer-employee activities, regardless of profit or capital, widening access to labour protections.
- **Expanded Worker Definition:** Defines worker as any person (except an apprentice) employed in any industry to do any manual, unskilled, skilled, technical, operational, clerical or supervisory work for hire or reward.
 - Includes sales promotion employees, working journalists, and those employed in supervisory capacity drawing wages less than Rs 18,000.
- **Fixed Term Employment (FTE):** Allows direct, time-bound contracts with full parity in wages and benefits; gratuity eligibility after one year. The provision reduces excessive contractualization and offers cost efficiency to employers.
- **Re-skilling Fund:** To train retrenched employees, this fund has been set up from the contribution to be made by an industrial establishment for an amount equal to 15 days' wages for every worker retrenched.
 - This is in addition to retrenchment compensation. The amount will be credited to the workers account within 45 days of retrenchment.
- **Higher Threshold for Lay-off:** Threshold for seeking prior government approval for layoff, retrenchment and closure in factories, mines and plantations **hiked to 300 workers from 100**.
 - While industry states that this gives flexibility in hiring, unions have said that this provision eases hiring and firing.
- **Women's Representation:** Ensures proportional representation of women in grievance committees for gender-sensitive redressal.
- **Expanded definition of strike:** The definition of strike has been amended to **include mass casual leave**, wherein casual leave has been taken by **more than 50% of the workers** on a given day. This has been done to **discourage flash strikes**.
- **Strike notice:** In all industrial establishments, it is now **mandatory to give a 14 day notice** before going on a strike. Earlier this provision applied to public utilities like water, electricity, natural gas and other essential services.

- **Negotiating union/council:** A trade union with 51% membership of workers will be the sole negotiating union.
- If there is more than one trade union in an establishment, then the negotiating council will be formed with representatives of unions having 20% of workers as members, granting one seat for each 20% of verified membership.
- **Industrial Tribunals:** Two-member tribunals consisting of judicial and administrative member for quicker dispute resolution.
- **Direct Tribunal Access:** Parties may approach tribunals directly after failed conciliation within 90 days.

Code on Social Security, 2020

- **Expanded ESIC (Employees' State Insurance) Coverage:** ESIC now applies pan-India, eliminating the criteria of notified areas.
 - Establishments with fewer than 10 employees may voluntarily opt in with mutual consent of employers and employees.
 - ESIC cover is mandatory even if a single person is engaged in hazardous occupation, as against the minimum 10 workers norm at present. ESIC cover has been extended to plantation workers.
- **Inclusion of Gig and Platform Workers:** Defines gig and platform workers legally for the first time and extends social security cover to them.
 - Aggregators for gig workers to contribute 1-2% of annual turnover for social security (capped at 5% of payments to such workers).
- **Social Security Fund:** A dedicated fund to finance schemes for unorganised, gig, and platform workers, covering life, disability, health, and old-age benefits has been proposed.
 - The amount collected through the compounding of offences will be credited to this Fund and used by the Government.
- **Expanded Dependents:** Coverage extended to maternal grandparents and in case of female employees it also includes dependent parents-in-law, broadening family benefit access.
- **Gratuity:** Fixed-term employees become eligible for gratuity after one year of continuous service (earlier five years).
- **Inspector-cum-Facilitator System:** Inspectors will now act as facilitators with an objective to help employers comply with law, rules and regulations rather than merely policing them.

The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code 2020

The Code balances the twin objectives of **safeguarding worker rights and safe working conditions, and creating a business-friendly regulatory environment.**

Key Points

- **Unified Registration:** A uniform threshold of 10 employees is set for electronic registration. One registration for an establishment has been envisaged in place of 6 registrations in the Acts. This will create a centralised database and promote ease of doing business.
- **Simplified Compliance:** Introduces one license, one registration, one return framework for the establishments, reducing redundancy and compliance burden.
- **Revised Factory Thresholds:** Applicability increased from 10 to 20 workers (with power) and 20 to 40 workers (without power), reducing compliance burden for small units.

- **Wider Definition of Migrant Workers:** The definition of inter-state migrant workers (ISMW) now covers workers employed directly, through contractors, or migrate on their own. Establishments must declare the number of ISMW.
 - Benefits include: a lump-sum annual travel allowance to native place once in 12 months and portability of public distribution system and social security benefits across states along with access to a toll-free helpline.
- **National Database for Unorganised Workers:** A national database to be developed for unorganized workers including migrants to help migrant workers get jobs, map their skills and provide other social security benefits.
- **Women's Employment:** Women can work in all types of establishments and during night hours (before 6AM, beyond 7PM) with consent and safety measures, fostering equality and inclusion.
- **Safety Committees:** Establishments with 500 or more workers will form safety committees with employer-worker representation, enhancing workplace safety and shared accountability.
- **Victim Compensation:** Courts can direct at least 50% of fines imposed on offenders to be paid as compensation to victims or their legal heirs in case of injury or death.

Benefits of Labour Codes	Concerns with the new Codes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align labour laws with the current economic scenario by modernizing regulations in accordance with evolving work patterns, technological advancements, and economic realities. • Ensure the safety, health, social security, and wage security of every worker through a unified and comprehensive framework encompassing all categories of workers. • Enhance employment/job opportunities by simplifying procedures and encouraging a business-friendly environment that promotes investment and economic growth. • Protect workers' right& Facilitate easier compliance by introducing uniform definitions, single registration, single return, and simplified online systems for seamless adherence. • Encourage the use of technology in the administration of labour laws through digital registration, licensing, and inspections. • Strengthen transparency and accountability in enforcement through online, risk-based inspection mechanisms and objective implementation processes. • Achieve simplification, harmonization, and rationalization of the regulatory framework by consolidating multiple labour laws into four comprehensive Codes, ensuring consistency and reducing administrative burden. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Association of Indian Entrepreneurs (AIE) fear that the new Labour Codes may significantly increase operating costs for MSMEs and disrupt business continuity across key sectors. • Most of the Central Trade Unions (CTUs) have opposed the new Codes. As per them the codes will take away several federal rights, including the right to decide minimum wages in the States. • On social security, the CTUs claim that 93% of the workers are not covered under any social security and the codes have no provision to improve the scenario. • Also, the threshold of workers for factory licence has been increased and this will exclude a lot more workers from the social security and minimum wages provisions. • CTUs claim that the Industrial Code imposes unwarranted restrictions on the functioning of trade unions through limitations on membership, restrictions on outsiders serving as office-bearers, and the introduction of sole negotiating union and the negotiating council. • The right to strike has also been significantly curtailed through the new Codes. • Furthermore, the way wages have been defined, the allowance component will be restructured, leading to a reduction in the take-home pay component from the total remuneration.

PM Modi's Visit to Bhutan

PM Modi visited Bhutan to attend the 70th birthday celebrations of the fourth king of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck (K4), the father of the incumbent king, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck (K5).

Key Outcomes of PM Modi's Visit to Bhutan

• Hydropower Cooperation

- PM Modi and Bhutan's King Namgyel Wangchuck jointly inaugurated the 1,020 MW Punatsangchhu-II Hydroelectric Project, marking a major boost in India-Bhutan energy ties.
- The project increases Bhutan's hydropower capacity by nearly 40%, reinforcing its status as a 100% renewable energy producer.

• Financial Support

- India announced a ₹4,000 crore concessional line of credit for Bhutan's energy projects.
- PM Modi recalled India's earlier ₹10,000 crore support for Bhutan's Five-Year Plan, aiding development across sectors.

• Connectivity Projects

- India will link **Gelephu and Samtse** in Bhutan to its rail network, improving trade and people-to-people movement.
- A new immigration checkpoint near Gelephu will facilitate travel and investment for **Bhutan's "Mindfulness City" project**.

• New Agreements

- Three MoUs signed in renewable energy, mental health, and healthcare cooperation.
- India reaffirmed support for Bhutan's border infrastructure expansion.

• Cultural and People-to-People Ties

- PM Modi described India and Bhutan as "spiritual siblings", rooted in Buddhism.
- India will send a Sanskrit teacher to Gandan Monastery and digitize 1 million ancient manuscripts.
- A new MoU links Ladakh's Hill Council with Mongolia's Arkhangai Province, strengthening cultural exchange.



India-Bhutan Relations - Historical Depth and Enduring Friendship:

• Early foundations:

- The Fourth King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, ascended the throne in 1972 at age 16, continuing his father's policy of **close ties with India**.
- Appointed Chairman of Bhutan's Planning Commission (1971), he **coordinated the first Five-Year Plans** modeled on India's planning framework with Indian support since 1961.
- Pegged Bhutan's currency (Ngultrum) to the Indian Rupee at a 1:1 rate (1974), ensuring **stable bilateral trade and financial integration**.

• Hydropower cooperation - The economic backbone:

- Laid the foundation for Bhutan's hydropower partnership with India — the **Chukha** (336 MW), **Kurichhu** (60 MW), **Tala** (1,020 MW) projects, Mangdechhu (720 MW) and Punatsangchhu-II (1020 MW).
- These projects, built on a **grant-loan model** (60:40), became the bedrock of **Bhutan's export revenue and India's clean energy import**.

• Security cooperation:

- Spearheaded **Operation All Clear (2003)** with Indian support to eliminate insurgent camps of ULFA, NDFB, and KLO from Bhutanese soil.
- Strengthened **defence and border cooperation**, marking a milestone in regional security synergy.

• Democratic transition and treaty modernisation:

- Jigme Singye Wangchuck abdicated the throne in 2006, paving the way for Bhutan's **democratic transformation (2008)**.
- **India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty (2007)**, replaced the **1949** provision that Bhutan would be "guided by India" with mutual cooperation and sovereign equality.

2025 G20 Summit

- The 2025 G20 Leaders' Summit was held in **Johannesburg (South Africa)**, marking the **first-ever** G20 summit hosted on the African continent.
- South Africa's presidency followed those of Indonesia, India, and Brazil—making it the *fourth consecutive G20 presidency led by a Global South nation*.
- This continuity demonstrates a significant shift toward more inclusive global representation and highlights the increasing influence of emerging economies in shaping international economic and development agendas.
- The summit resulted in the adoption of the G-20 Leaders' Declaration by consensus—despite the **U.S. boycott** and attempts to block the text.

Key Outcomes

- **Theme of G20 Summit - Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability**
 - Leaders affirmed commitment to multilateralism, international law, peaceful dispute resolution, and condemned attacks on civilians.
- **Strengthening Disaster Resilience**
 - Countries endorsed investing in disaster risk reduction, preparedness, early-warning systems, and inclusive recovery—especially for SIDS and LDCs.
 - They adopted High-Level Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Principles.
- **Debt Sustainability for Developing Economies**
 - Recognizing rising debt distress, leaders endorsed debt transparency, IMF-World Bank reforms, and support for liquidity-strapped developing nations through the **G20 Common Framework**.

U.S.–South Africa Diplomatic Rift During the 2025 G20 Summit

- U.S. President Donald Trump boycotted the 2025 G20 Summit in Johannesburg, directing a complete U.S. absence from the event due to rising diplomatic tensions with South Africa.
- He accused the South African government of allowing **alleged human rights abuses** and violence against the **white Afrikaner community**—claims strongly rejected by South.
- A protocol disagreement further escalated the situation: Trump argued that South Africa denied proper recognition to a U.S. Embassy representative during the summit's closing ceremony.
- In retaliation, Trump declared that **South Africa would not be invited to the 2026 G20 Summit** in Miami (USA), demonstrating a significant diplomatic setback between the two nations.

India at 2025 G20 Summit

- **Reconsidering global parameters of growth**
 - The Indian PM argued current economic models have left many deprived of resources and caused over-exploitation of nature.
 - He stressed the need to **rethink development**, especially as Africa remains most affected.
- **"Integral Humanism"**
 - The Indian PM promoted Deen Dayal Upadhyay's Integral Humanism - holistic development of individuals and society through the integration of material and spiritual well-being.
 - It will provide an alternative to Western ideologies such as individualism, secularism, communism.
- **Key initiatives proposed by India**
 - **Global traditional knowledge repository:** For sustainable, culturally rooted, eco-balanced lifestyles.
 - **G20–Africa Skills Multiplier initiative:** India to train 1 million Africans in skill sectors.
 - **G20 Global Healthcare Response Team.**
 - **G20 Initiative on Countering the Drug–Terror nexus:** Highlighted fentanyl, drug trafficking, and terror financing.
 - **G20 Open Satellite Data Partnership:** Sharing agriculture, fishing, disaster data.
 - **Critical Minerals Circularity Initiative:** Recycling, sustainable mining, strategic minerals.
 - **Human-Centric Technology:** India called for **human-centric, globally beneficial, and open-source** technological development rather than finance-driven or exclusive systems.
- **Calls for a Global Compact on Responsible AI**
 - PM Modi emphasized that India's AI strategy is rooted in **accessibility, skilling, and responsible usage**.
 - He called for an international **"global compact on AI"** to ensure ethical deployment.
 - Key principles he proposed include **human oversight, safety-by-design, transparency, and strict bans on AI misuse** such as deepfakes, crime, and terrorism.
 - He invited all G20 nations to India's **AI Impact Summit** in February 2026.
- **India's diplomatic engagements**
 - ACITI Partnership (Australia–Canada–India) launched for technology and innovation, AI, clean energy, supply chain resilience.

- **Just & Inclusive Energy Transitions**

- Key decisions included tripling renewable capacity, expanding clean cooking access, promoting affordable financing, and supporting **Mission 300** for electrifying 300 million Africans by 2030.

- **Critical Minerals for Sustainable Growth**

- The G20 adopted a voluntary **Critical Minerals Framework** to expand exploration, promote local value addition, and ensure producer-country benefits.

- **Food Security and Ubuntu** (African philosophy Ubuntu: “I am because we are) **Approach**

- To combat hunger, leaders committed to resilient food systems, reduced food price volatility, and support for Africa’s agricultural capacity building.

- **Harnessing AI for Development**

- The summit launched the **AI for Africa Initiative**, focusing on skills, computing access, and ethical governance through the UNESCO-backed TPAF facility.

- ♣ The **UNESCO-backed TPAF facility** is the **Technology Policy Assistance Facility**, an initiative created in collaboration with UNESCO and announced during the 2025 G20 Summit.

Challenges Ahead

- Weak consensus on global conflicts: Almost no mention of Ukraine, Gaza. Makes it one of the weakest declarations in G20 history.
- Debt sustainability for developing nations: High interest rates for the same risk profile.
- Geopolitical fragmentation: US–South Africa tensions, rise of competing blocs.
- Inequality and resource deprivation: Current growth models unsustainable.
- Climate change: G20 responsible for the majority of emissions—yet slow collective action.



COP30

- The 30th UN Climate Conference (COP30) in **Belem, Brazil**, ended with a political agreement, known as the **Global Mutirao** (a tradition of community-driven action) **Agreement**.
 - **Global Mutirão Platform**: A digital initiative launched by Brazil to enhance collective global climate action and narrow the “pledge–implementation” gap.
 - COP 30 represented a critical juncture—the 10th anniversary of the Paris Agreement—focused on converting past pledges into tangible action, earning it the label of the **"COP of Implementation."**
- All 195 Parties adopted a “Belém Package” consisting of **29 decisions** covering multiple dimensions
- The agreement commits nations to prepare two major roadmaps: one to halt and reverse deforestation, and another to “transition away” from fossil fuels.
- The summit emphasised executing existing commitments rather than announcing new pledges.
- However, the removal of the **fossil fuel phase-out** reference from the final text sparked global criticism.
 - Over 80 countries, including the EU and small island nations, pushed for explicit language requiring a phase-out of fossil fuels.
 - However, major developing economies, **India, China, Russia, Saudi Arabia**, and **South Africa**, opposed binding phase-out language.
 - As a compromise, COP30 adopted a broad commitment to “transition away from fossil fuels”, but no timeline was fixed and no mandatory reduction pathway were formulated.

- **Future COP Hosts**

- o COP31 (2026): Türkiye
- o COP32 (2027): Ethiopia
- o **COP33** (2028): India — bid submitted

- **A COP Without the United States**

- o For the first time in three decades, the United States did not send an official delegation.
- o This absence dramatically changed the negotiation landscape, weakening the bargaining influence of developed countries.

Key Takeaways

- **Roadmap Focused on Ending Deforestation**

- ✓ The centrepiece of the conference was a strong political push to address global deforestation.
- ✓ COP30 President announced a dedicated deforestation roadmap, which countries will develop over the coming year.
- ✓ The roadmap is expected to mobilise:
 - ➔ Additional finance for forest conservation,
 - ➔ Cross-border cooperation to curb illegal logging,
 - ➔ Long-term strategies for restoring degraded landscapes,
 - ➔ Support systems for forest and indigenous communities.

- **Belem Health Action Plan**

- ✓ Strengthens climate-resilient health systems with a focus on equity and public participation.

- **Tropical Forests Forever Facility (TFFF)**

- ✓ \$125 billion target fund using satellite verification for forest conservation; Brazil commits first \$1 billion.
- ✓ India joined the TFFF as an observer.

- **Belem Political Agreement Gaps**

- ✓ Unresolved issues: climate finance (Article 9.1 – developed nations funding developing nations), EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)-like measures, fossil fuel phase-out, transparency requirements.

- **Open Planetary Intelligence Network (OPIN)**

- ✓ A new global collaboration to improve global climate data integration and digital cooperation.

- **Global Ethical Stocktake (GES)**

- ✓ Introduces ethics, justice, and civil society into climate accountability.

- **Belem 4X Pledge on Sustainable Fuels**

- ✓ Goal: 4x increase in sustainable fuels (biofuels, hydrogen, biogas) by 2035.

- **Belem Declaration on Hunger, Poverty & People-Centered Climate Action**

- ✓ Signed by 43 countries + EU; focuses on social protection and resilience for vulnerable populations.

- **National Adaptation Plan (NAP) Implementation Alliance**

- ✓ Accelerates adaptation finance and national climate resilience planning.

- **Global Mutirão Strategy**

- ✓ Community-driven approach to close pledge-delivery gaps in energy, finance, and trade.

- **Belém Gender Action Plan (GAP)**

- ✓ To strengthen gender equality and women's empowerment in climate action.

- **Just Transition Mechanism (JTM) Belém Action Mechanism – BAM**

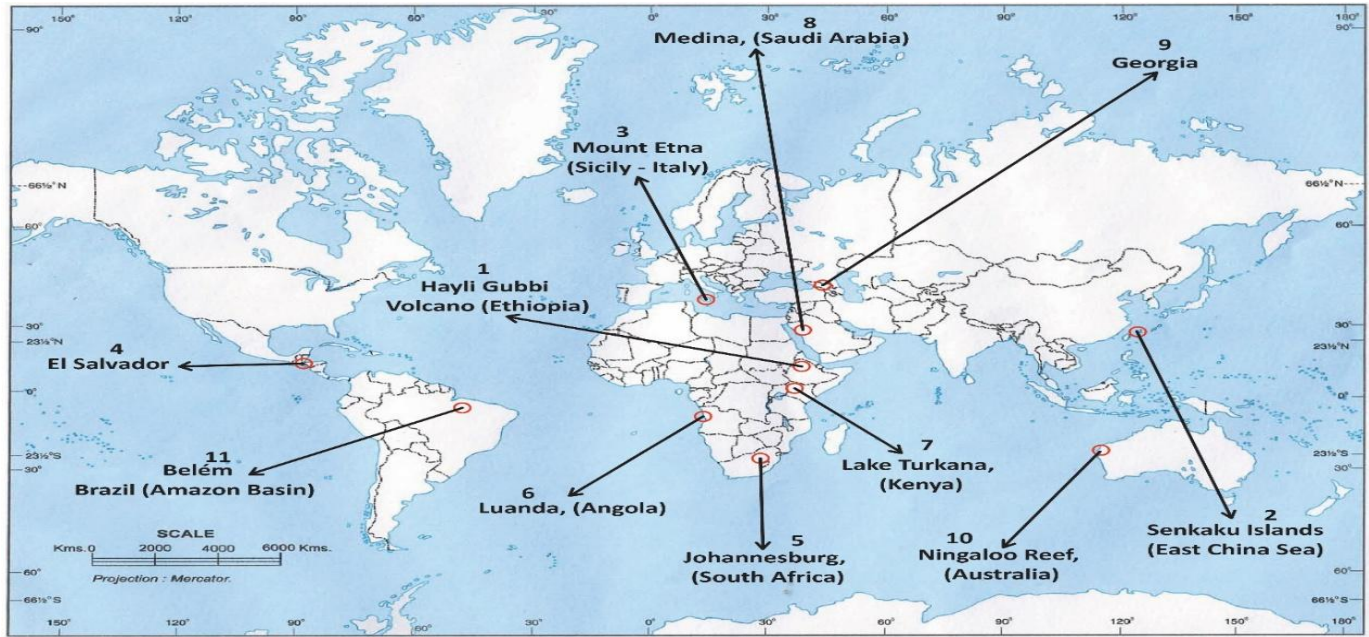
- ✓ A new mechanism adopted at COP30; does not introduce new or assured finance; focuses on a fair, inclusive, just transition.

India's Role and Stand at COP30

Key Issue	Details
Climate Finance as a Legal Obligation	India, along with the BASIC group (Brazil, South Africa, India, China) and the Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC), strongly emphasized Equity and Climate Justice . India demanded climate finance that is predictable, adequate, and grant-based , rather than loan-dependent models that increase debt burdens.
Paris Agreement – Article 9.1	India called for the full implementation of Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement and urged the adoption of a globally acceptable definition of climate finance .
Baku-to-Belém Roadmap (COP29)	India urged immediate mobilisation of funds to meet the US\$1.3 trillion climate finance goal established under the Baku-to-Belém Roadmap agreed at COP29.
Support for the CBDR–RC Principle	India reiterated the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC) , stressing the historical responsibility of developed nations.
Implementation of Climate Agreements	India demanded the full and effective implementation of all climate treaties — the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement.
Opposition to Trade-related Restrictions	India, China, and other developing countries opposed the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) , arguing that it is a discriminatory trade barrier imposed under the pretext of climate policy.

MAPS: PLACES IN NEWS

International Places in News

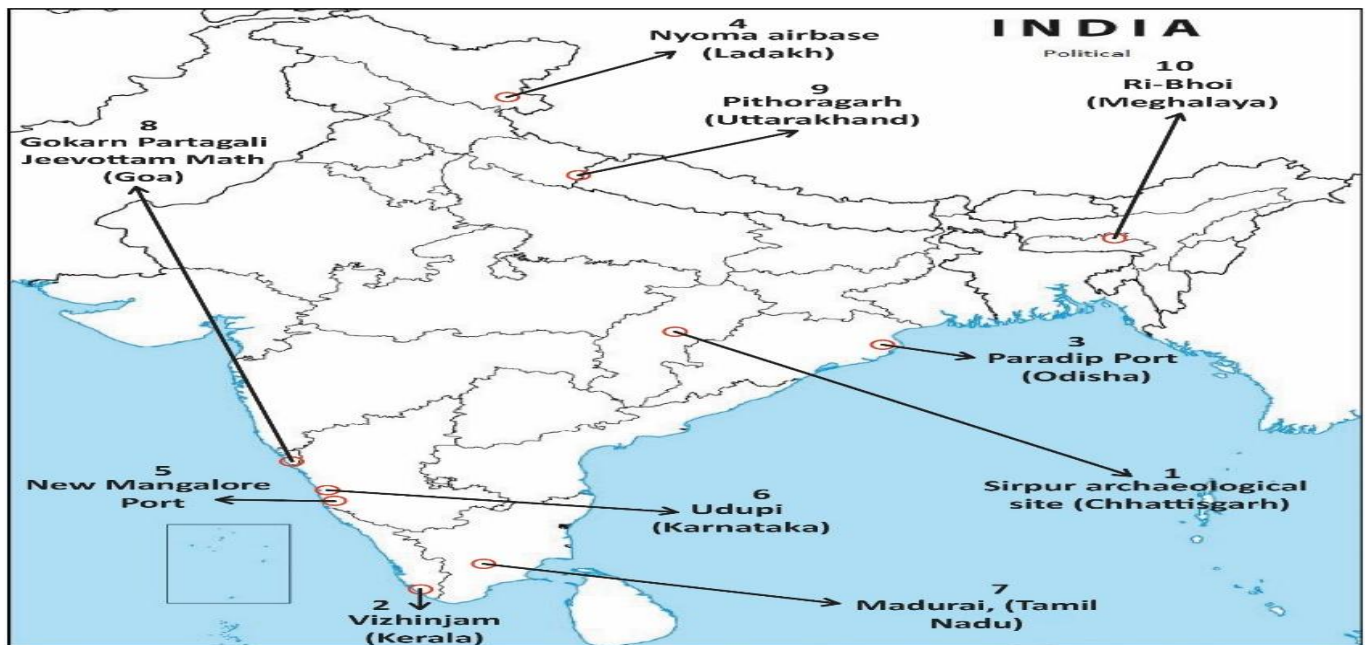


1	Hayli Gubbi Volcano (Ethiopia)	<p>A massive volcanic ash cloud from Ethiopia's Hayli Gubbi volcano—which erupted after nearly 10,000 years—has drifted toward India, raising concerns over air quality and aviation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Afar Region, northeastern Ethiopia. It is the southernmost volcano of the Erta Ale Range. • Tectonic Setting: Sits within the Afar Depression, which is the intersection point of three spreading tectonic plates—the Nubian Plate, the Somali Plate, and the Arabian Plate—known as the Afar Triple Junction. • Type: Classified as a Shield Volcano.
2	Senkaku Islands (East China Sea)	<p>Continuation of maritime tension as China Coast Guard ships reportedly conducted patrols near the Japan-administered islands.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: East China Sea, southwest of the Ryukyu Islands (Okinawa), northeast of Taiwan, and east of mainland China. • Claimants: Japan (administers, calls them Senkaku Islands). China (PRC) (claims, calls them Diaoyu Dao). Taiwan (ROC) (claims, calls them Diaoyutai Lieyu).
3	Mount Etna (Sicily-Italy)	<p>Europe's tallest and most active volcano, in news for potential seismic or eruptive activity, linking to plate tectonics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plate Boundary: Etna lies above a convergent plate margin where the African Plate is subducting beneath the Eurasian Plate. • Volcano Type: It is classified as a Stratovolcano (or composite volcano), built up over time by layers of hardened lava, ash, and tephra.
		<p>El Salvador signed an agreement with the USA regarding the deportation of criminals.</p>

4	El Salvador	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: Central America. It is the only Central American country without a Caribbean Sea coast, bounded by the Pacific Ocean to the south. Nickname: "Land of Volcanoes" which are part of the volcanic chain in the Sierra Madre mountains. This also provides potential for geothermal energy generation. Bitcoin as Legal Tender (2021): El Salvador became the first country in the world to adopt Bitcoin (BTC) as legal tender alongside the US dollar.
5	Johannesburg, (South Africa)	<p>Hosted the 2025 G20 Johannesburg Summit, the first time the G20 summit was held on African soil.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "The City of Gold" (eGoli): Johannesburg was founded in 1886 with the discovery of the world's largest known gold deposit on the Witwatersrand (White Water's Ridge). Unique Topography: Johannesburg is situated on the Highveld plateau at an elevation of over 1,750 meters. It is considered the world's largest city not situated on a major river, lake, or coastline, owing its existence entirely to the gold discovered beneath its land.
6	Luanda, (Angola)	<p>Venue of the 7th European Union–African Union Summit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Petro-State Engine: Angola is one of Sub-Saharan Africa's largest oil producers (ranking alongside Nigeria and Libya). Export Gateway: The city's port is critical for the export of crude oil, which historically accounts for over 90% of Angola's exports and a significant portion of its GDP and state revenue.
7	Lake Turkana, (Kenya)	<p>A new Nature Scientific Report found that falling water levels in East Africa's Lake Turkana over past 6,000 years accelerated earthquake activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location & Setting: Situated in the Eastern branch of the East African Rift System (EARS), a major divergent plate boundary where the African continent is splitting into the Somali and Nubian plates. Physical Characteristics: World's largest permanent desert lake and the world's largest alkaline lake. It is a closed-basin (endorheic) lake.
8	Medina, (Saudi Arabia)	<p>A tragic bus fire near Medina, Saudi Arabia, killed 45 Umrah pilgrims from Telangana, leaving only one survivor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Peace and Reflection: Unlike the ritual focus of Mecca, Medina is often viewed as a place of peace and introspection, where visitors reflect on the Prophet's life & the early years of the <i>Ummah</i>. Agriculture: Historically, the city was a thriving oasis known for its fertile soil, with a traditional focus on date cultivation, particularly the high-quality Ajwa dates. Other Holy Sites: Pilgrims visit other historically important sites, including the Quba Mosque (the first mosque built in Islamic history), Masjid al-Qiblatayn (where the direction of prayer (<i>Qibla</i>), was changed from Jerusalem to Mecca), and Mount Uhud (the site of the Battle of Uhud).
		<p>India has strengthened its textile and sericulture cooperation with Georgia during a high-level visit by the Central Silk Board delegation, including India's participation at the 11th BACSA International Conference – CULTUSERI 2025.</p>

9	Georgia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Situated at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, in the Transcaucasia region. It borders the Black Sea to the west, Russia to the north and northeast and Azerbaijan in the east. • Topography: It is a largely mountainous country, dominated by the Greater Caucasus Mountain Range in the north (home to the highest peak, Mount Shkhara and the Lesser Caucasus Mountains in the south.
10	Ningaloo Reef, (Australia)	<p>"Nearly 70% of corals at UNESCO-listed Ningaloo Reef have died due to Australia's most intense and prolonged marine heatwave ever recorded.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Extends for over 300 km along the arid North West Cape of Western Australia in the Indian Ocean. • The Leeuwin Current: A warm, south-flowing current that carries tropical species southward, contributing to the reef's high biodiversity despite the region's arid coastal setting. • Fringing Reef Status: Ningaloo is a fringing reef, meaning it is directly connected to or very close to the mainland shore (in some places, less than 500 meters offshore).
11	Belém Brazil (Amazon Basin)	<p>Brazil hosted the 30th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP30), which was held in Belém, the capital of the state of Pará.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique Hydrology: Belém is defined by the Amazon Estuary. It sits near the point where the main Amazon channel meets the sea. • Tidal Bore (Pororoca): The coastal area near Belém is famous for the Pororoca, a powerful tidal bore (a large wave that travels upriver) caused by the Atlantic tide meeting the massive outflow of the Amazon River.

National Places in News



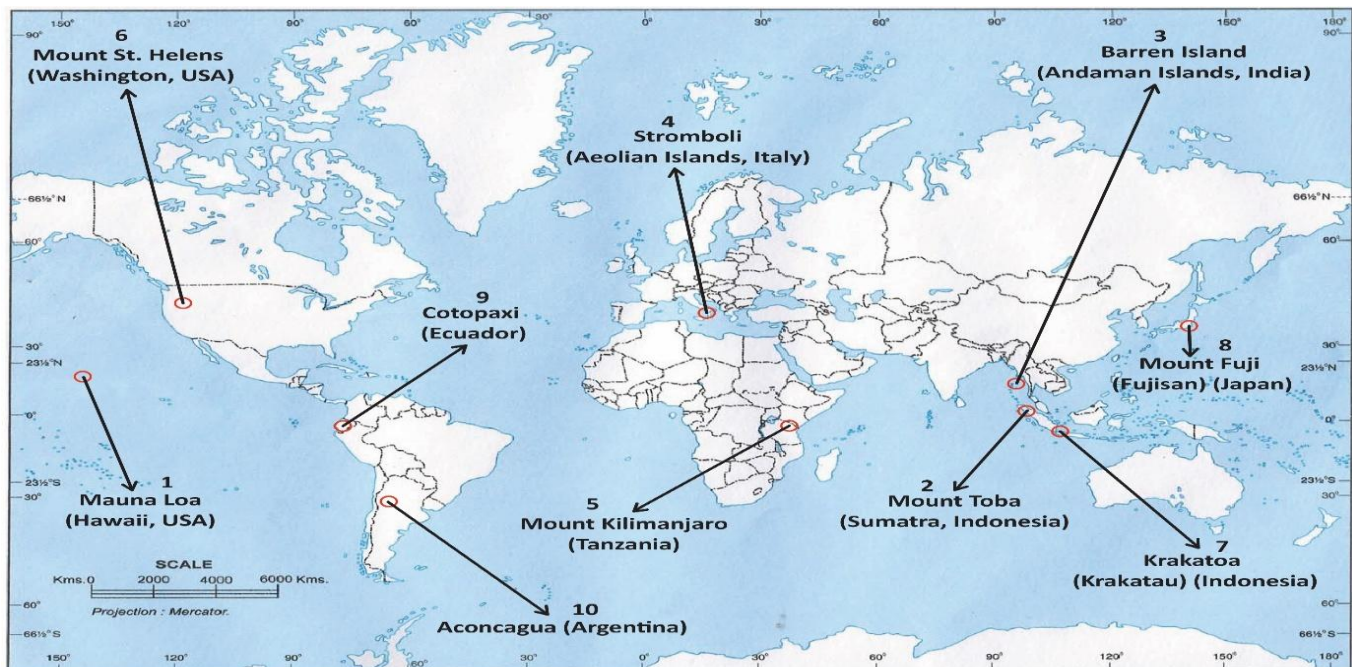
1	Sirpur Archaeological site (Chhattisgarh)	<p>The Sirpur archaeological site in Chattisgarh is being upgraded to secure a UNESCO World Heritage tag.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sirpur, also known as Shripur and Sripura is a 5th–12th century multi-religious urban centre first discovered in 1882 by Alexander Cunningham,
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		<p>a British army engineer who became the first Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in 1871.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Located on the banks of River Mahanadi, the site has 22 Shiva temples, 5 Vishnu temples, 10 Buddhist viharas and three Jain viharas, with the earliest monuments dating back to the 5th Century AD. The site was a major Buddhist centre with large viharas, meditation halls and excavated stupas. One monastery (Tivaradeva Mahavihara) houses a significant Buddha statue. One of the notable structures include the Lakshmana Temple (dedicated to Vishnu), one of India's finest brick temples, built around the 7th century. An example of early-medieval urban planning, Sirpur was the capital of Dakshina Kosala under the Panduvanshi and later Somavamshi kings.
2	Vizhinjam (Kerala)	<p>IIT Madras deployed India's first indigenous Vessel Traffic Management System (VTMS) at the international seaport.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: Located on the Arabian Sea coast, approximately 16 kilometers south of Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum), the state capital. Key Advantage: Natural Deep Draft (up to 20 meters) & can handle mega-max container ships (the world's largest) with minimal or no dredging. The port received its first mega-container ship in October 2023 for trial runs, marking a significant milestone towards operational status.
3	Paradip Port (Odisha)	<p>It achieved the fastest ever 100 million metric tonnes (MMT) cargo throughout in a fiscal year in November 2025, reaching this milestone 12 days earlier than the previous record.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: Situated at the confluence of the Mahanadi River and the Bay of Bengal. Port Type: It is a deep-water major port administered by the Central Government (under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways) The port handles large vessels due to its deep draft (16 m) and can accommodate sizeable bulk-carrier ships. Paradip is primarily a bulk cargo handling port and is one of the busiest in India by volume, often ranking among the top three.
4	Nyoma airbase (Ladakh)	<p>The Mudh-Nyoma airbase in eastern Ladakh was inaugurated in November 2025, at an altitude of approximately 13,700 feet.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location: Situated in the Nyoma block of eastern Ladakh. All-Weather Capability: The upgrade aims to make the base operable year-round, even during the harsh Himalayan winter. Strategic Role: Its proximity to the disputed LAC provides India with a forward operating base for rapid deployment, surveillance, and logistics support, especially for troops deployed in areas like the Chumar sector.
		<p>The Government of India has launched ₹1,500 crore worth of modernisation projects at the New Mangalore Port as part of its Golden Jubilee (50 years) celebrations in 2025.</p>

5	New Mangalore Port	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Situated on the West Coast of India, at the northern side of the Gurupura river confluence, near the city of Mangalore (Mangaluru). • Significance: It is the only major port of Karnataka and functions as the main outlet for the region's agricultural, industrial, and mineral produce. • Coffee and Cashew Trade: The port plays a vital role in India's export of premium cash crops like coffee and cashew nuts grown in the Karnataka hinterland (e.g., Coorg, Chikmagalur).
6	Udupi(Karnataka)	<p>The Prime Minister visited the Sri Krishna Matha in Udupi in connection with the legacy of Jagadguru Madhvacharya. The visit emphasized Udupi's role as the center of the Dvaita philosophy founded by Madhvacharya.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Udupi is often called the "Temple City" and the "Mathura of South India" due to its central religious significance • Sri Krishna Matha: The city's spiritual heart is the Udupi Sri Krishna Matha, a world-famous Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Krishna, specifically the form of Bala Krishna (infant Krishna). • Dvaita Vedanta: The temple was founded in the 13th century by the great Vaishnavite saint and philosopher, Sri Madhvacharya, who was the proponent of the Dvaita (Dualism) school of Vedanta philosophy. • Folk Arts (Tulunadu): Being part of the Tulunadu region (along with Dakshina Kannada), Udupi is a major center for traditional folk art forms such as Yakshagana (a vibrant night-long dance-drama), Naga Aradhane (serpent worship), and Kambala (traditional buffalo race).
7	Madurai, (Tamil Nadu)	<p>The Madurai hosted 2025 Men's FIH Hockey Junior World Cup.</p> <p>Madurai, known as "The City that Never Sleeps", is the cultural capital of Tamil Nadu and one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancient Capital: Madurai served as the capital of the ancient Pandyan Kingdom (one of the three great Tamil dynasties) from the 6th century BCE to the 16th century CE.
8	Gokarn Partagali Jeevottam Math (Goa)	<p>PM Modi unveils 77-foot bronze Lord Ram statue at Gokarn Partagali Math in Goa.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philosophical Lineage: The Math follows the Dvaita school of Vedanta philosophy, established by Jagadguru Madhvacharya in the 13th century. • Saraswat Identity Anchor: The Math is considered the first Gowd Saraswat Brahmin Vaishnava Math and has historically served as the emblem of Saraswat identity • 550th Anniversary: The Math has recently marked its 550th-year celebration (Sardha Panchashatamanotsava)
9	Pithoragarh (Uttarakhand)	<p>India hosted the 19th Indo-Nepal Joint Military Exercise SURYAKIRAN XIX in Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Border Location: Pithoragarh is the easternmost district of Uttarakhand and holds immense strategic importance. It shares international boundaries with: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tibet/China to the North (separated by the Great Himalayas). 2. Nepal to the East (separated by the Kali River). • Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra: Pithoragarh is the traditional gateway and one of the main starting points for the Hindu pilgrimage route to Mount Kailash and

		<p>Lake Manasarovar via the Lipulekh Pass (although currently restricted/contested).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographical Layout: The town is nestled in the Soar Valley
10	Ri-Bhoi (Meghalaya)	<p>A new fruit fly species, <i>Euphranta undulata</i>, has been discovered in the bamboo ecosystems of the Ri-Bhoi district in Meghalaya.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gateway to Shillong: The district hosts the main stretch of the National Highway 6 (NH-6), which is the lifeline connecting the Brahmaputra Valley (Assam) to the Shillong Plateau. • Dominant Tribe: The district is predominantly inhabited by the Khasi tribe, an indigenous ethnic group of Meghalaya.

Important Volcanoes of World



1	Mauna Loa (Hawaii, USA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shield Volcano. Formed over the Hawaii Hotspot (intra-plate volcanism), not near a plate boundary. • World's largest active volcano by volume, covering over half of Hawaii's Big Island. • Erupts fluid, low-viscosity basaltic lava, leading to gentle slopes and non-explosive eruptions.
2	Mount Toba (Sumatra, Indonesia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervolcano/Caldera. Located on the subduction zone boundary of the Indo-Australian and Eurasian plates. • Site of a catastrophic super-eruption ~74,000 years ago, creating the massive Lake Toba caldera.
3	Barren Island (Andaman Islands, India)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stratovolcano. Formed by the subduction of the Indian plate beneath the Burma plate. • India's only confirmed active volcano in South Asia. Its eruptions, though usually small, are a key indicator of continued tectonic activity in the Andaman Sea.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stratovolcano. Part of the Campanian Volcanic Arc.

4	Stromboli (Aeolian Islands, Italy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Known as the "Lighthouse of the Mediterranean" because of its continuous, mild, and highly regular eruptions that are visible at night. These small, frequent bursts define the Strombolian type of eruption.
5	Mount Kilimanjaro (Tanzania)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stratovolcano (Dormant). Intra-plate volcanism associated with the East African Rift Valley. It is Africa's highest peak and the world's largest solitary mountain. Its three cones (Kibo, Mawenzi, Shira) are a major focus of climate change study due to its rapidly disappearing glaciers.
6	Mount St. Helens (Washington, USA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stratovolcano. Part of the Cascade Volcanic Arc (Ring of Fire), formed by the subduction of the Juan de Fuca Plate beneath the North American Plate. The 1980 eruption was the deadliest and most economically destructive volcanic event in US history.
7	Krakatoa (Krakatau) (Indonesia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caldera/Stratovolcano remnants. Located in the Sunda Arc (part of the Ring of Fire), resulting from the subduction of the Australian plate beneath the Sunda plate. The 1883 eruption was one of the most catastrophic in recorded history, generating a colossal tsunami (killing >36,000 people) and causing a global drop in temperature for five years. Famous for producing the loudest sound ever recorded.
8	Mount Fuji (Fujisan) (Japan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stratovolcano. Located where the Eurasian, Pacific, and Philippine Sea plates meet (Ring of Fire). Japan's highest peak and most famous national symbol. It is a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site (not Natural)
9	Cotopaxi (Ecuador)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stratovolcano. Part of the Andean Volcanic Belt, formed by the subduction of the Nazca plate beneath the South American plate. One of the world's highest active volcanoes. It is a massive risk due to the thick ice cap at its summit, posing a major threat of catastrophic lahars (volcanic mudflows) to surrounding cities.
10	Aconcagua (Argentina)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stratovolcano (Dormant/Extinct). Part of the Andes mountain range. Highest peak in the Americas, and the highest peak outside of Asia. Although inactive now, its origin is volcanic, highlighting the scale of volcanism along the Andean subduction zone.

Bharat NCAP 2.0

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has released a revised draft of the **Bharat New Car Assessment Programme (Bharat NCAP)**, updating the 2023 version that is valid until September 2027.

The new draft significantly broadens the programme's scope by adding new mandatory crash tests, revised scoring criteria, and expanded assessment verticals.

A major shift in the draft is the inclusion of **vulnerable road user (VRU)** protection tests, especially for pedestrians, who make up over 20% of road accident fatalities in India. For the first time, vehicles will be evaluated on **pedestrian safety** features such as impact protection, braking systems, and design elements that reduce injury risks.

Bharat NCAP: India's Vehicle Crashworthiness Rating System

- Bharat New Car Assessment Programme (Bharat NCAP) is a **voluntary** vehicle safety rating system that evaluates cars based on **crashworthiness**, going beyond basic roadworthiness requirements.
- Cars are tested using India-specific crash protocols, and those performing best receive a five-star safety rating.
- Designed to give Indian consumers clearer safety information, Bharat NCAP aligns with global NCAP models but adapts them to Indian conditions and technologies.
- **Central Institute of Road Transport (CIRT)**, Pune, is the authorised agency for issuing Bharat NCAP ratings.

Key Changes Proposed in Bharat NCAP 2.0

- **Expanded Safety Assessment Framework**
 - Bharat NCAP 2025 broadens its evaluation method.
 - Instead of the earlier three verticals — AOP (Adult Occupant Protection), COP (Child Occupant Protection), and SAT (Safety Assist Technologies) — the new programme rates vehicles across five assessment areas:
 - Safe Driving – 10%
 - Accident Avoidance – 10%
 - Crash Protection – 55%
 - Vulnerable Road User Protection – **20% (pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists)**
 - Post-Crash Safety – 5%
 - This gives a more holistic picture of a vehicle's overall safety performance.
- **More Comprehensive Crash Tests**
 - The earlier version required three crash tests based on speed.
 - Bharat NCAP 2.0 increases this to five mandatory crash tests:
- **Enhanced Injury Assessment**
 - Using Anthropomorphic Test Devices (ATDs) (crash-test dummies), the new draft evaluates injury risk for:

Adult occupants	Driver, front passenger and rear-seat occupants	Child occupants
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 - This ensures a more precise measurement of protection across all seating positions.

Revised Star Rating System Under Bharat NCAP 2.0

- The thresholds for 4-star and 5-star ratings have been raised to 65 and 80 points, up from 60 and 70 in the 2023 framework.

- Thresholds for 1-star, 2-star, 3-star ratings are fixed at 30, 40, and 50 points, respectively.
- **Additional safeguards include:**
 - A 5-star vehicle cannot score zero in any assessment vertical; otherwise, its rating is capped at 4 stars.
 - No injury values in the red zone for adult or child ATDs (Anthropomorphic Test Device — commonly known as a crash test dummy) are permitted in a 5-star rating before modifiers are applied.

Reforming State PSCs

The 2025 National Conference of State Public Service Commissions (PSCs), hosted by the Telangana State PSC, has brought renewed focus on the longstanding challenges affecting State PSCs.

Structural Differences Between UPSC and State PSCs

- **UPSC's Strong Governance Framework:** The Union government institutionalised recruitment processes by creating the **Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions** (1985), enabling regular manpower planning and timely declaration of vacancies. The UPSC operates in a politically insulated environment, ensuring independence and professionalism. Members generally:
 - Are above 55 years of age,
 - Have rich experience in public administration,
 - Come from diverse zones of the country.
- **State PSCs' Politicised Environment:** In contrast, State PSCs function in a “politically osmotic environment”, where:
 - Appointments tend to reflect political proximity rather than experience,
 - States lack dedicated personnel ministries,
 - Vacancies are declared irregularly due to fiscal constraints,
 - Exams are conducted infrequently, leading to widespread litigation and delays.

Procedural Challenges Undermining State PSC Efficiency

- **Irregular Syllabus Updates and Academic Limitations:** Unlike the UPSC, which periodically appoints committees of academicians, civil servants, and experts, State PSCs do not frequently update their syllabi. They also:
 - Depend heavily on limited academic resources within the State,
 - Struggle to ensure objective evaluation due to weak moderation mechanisms.
- **Complex Reservation and Regional Quota Calculations:** State PSCs face significant challenges in applying:
 - Vertical reservations,
 - Horizontal reservations,
 - Regional (zonal) reservations are especially visible in States like Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. This often leads to errors and legal disputes.
- **Recurring Examination Controversies**

Paper leaks

Frequent judicial interventions

Errors in evaluation and translation

Lack of confidentiality protocols

Reform Measures to Strengthen State PSCs

- **Institutional and Manpower Reforms**
 - Institutionalise manpower planning,
 - Provide a five-year roadmap of vacancies,
 - Ensure predictable exam cycles.
- **Constitutional Amendments for Professional Appointments:** The 41st Constitutional Amendment (1976) raised the PSC member age limit from 60 to 62. Experts suggest further modifications:
 - Minimum age: 55 years,
 - Maximum age: 65 years,
 - Mandatory qualifications, e.g., former State Secretary for official members, 10 years' professional experience for non-officials,
 - Consultation with the Leader of the Opposition, ensuring bipartisan selection.
- **Exam Reforms for Fairness and Transparency**
 - Periodic syllabus revision with public consultation,
 - Objective-type testing for State-specific subjects,
 - Mixed question formats (objective + descriptive) in mains,
 - Improved translation processes using technology plus human verification,
 - Frequent changes in question patterns to reduce overreliance on AI tools by candidates.
- **Strengthening Administrative Leadership:** The Secretary of State PSC should be a senior officer with experience in school or intermediate education boards. This would enhance oversight of examination processes.

High Pendency and Staffing Gaps in Juvenile Justice Boards

A first-of-its-kind study by the **India Justice Report (IJR)** has revealed that more than 55% of cases before India's Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs) were pending as of October 31, 2023, highlighting systemic gaps in staffing, data management, and infrastructure.

- The findings from 21 States, show that JJBs have disposed of less than half of 1,00,904 cases filed before them.

Status of Juvenile Justice Boards Across India

- According to the IJR study, while 92% of India's 765 districts have constituted JJBs, the pendency rate is alarmingly high and varies widely:
 - **Odisha:** 83% pendency
 - **Karnataka:** 35% pendency
 - **National Average:** 55% pendency
- Moreover, 24% of JJBs are not fully constituted, and 30% lack an attached legal services clinic, both essential for delivering child-centric justice.

Findings from the India Justice Report Study

- The report titled "**Justice and Children in Conflict with the Law: A Study of Capacity at the Frontlines**" evaluates the functioning of institutions created under the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**.

- **High Pendency and Workload**
 - Each JJB handled an average of 154 pending cases annually, reflecting a serious mismatch in caseload and capacity.
- **Staffing and Infrastructure Shortfalls**
 - Major vacancies in JJB positions, particularly social workers and support staff,
 - Insufficient funds for training and capacity-building,
 - Lack of child-friendly infrastructure in many districts.
 - These gaps directly affect the quality and timeliness of hearings.
- **Poor Data Systems and Transparency**
 - Unlike the National Judicial Data Grid for courts, no central repository exists for JJB data. RTI responses revealed:
 - **11%** of queries were rejected outright,
 - **24%** received no reply, 29% were transferred to districts,
 - Only **36%** received responses.
- **High Number of Juveniles Apprehended**
 - 40,036 juveniles were apprehended in 31,365 cases,
 - Over 75% were aged 16-18 years, indicating a rising trend of older adolescents entering the justice system.

Structural Gaps in the Juvenile Justice Architecture

- The IJR study highlights that despite a decade since the JJ Act 2015, the decentralised juvenile justice architecture remains weak:
- **Inter-Agency Coordination Deficit**
 - The four nodal agencies, Police, Department of Women & Child Development, State Child Protection Society (SCPS), and State Legal Services Authority (SLSA), often operate in silos.
 - More than 500 RTI queries were submitted across 28 States and 2 UTs, covering 530 districts. The fragmented responses reflect poor coordination and monitoring.
- **Inadequate Legal Support**
 - With **30% of JJBs lacking legal aid clinics**, many children face the system without proper defence representation, contrary to the child-centric principles of the JJ Act.
- **Vacancies in Child Care Institutions**
 - Not just JJBs, but even child care institutions suffer from significant staff shortages, affecting rehabilitation and reintegration efforts.

Way Forward

- To strengthen the juvenile justice ecosystem, experts recommend:
 - Establishing a **National Juvenile Justice Data Grid**,
 - Filling vacancies across JJBs and child care institutions,
 - Ensuring the availability of legal aid services in all districts,
 - Enhancing inter-agency data sharing,
 - Increasing budgetary allocations for child protection services,
 - Regular monitoring and public reporting of JJB functioning.

- Such reforms are essential for safeguarding children in conflict with the law and ensuring a fair, timely, and child-friendly justice process.

National Migration Survey in 2026 to Map Internal Mobility

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has announced a year-long National Migration Survey to be conducted from July 2026 to June 2027.

About National Migration Survey 2026

- The survey will be conducted under the aegis of the **National Sample Survey (NSS)**, which has been India's principal source of household-level socio-economic data since 1950.
- It will cover **almost all states and union territories**, except the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands**, due to logistical constraints.
- The **objective** of the survey is to generate **reliable and up-to-date estimates** of:
 - Migration rates and trends (rural-to-urban, inter-state, and intra-state)
 - Short-term and seasonal migration patterns
 - Reasons for migration (economic, social, educational, or marital)
 - Employment and income profiles of migrants
 - Return migration and its socio-economic effects
 - Impact of migration on household welfare and community development
- MoSPI has already released a **draft questionnaire and concept note** on its website and invited **public feedback and expert comments**

Key Features of the 2026 Migration Survey

- **Revised Definitions and Improved Coverage**
 - The upcoming survey introduces updated definitions to capture modern migration trends more accurately.
 - A person will now be classified as a **short-term migrant** if they have stayed away from their usual residence for **15 days to six months** within the last year for employment or job search, a shift from the previous threshold of one to six months.
 - The survey will also focus on **individual migration patterns** rather than entire households, as the proportion of households migrating together has historically been low.
- **Comprehensive Scope of Data**
 - The questionnaire includes **new questions** designed to assess the broader **impact of migration** on the individual's quality of life, such as:
 - Changes in income, healthcare access, and social stability post-migration.
 - Experiences with housing, employment, and local integration.
 - Challenges faced at the destination and the intent to relocate again.
- **Integration with Policy Planning:** data will support **evidence-based policymaking** in critical sectors:
 - **Urban Development:** Informing city-level housing, transport, and infrastructure planning.
 - **Employment Generation:** Identifying labour shortages and skill gaps across regions.
 - **Social Protection:** Enhancing portability of welfare benefits for migrant workers.
 - **Regional Development:** Assessing how migration affects remittance flows and rural economies.

SC Seeks Implementation of Women's Reservation Law

The Supreme Court has described women as the “largest minority” and sought the Centre’s response on enforcing the Women’s Reservation Act, 2023, which remains unimplemented pending the next Census and delimitation.

Political Representation of Women in India

- Women constitute **48.4% of India’s population** (Census 2011), yet their political representation remains disproportionately low.
- In the **18th Lok Sabha (2024)**, women hold **74 out of 543 seats**, i.e., **13.6%**, slightly down from **14.4%** in the 17th Lok Sabha (2019).
- In **State Legislative Assemblies**, women occupy only **9.2%** of total seats on average.
- At the **local governance level**, women’s representation is significantly higher, about **46%** in Panchayati Raj Institutions, owing to the **73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments** mandating one-third reservation for women.
- According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2024), India ranks **143rd out of 185 countries** in women’s representation in national parliaments.

The Women’s Reservation Act, 2023

- The **Women’s Reservation Act** received **Presidential assent** in 2023, thereby becoming the **Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023**.
- The amendment inserted **Article 334A** into the Constitution, which provides for **33% reservation of seats** for women in the **Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies**, and the **Delhi Assembly**.
- However, the implementation of this reservation is tied to the **completion of the next Census** and the subsequent **delimitation process**, the redrawing of constituencies based on updated population data.
- The petitioner has challenged this condition, calling it **“unjustified and dilatory.”**

Supreme Court’s Observations

- During the hearing, **Justice Nagarathna** observed that women, despite constituting nearly half of India’s population, remain **underrepresented in legislative bodies**.
- She described them as the **“largest minority”**, invoking the **Preamble’s guarantee of political and social equality** and citing **Article 15(3)** of the Constitution, which empowers the State to make special provisions for women’s advancement.
- The Bench questioned the rationale behind delaying implementation, especially since **political justice**, along with social and economic justice, is a core principle of the **Constitution’s preamble**.

The Case for Immediate Implementation

- The petition urged the court to declare the words *“after an exercise of delimitation is undertaken for this purpose after the relevant figures for the first census are published”* in Article 334A as **void ab initio**, allowing immediate implementation of the reservation.
- The petitioner also drew parallels with other constitutional amendments that were implemented without preconditions:
 - **73rd & 74th Amendments (1993)**: Introduced one-third reservation for women in local governance.
 - **77th Amendment (1995)**: Provided reservation in promotions for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.
 - **103rd Amendment (2019)**: Enabled **10% reservation for the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS)** in education and employment.
- The petitioner argued that the **delay in women’s representation** in Parliament and Assemblies was contrary to the **constitutional principles of equality and justice**.

Way Ahead

- While the Supreme Court refrained from issuing directions that could override the executive's domain, it urged the Centre to clarify its stance and timeline for implementation.
- The Union government has maintained that the **reservation will take effect only after the next Census and delimitation exercise**, which have been pending since 2021.
- Experts suggest that an **interim framework**, such as the **temporary allocation of reserved constituencies**, could be introduced to operationalise the law before the next general election.

Doctrine of Severability

The Supreme Court (SC) clarified that Doctrine of Severability must be exercised sparingly and only in exceptional circumstances.

What Is Meant by the Doctrine of Severability?

Also called Doctrine of Separability, the Doctrine of Severability means that *if part* of a statute or contract is found invalid (e.g., unconstitutional), the invalid portion can be “severed” (cut off) while the remaining part stays valid- if the rest can function independently.

- Under Article 13 of the Constitution of India, a law inconsistent with fundamental rights is *void to the extent of the inconsistency*. This implies that the valid part may survive.

Scope of Application: Statute or Legislation, contracts or agreements or arbitration clauses.

Key Principles Involved: To apply severability, courts typically check:

- **Legislative Intent** when the law was passed to determine if the valid and invalid parts are separable.
- **Severability:** Are the valid and invalid parts independent (i.e., can the valid part operate by itself without the invalid part)? If they are *inextricably linked*, the whole statute may fail.
- **Effect on Object/Scheme:** Excision of the invalid portion should not distort the scheme or change the nature of the law/contract fundamentally. If it does, severance is inappropriate.
- **Public Interest/Enforceability:** The remaining law must still be workable and aligned with the purpose.

Key SC Precedents:

- **A.K. Gopalan v. State of Madras (1950):** Preventive detention section 14 severed; rest of the Act upheld.
✓ Principle: Invalid part removable if the rest remains effective.
- **R.M.D. Chamarbaugwalla v. Union of India (1957):** Laid down **tests for severability**- valid and invalid parts must be independent, and legislature’s intent must favor partial survival.
✓ Foundation case defining the doctrine.
- **Minerva Mills Ltd. v. Union of India (1980):** Sections 4 & 55 of the 42nd Amendment Act struck down for violating the Basic Structure; rest upheld.
✓ Principle: Doctrine extends even to constitutional amendments.
- **Shayara Bano v. Union of India (2017):** **Instant triple talaq (Talaq-e-Biddat)** declared unconstitutional; rest of Muslim personal law remained valid.
✓ Principle: Applied severability to personal laws protecting women’s rights.
- **Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India (2018):** Section 377 IPC partly struck down (decriminalizing consensual same-sex acts); other parts retained.
✓ Principle: Partial invalidation to uphold Fundamental Rights.

Significance of the Doctrine	Limitations of the Doctrine
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protects legislative intent: Saves valid parts of a law.• Ensures stability of laws: Prevents unnecessary invalidation and maintains legal continuity.• Upholds Fundamental Rights: Removes only unconstitutional portions that violate the Constitution.• Shows judicial restraint: Courts respect separation of powers by modifying minimally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complex to apply: Difficult to determine if valid and invalid parts are truly separable.• Judicial overreach risk: Courts may appear to “rewrite” laws while severing parts.• Legislative intent uncertain: Hard to assess if the legislature would have passed the law without the invalid part.• Fails if inseparable: If the invalid and valid portions are intertwined, the entire law becomes void.

Doctrine of Party Autonomy

The Supreme Court (SC) held that the Doctrine of Party Autonomy is not limitless, and the same is the bedrock of arbitration.

What is the Doctrine of Party Autonomy?

It is a **core principle of arbitration** which gives parties the **freedom to decide** how their disputes will be resolved. This includes choice of **law, seat, procedure, language, and appointment of arbitrators** and reflects the **consensual and flexible** nature of arbitration.

Key Principles Involved

- **Freedom of Contract:** Parties design their dispute resolution mechanism.
- **Equality and Fairness:** Both parties must have **equal say** in process and appointments.
- **Impartiality:** Arbitrators must remain independent, without bias.
- **Minimal Judicial Interference:** Courts should respect the arbitral process (Sec. 5, Arbitration Act).

Recognition to the Doctrine of Party Autonomy: It has been accepted globally under **New York Convention (1958)**, **UNCITRAL Model Law (1985)**, **Indian Arbitration & Conciliation Act, 1996**, **ICC Arbitration Rules**.

Significance	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensures Flexibility, efficiency, and confidence in arbitration.• Promotes Commercial Certainty and reduces litigation.• Encourages International Acceptance of arbitration as a neutral forum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not Absolute: Subject to public policy, equality, and impartiality.• Judicial Overreach may undermine autonomy• Requires a Balance between freedom of choice and fairness in proceedings.

Kendriya Grihmantri Dakshata Padak

The 'Kendriya Grihmantri Dakshata Padak' (**KGDP**) was awarded to 1,466 personnel of various States/UTs/Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs)/Central Police Organizations (CPOs) for the year 2025.

About KGDP

Instituted by the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** on **1 February 2024**, the **KGDP** honours exceptional performance by members of **Police Forces, Security and Intelligence Organizations, CAPFs, and Forensic Science institutions** across India.

- ✓ It replaces and consolidates the earlier **Union Home Minister's Special Operation Medal, Medal for Excellence in Investigation, Asadharan Aasuchana Kushalata Padak, and Awards for Meritorious Service in Forensic Science** into a single, unified national honour.

Announcement & Decorations: Announced annually on **31st October**, the birth anniversary of **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**. Awardees receive a **Medal and Certificate (Scroll)** signed by the Union Home Minister.

Their names are published in the **Gazette of India** (except Intelligence field).

Withdrawal & Restoration: Medal may be **withdrawn** if the awardee faces dismissal, major penalty, or criminal conviction but can also be **restored** upon exoneration or clearance.

Objective: To **recognize excellence, promote professional standards, and boost morale** of officers in 4 key fields:

- **Special Operations:** e.g., counterterrorism, border action, arms control, left-wing extremism, narcotics control, rescue operations.
- **Investigation:** outstanding investigative work using innovation and forensic tools.
- **Intelligence:** an exceptional and daring service in combating terrorism, espionage, insurgency, or organized crime.
- **Forensic Science:** meritorious scientific contributions in crime examination, R&D, and training.

Eligibility:

- Open to all ranks of Police, CAPFs, CPOs, Security/Intelligence wings, and Forensic Scientists.
- No minimum service period is required.
- No pending disciplinary or judicial proceedings; clean service records for the past 5 years.

Selection Process:

- **Nominations** are invited annually (June) via the **National Awards Portal**.
- **Scrutiny Committees** of senior level officers at State/UT/Organization level scrutinize nominations and recommend nominees to MHA.
- **MHA Sub-Committee** and **MHA-level Committee** (chaired by the Union Home Secretary) recommend final names.
- **Approval by Union Home Minister.**

Contempt of Court

The Supreme Court (SC), while closing contempt proceedings against litigant **N. Peddi Raju** and two lawyers, cautioned against the rising tendency of making scandalous allegations against judges when judgments are unfavourable, observing that such conduct erodes public confidence and undermines the judiciary's integrity.

What is meant by Contempt of Court?

Contempt of court is any behaviour or publication that disrespects, disobeys or obstructs the authority, dignity or functioning of a judicial body and thereby tends to interfere with the administration of justice.

Related Constitutional Provisions	Related Statutory framework
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Article 129: Establishes SC as a court of record with the power to punish for contempt of itself.• Article 215: Establishes High Courts (HCs) as courts of record with power to punish for contempt of themselves.• Article 142(2): SC can make orders to secure attendance, production of documents or punishment for contempt.• Article 19(2): Contempt is a recognized ground on which reasonable restrictions on freedom of speech may be imposed. <p><i>** The constitution does not define "contempt of court".</i></p>	<p>Contempt of Courts Act, 1971: enacted after the H.N. Sanyal Committee's recommendations, provides a uniform framework for the exercise of contempt powers. It classifies contempt into two categories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Civil Contempt (Section 2(b)): Wilful disobedience of any judgment, decree, direction, order, or breach of an undertaking given to a court.• Criminal Contempt (Section 2(c)): Publication or acts that scandalize or lower the authority of a court, prejudice judicial proceedings, or obstruct the administration of justice. <p>The 2006 Amendment refined this law by introducing the requirement that contempt must "<i>substantially interfere with the administration of justice</i>" and recognized "<i>truth in public interest</i>" as a valid defence.</p>

Test Applied by Courts to Determine Contempt

- **Tendency or Effect Test:** Focus is on whether the act *tends* to scandalize or *tends* to interfere with proceedings (actual effect not always necessary).
- **Real and Present danger / Substantial Interference Test:** used to check if the impugned act poses a real threat to administration of justice.
- **Fair Criticism Exception:** Bona fide, reasoned criticism of judgments is allowed (Section 5 of Contempt of Courts Act, 1971); line drawn where criticism becomes scandalous, intimidating or obstructive.

Procedure of Initiating Contempt Proceedings

- **Who may initiate?** SC/HC *Suo motu*, or on a motion by Advocate-General/Attorney-General, or by a third party with Attorney-General/Advocate-General's written consent (statutory consent required in some cases).

Judicial Interpretation and Safeguards:

- **Ashwini Kumar Ghosh v. Arabinda Bose (1952):** The SC held that fair criticism of a judgment is not contempt; limits must be respected.
- **Brahma Prakash Sharma v. State of UP (1953):** Defamation and contempt are different concepts.
- **P.N. Duda v. P. Shiv Shanker (1988):** The Court observed that this power should be invoked only when there is a real and imminent danger to the administration of justice.
- **Anil Ratan Sarkar versus Hirak Ghosh (2002):** The power to punish for contempt must be exercised with caution and shall only be exercised when there is a clear violation of an order.
- **M. V. Jayarajan v. High Court of Kerala (2015):** abusive public remarks against a HC order were held to amount to criminal contempt.
- **Prashant Bhushan (2020):** tweets held contemptuous; court emphasized protection of judicial dignity but faced public debate on free speech.
- **Shanmugam @ Lakshminarayanan v. High Court of Madras (2025):** The SC reiterated that contempt exists to secure the administration of justice rather than protect individual judges.

Key Criticisms & Constitutional Concerns	Way Forward
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Free Speech Vs Judicial Dignity: Contempt law can curtail legitimate, even robust, criticism; risk of chilling effect on media and citizens.• Broad & Vague Language: Terms like "scandalize" invite wide judicial discretion.• Potential for Abuse: Courts acting as judge, jury and executioner (summary powers) may risk procedural fairness.• Disproportionate Use: Historically, contempt has sometimes been used in politically or socially sensitive contexts, producing controversy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Narrowing the Definition: Replace vague expressions like "scandalize" with measurable standards such as "substantial and imminent interference."• Ensure Procedural Fairness: Independent mechanism or recusal norms where judges are directly involved.• Strengthen the Public Interest Defence: Clarify the contours of "truth" and "good faith."• Promote Awareness: Educate citizens and the media on respectful engagement with judicial processes.• Balance Free Speech and Judicial Dignity: Courts must protect their authority without appearing intolerant of fair criticism.

- **Summons & hearing:** Accused is summoned; courts may proceed summarily in some cases (Section 14 of Contempt of Courts Act, 1971) but procedural safeguards and opportunity to apologize/defend are required.
- **Punishment:** imprisonment up to **6 months**, fine up to **₹2,000**, or both; courts can waive punishment if apology is accepted. 2006 amendment added higher threshold of “substantial” disruption.

India AI Governance Guidelines

The MeitY unveiled **governance guidelines for Artificial Intelligence (AI)**.

What are the India AI Governance Guidelines (2025)?

These are a policy framework to guide the **safe, responsible, transparent and inclusive development and use of AI** in India. They aim to **balance innovation with accountability**, promote **human-centric and trustworthy AI**, and ensure **ethical governance** through an **agile, sector-specific, & techno-legal approach** rather than a single AI law.

Objectives:

- **Harness AI’s potential** for inclusive and sustainable development.
- **Balance innovation and risk** through a techno-legal and voluntary framework.
- **Position India as a global leader** in safe and trusted AI ahead of the India-AI Impact Summit 2026.

Structure of the Guidelines: The document is divided into four main parts:

• **Part 1 Key Principles (Seven Sutras):**

- **Trust is the Foundation:** Trust must pervade AI systems, institutions, and user interactions.
- **People First:** AI must remain human-centric, ensuring oversight and empowerment.
- **Innovation over Restraint:** Promote responsible innovation rather than overregulation.
- **Fairness & Equity:** Ensure inclusivity, prevent bias, and avoid discrimination.
- **Accountability:** Assign responsibility based on function and risk level.
- **Understandable by Design:** Ensure explainability and transparency of AI systems.
- **Safety, Resilience & Sustainability:** Encourage robust, secure, and eco-conscious AI systems

• **Part 3 Action Plan: Short term, medium term, long term (given in table)**

• **Part 4 Practical Guidelines:**

- **For Industry:** Comply with all Indian laws. Publish transparency reports and enable grievance redressal.

Part 2 Key Recommendations (Six Pillars): Grouped into three domains- Enablement, Regulation, and Oversight.

- **Infrastructure and Enablement:** Enable innovation and adoption of AI by expanding access to **data, computing power, and Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** like Aadhaar and UPI through platforms such as **AIKosh**, **attract investment** and leverage the power of digital public infrastructure for scale, impact and, inclusion
 - ✓ AIKosh is a secured platform that provides a repository of datasets, models and use cases to enable AI innovation.
- **Capacity Building:** Initiate education, skilling, and training programs via initiatives like **IndiaAI FutureSkills** to empower people, build trust, and increase awareness about the risks and opportunities of AI.
- **Policy & Regulation:** Adopt balanced, agile, and flexible frameworks that support innovation and mitigate the risks of AI.
 - ✓ Review current laws (IT Act, DPDP Act, Copyright Act), identify regulatory gaps in relation to AI systems, and address them with targeted amendments for liability, classification, and “text and data mining” (TDM) exceptions. Focus on content authentication to counter deepfakes.
- **Risk Mitigation:** Develop an **India-specific risk assessment framework** and an **AI Incident Database**. Promote **voluntary frameworks, techno-legal compliance**, and human oversight to mitigate harm, especially for vulnerable groups.
- **Accountability:** Implement a **graded liability system**, grievance redressal mechanisms, and transparency reports. Ensure due diligence through **self-certification and audits**.
- **Institutions:** Establish a **whole-of-government approach** through:
 - ✓ **AI Governance Group (AIGG)**- Apex policy body.
 - ✓ **Technology & Policy Expert Committee (TPEC)**- Expert advisory body.
 - ✓ **AI Safety Institute (AISi)**- Research and safety testing entity.

Timeframe	Key Priorities
Short-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish key governance institutions Develop India-specific risk frameworks Adopt voluntary commitments Suggest legal amendments Develop clear liability regimes Expand access to infrastructure Launch awareness programmes Increase access to AI safety tools
Medium-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish common standards Amend laws and regulations Operationalise AI incidents systems Pilot regulatory sandboxes Expand integration of DPI with AI
Long-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue ongoing engagements (capacity building, standard setting, access and adoption, etc.) Review and update governance frameworks to ensure sustainability of the digital ecosystem. Draft new laws based on emerging risks and capabilities

Use techno-legal tools (bias detection, machine unlearning, privacy tech).

- **For Regulators:** Encourage innovation; avoid over-compliance regimes. Adopt agile, principle-based regulation. Prioritize policy interventions only where there is real harm or risk. Promote self-regulation and tech-enabled compliance.

Significance of India's AI Governance Approach	Implementational Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptive Framework: This framework is agile, voluntary, and risk-based, encouraging innovation while ensuring accountability. • Techno-Legal & Human-Centric: Builds privacy, fairness, and transparency into system design; ensures inclusivity and local relevance. • Coordinated Governance: Implements a whole-of-government model via AIGG, AISI, and TPEC for unified oversight. • Strategic Importance: Positions India as a Global South leader in ethical AI, aligned with Viksit Bharat 2047 and "AI for All." • Trust & Innovation Focus: balancing growth with digital rights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional Coordination: Ensuring effective collaboration among multiple ministries, regulators, and agencies under the "whole-of-government" approach. • Legal and Regulatory Gaps: Existing laws like the IT Act and Copyright Act need timely amendments to address new AI-specific risks and liabilities. • Capacity Constraints: Limited technical expertise among regulators, public officials, and law enforcement to oversee AI deployment and risks. • Data and Infrastructure Limitations: Inadequate access to high-quality, representative datasets and affordable computing resources for AI research and innovation. • Accountability and Enforcement: Challenges in defining clear responsibility across the AI value chain and ensuring compliance through effective monitoring. • Risk of Misuse and Ethical Concerns: Threats from deepfakes, algorithmic bias, and privacy violations that can erode public trust if not properly managed.

Can Prisoners Have a Mobile Phone in Open Jail Precincts?

The Delhi High Court (HC), in *Surender Kumar v. State (NCT of Delhi)*, addressed the issue of whether inmates of **open prisons** can possess mobile phones within the prison precincts. The Court noted the absence of clarity in existing prison regulations and directed the **Director General (Prisons)** to frame a **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)** to regulate this matter within eight weeks.

****Note:** Open prisons, also known as minimum-security prisons, aim at the rehabilitation and reintegration of inmates into society. Here, inmates are typically allowed to exit daily between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. for employment or social interaction (Delhi Prison Rules, 2018). The system is based on the principle of earned liberty through good conduct

Case Background: Surender Kumar, a life convict shifted to an open prison for good conduct, was found with mobile phones in 2020. His privileges were suspended, and he was transferred to a closed jail following a judicial appraisal- a move he challenged as disproportionate and without due process.

Key Issues Before the Court and Court's Observations:

Q1. Whether possession of a mobile phone by an inmate in an open prison constitutes a punishable breach?

Court's Observation: No explicit rule bars mobile phones in open prisons. Phones are essential for inmates' communication, work coordination, and digital payments during authorized hours. If prohibited, a clear **deposit-and-retrieval system** must exist to ensure compliance.

Q2. Whether the transfer from open to closed prison, based solely on a single violation, was lawful and proportionate?

Court's Observation: Transfer from open to closed prison is a **major punitive step** and must be proportionate. A single violation cannot justify withdrawal of a **rehabilitative privilege**, especially given the inmate's clean record and repeated successful paroles.

Q3. Whether due process was followed before imposing punishment and withdrawal of privileges?

Court's Observation: Authorities imposed punishment and transfer **without written notice or inquiry**, violating principles of natural justice. A later **judicial appraisal** could not cure this procedural defect.

Court's Directions:

- ✓ **DG (Prisons)** to frame an **SOP** within eight weeks to either permit regulated retention of mobile phones by open-prison inmates or establish a secure deposit-and-return system.
- ✓ **Punishment and transfer orders were quashed.**
Petitioner to be **restored to his open-prison status**, subject to lawful reconsideration by authorities.

Significance of the Judgment:

- ✓ **Promotes Clarity and Fairness:** through a mandated SOP on mobile phone use in open prisons.
- ✓ **Upholds Due Process and Natural Justice**
- ✓ **Reinforces the Principle of Proportionality** in punishment and protection of rehabilitative privileges.
- ✓ **Advances a Reformatory and Human-Rights-Based Approach**

Relevant Legal Framework

- **Delhi Prison Rules, 2018:** Rule 1270 provides that no punishment or denial of privileges and amenities, or no transfer to other prisons with penal consequences, shall be imposed on prisoners without judicial appraisal (review).
 - The rules require **written notice** and opportunity to be heard before imposing major penalties.
- **Prison Act, 1894:** Governs discipline and management in prisons.
- **Constitutional Provisions:**
 - **Article 21:** Right to life and personal liberty extends to prisoners.
 - **Article 14:** Ensures equality and non-arbitrariness in administrative action.

National Press Day 2025

India celebrated the National Press Day on November 16 honouring the essential role of a free and responsible press which is considered the **fourth pillar of democracy**.

Roots of National Press Freedom:

- **Historical Background: National Press Day (16 November)** marks the establishment of the **Press Council of India (PCI)** in **1966** under the *Indian Press Council Act, 1965*. The Act was repealed in 1975, and PCI was **reconstituted in 1979** under a new law.
- **Growth of Media:** Registered publications increased sharply from **60,143 (2004-05)** to **1.54 lakh (2024-25)**

Media Governance- Key Initiatives and Legal Reforms:

- **Press Registrar General of India (PRGI):** Established in 1956, it oversees the registration of periodicals and supports the growth of print media. It is now a statutory body under the ***Press and Registration of Periodicals (PRP) Act 2023***.
- **Press Council of India (PCI):** is a statutory autonomous body under the **Press Council Act, 1978**, established mainly to safeguard press freedom and maintains ethical and professional standards in print media. – Its functions include-
 - Hearing complaints on attacks or curtailment of press freedom under **Section 13**, can take **Suo motu** action.
 - Under **Section 14**, warning, admonishing, or censuring newspapers for violating ethical norms (e.g., fake or misleading news).
 - ✓ The **Norms of Journalistic Conduct** issued by the PCI serve as the guiding framework for ethical reporting in the print media. Newspapers are required to adhere to these norms, which, among other provisions, discourage the publication of fake, defamatory or misleading news.
 - Recent PCI initiatives include:
 - **2023:** Report on fair representation of the **LGBTQ+ community** in the media
 - **2023: Guidelines for reporting natural disasters** emphasizing sensitivity and accuracy.
 - Promoting global cooperation through MoUs with **Indonesia, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka**.
- **PRP Act, 2023:** modernizes the colonial **Press and Registration of Books (PRB) Act, 1867**, introducing a fully online system for simultaneous title allotment and registration via the **Press Sewa Portal (PSP)**. It streamlines procedures, removes physical interfaces, reduces compliance burdens, and **decriminalizes procedural lapses**. The **PRP Rules, 2024** provide the operational framework for this modern, transparent regulatory system.
- **Press Sewa Portal (PSP):** created under the PRP Act 2023, provides a fully digital, paperless system for registering and regulating periodicals, improving transparency and ease of doing business. Within six months, it onboarded **40,000 publishers**, filed **37,000 annual statements**, and registered **3,000 presses**. It also offers a dedicated website with an **AI chatbot** for user support.

- **Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC):** established in **1965**, is a premier media training institute offering specialized journalism courses, including international and linguistic programmes. It has trained over **15,000 professionals** through 700+ courses and promotes inclusive journalism, including Sanskrit journalism. In **2024**, IIMC (New Delhi and five regional campuses) were granted **Deemed-to-be University** status, enabling it to award degrees, including doctorates.
- **Journalist Welfare Scheme (2001, revised 2019):** provides financial assistance to journalists and their families in distress, including:
 - ₹5 lakh for death or permanent disability,
 - ₹3 lakh for major ailments,
 - ₹2 lakh for serious accident-related injuries.
 Support is subject to non-coverage under CGHS/insurance, with lower ceilings for non-accredited journalists.
- **Working Journalists Act, 1955:** regulates service conditions of journalists and newspaper employees, covering hours of work, leave, and wage fixation, and establishes a **Wage Board** to revise wage rates in the industry.
- **Employees' Provident Funds (EPF) & Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952:** applies to newspaper establishments since 1956 and to private electronic media since 2007, providing employees social security under EPF schemes. Media personnel earning up to **₹21,000/month** in units covered under the **Employees' State Insurance (ESI) Act, 1948** are also eligible for ESI benefits.

Way Forward

- **Strengthen Legal Protections:** Enact clearer safeguards for press freedom; prevent misuse of laws against journalists.
- **Ensure Independence of Media Bodies:** Empower PCI/PRGI with greater enforcement powers and autonomy.
- **Improve Journalist Safety:** Create fast-track mechanisms for attacks on journalists; expand welfare schemes.
- **Promote Ethical Journalism:** Enforce stronger self-regulation, transparent editorial policies, and fact-checking norms.
- **Reduce Political & Corporate Influence:** Encourage diversified ownership and transparent funding models.
- **Support Financial Sustainability:** Promote public-interest journalism, tax incentives, and innovation grants for media startups.

Significance of the Press in Indian Democracy

- **Guardian of Freedom of Speech (Article 19(1)(a)):** It enables public debate and protects democratic values.
- **Watchdog of the Government:** Investigates and exposes corruption, arbitrary use of power and policy failures. Thus, strengthening accountability.
- **Fourth Pillar of Democracy:** Complements Legislature, Executive, and Judiciary by ensuring checks and balances.
- **Shaper of Public Opinion:** Communicates policy decisions, schemes, and welfare programmes. Influences voter behaviour, and mobilizes people around social issues.
- **Instrument of Social Change:** Highlights social issues and drives **social change** by amplifying marginalized voices and bringing issues into the national agenda.
- **Facilitator of Inclusive Democracy:** Regional and vernacular media ensure representation of diverse voices across states, cultures, and socio-economic groups.

Challenges Faced by the Press in India

- **Threats to Press Freedom:** Intimidation, harassment, and violence against journalists. Misuse of laws like sedition, UAPA, defamation, and state-level media regulations.
- **Political and Corporate Influence:** Ownership concentration among large corporate houses or politically aligned groups. Advertiser influence (especially government advertising) affects editorial independence.
- **Rise of Fake News & Misinformation:** Social media virality and unverified digital content challenge credibility. Inadequate fact-checking capacity.
- **Economic Vulnerabilities:** Declining revenue models, heavy dependence on advertising. Smaller and regional outlets struggle more due to financial stress.
- **Ethical Issues and Sensationalism:** TRP-driven reporting, clickbait headlines, paid news, and biased coverage dilute journalistic ethics. Violation of privacy, trial by media, and lack of verification.
- **Digital Media Regulation Concerns:** Ambiguity in IT Rules, 2021 and oversight mechanisms raise concerns of over-regulation. Lack of a clear framework for digital publishers and social media platforms.
- **Safety and Working Conditions:** Field reporters in conflict zones or rural areas face high risk. Irregular wages, long working hours, and lack of protective legal mechanisms.
- **Weak Grievance Redressal & Self-Regulation:** Bodies like PCI have limited enforcement powers (can only warn or censure). Digital media lacks a universally accepted self-regulatory mechanism.

- **Strengthen Digital Governance:** Clear, balanced regulation for online media to curb misinformation while protecting free speech.

No Judicial Timelines for Governors and President- Supreme Court

A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court (SC), in its 16th Presidential Reference, held that courts cannot impose fixed timelines on Governors or the President for disposing of State Bills, nor can they assume “deemed assent.” Such actions would violate the Constitution’s spirit and the basic structure doctrine of separation of powers.

- ✓ In April, a two-judge SC bench set strict timelines for Governors and even prescribed that the President must decide on Bills reserved by the Governor **within three months** of receiving them. President later sought clarity through a Presidential Reference, posing 14 key questions on this ruling.

Implications of the SC Ruling

- **Strengthens Cooperative Federalism:** The ruling prevents Governors from stalling Bills indefinitely, protecting the will of elected State legislatures and reducing political misuse of the office.
- **Reaffirms Separation of Powers:** By rejecting judicially imposed timelines and “deemed assent,” the Court ensures that the judiciary does not substitute executive functions, preserving the basic structure.
- **Introduces Accountability for Constitutional Inaction:** Though the merits of decisions are not reviewable, the Court allows limited review of *prolonged, unexplained, or indefinite inaction*, enhancing accountability of Governors’ office.
- **Clarifies Constitutional Procedure on Bill Assent:** The judgment settles long-standing ambiguities regarding Articles 200 and 201, defining the exact options available to Governors and ruling out the possibility of keeping Bills pending indefinitely.
- **Provides a Remedy for States:** States can now approach the Court when Governors unduly delay Bills
- **Encourages a Dialogic Constitutional Process:** The Court characterizes the assent process as “consultative and deliberative,” promoting cooperation rather than confrontation between Governors and State legislatures.

Key Clarifications by the SC:



- **Governor’s Options under Article 200:** The Governor has only three choices: (i) grant assent, (ii) reserve the Bill for the President, or (iii) return the Bill (if not a Money Bill) with comments. The Governor cannot simply withhold assent and keep a Bill pending.
 - ✓ Article 200 outlines the powers of a state’s governor concerning bills passed by the state.
- **Aid and Advice:** The Governor exercises constitutional discretion and is not bound by the Cabinet’s advice when acting under Article 200.
- **Justiciability:** The merits of the Governor’s decision are not reviewable, but prolonged, unexplained, or indefinite inaction is subject to limited judicial review. Courts may direct the Governor to act but cannot dictate the outcome.
- **Article 361 Immunity:** Immunity protects the Governor as an individual, not the Governor’s office; thus, inaction by the Governor’s office can be reviewed.
- **Timelines:** Courts cannot impose fixed timelines on either the Governor (Article 200) or the President (Article 201- Bill reserved by the Governor for President’s consideration).
- **Seeking SC’s Advice:** President is **not required** to seek the SC’s advice under Article 143 (allows the President to refer questions of law or fact, or disputes, to the Supreme Court for opinion) whenever a Bill is reserved; consulting the Court is optional and based on the President’s own discretion.
- **Other Clarifications:** Courts cannot review the contents of a Bill before it becomes law. Article 142 cannot be used to create “deemed assent.” A Bill becomes law only after assent. Several broader questions (Arts. 131, 145(3)) were declined as irrelevant.
 - ✓ Article 131 gives the SC original jurisdiction over disputes between the Centre and States.
 - ✓ Article 142 empowers SC to pass any order necessary to secure complete justice.
 - ✓ Article 145(3) mandates that cases involving substantial interpretation of the Constitution be heard by at least five judges.

Can Lawyers Break Client Confidentiality?

The Supreme Court (SC) ruled that a lawyer cannot be summoned merely to disclose what a client has communicated, except where legal advice is used to commit or conceal a crime. The ruling came in Suo motu proceedings triggered by a police notice summoning a defence lawyer under Section 179 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (BNSS), 2023.

- ✓ Section 179 of the BNSS, 2023 deals with police officer’s power to require attendance of witnesses.

What are Privileged Communications?

Privileged Communications are protected, confidential exchanges within specific relationships such as spouses, lawyers and clients, or State officials that cannot be disclosed in court unless certain exceptions apply. Their

purpose is to preserve trust, honesty, and the proper functioning of justice. For instance under the **Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA), 2023**:

- **Section 128 (Marital Communications):** Spouses cannot be compelled or allowed to disclose communications made *during marriage*, even after divorce, unless the case involves a crime by one against the other or a suit between them.
- **Section 129 (Official Communications):** Unpublished State records cannot be disclosed without departmental sanctions, protecting national interest.
- **Section 132 (Advocate-Client Communications):** Lawyers cannot reveal professional communications with clients, except when the advice is used for an unlawful purpose.

These protections ensure confidentiality and uphold key relationships crucial to the justice system.

Significance of the Verdict

- **Reinforces the Right to Legal Representation:** Strengthens the constitutional guarantee of effective counsel under **Articles 21 and 22(1)**. The Court reiterated earlier rulings (*M.H. Hoskot vs State of Maharashtra* (1978) and *Hussainara Khatoon vs State of Bihar* (1980)) reminding that liberty without legal assistance is meaningless.
- **Protects Professional Confidentiality:** Affirms that police powers under **Section 179 of BNSS** cannot override a lawyer's duty of confidentiality. Summons cannot breach "professional confidence."
- **Checks Executive Overreach:** At a time when agencies frequently summon journalists, tax consultants, and lawyers to "assist" investigations, the ruling restores constitutional restraint and reminds the State that investigative authority has limits.
- **Strengthens Fair Trial Guarantees:** Prevents the State from indirectly accessing privileged client information, thereby preserving the adversarial structure and the right to a fair defence.
- **Safeguards the Integrity of the Justice System:** Reaffirms that the lawyer-client relationship is central to the functioning of courts and cannot be compromised by executive convenience or investigative shortcuts.

What did the SC Rule?

- **Protection of Lawyer-Client Relationship:** Intruding into confidential communications undermines the right to fair representation. Such intrusion threatens the structural integrity of a fair trial and the rule of law.
- **Scope of Privilege under Section 132 (BSA, 2023):** Advocates cannot reveal professional communications, even after employment ends, except when:
 - ✓ Client consents,
 - ✓ The communication involves an **illegal purpose**, or
 - ✓ The lawyer **witnesses a crime** being committed during the engagement.
- **Lawyer as a "Constitutional Actor":** The SC emphasizes that an advocate is not a private agent but a **constitutional actor** vital to fair representation. Privilege is **not a perk for lawyers**, but a **safeguard for citizens**. It ensures no prejudice is caused to the accused and prevents lawyers from becoming involuntary witnesses for the State.
- **Why Privilege Matters?** Though the privilege belongs to the client, its protection depends on the lawyer's silence. This confidentiality safeguards both powerful and vulnerable persons such as survivors of sexual violence, accident victims, and families facing custodial abuse. In a system with **3.9 lakh undertrials**, this privilege ensures a fair defence.
- **Limits on Police and Investigating Agencies:** Police **cannot summon a lawyer** merely for appearing or advising in a case. Summons are valid only when supported by material showing the case fits within one of the **Section 132 exceptions**.
- **Constitutional Link with Article 20(3) & Article 21:** The Court constitutionalizes the privilege by linking it to **Article 20(3)** (protection against self-incrimination). If the State cannot compel a citizen to confess, it cannot compel the lawyer to reveal confidential communications. Forced disclosure violates **Article 21 (fair defence)** and **Article 14 (equality before law)**.

Legal Status of Bhang in India

The Kerala High Court (HC) recently dismissed a plea to quash a case for growing cannabis.

Case Background: The petitioner was caught with five cannabis plants grown in pots on a rented house terrace. He argued they were not illegal because they had no "flowering or fruiting tops," which alone define *ganja* under

the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985. The Kerala High Court rejected this, holding that the Act separately bans the cultivation of **any cannabis plant**, regardless of whether it has flowering tops.

- ✓ NDPS Act, 1985 seeks to consolidate and strengthen laws on narcotic drugs, regulate all related operations, provide for forfeiture of property linked to illicit drug trafficking, implement international drug control conventions, and address connected matters.

Punishments under NDPS Act:

- For Small quantity of **Ganja** (up to 1 kg) and **Charas** (up to 100 g): Up to 1 year RI, or ₹10,000 fine, or both.
- Commercial quantity of **Ganja** (≥ 20 kg) and **Charas** (≥ 1 kg): 10-20 years RI + ₹1-2 lakh fine.
- Intermediate quantity: Up to 10 years Rigorous Imprisonment (RI) + ₹1 lakh fine.
- Cultivation of cannabis plant: Up to 10 years RI + ₹1 lakh fine.

Industrial & Medical Exceptions:

Section 14 of the NDPS Act allows the government to permit cannabis cultivation **only for industrial (fibre/seed) or medical/scientific** purposes.

- **Industrial hemp** (low THC) is legally grown in states like **Uttarakhand**, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh under licenses.
- The Centre also licenses bodies like Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) to grow cannabis for **medical research**.
- India's first **medical cannabis clinic** opened in Bengaluru in 2020.
- A petition in the **Delhi High Court** (2019) is challenging the cannabis ban as arbitrary and unscientific.



What is 'cannabis' under Indian law?

Under the **NDPS Act, 1985**, "cannabis (hemp)" is defined narrowly in **Section 2 (iii)**. It includes:

- **Charas**: the resin extracted from the cannabis plant (including hashish oil).
- **Ganja**: the flowering or fruiting tops of the cannabis plant.
- **Any mixture or drink** prepared from charas or ganja.

Excluded: Seeds and leaves, if not accompanied by flowering tops, are **not** considered cannabis under the Act.

What is the Legal Status of Bhang in India?

- **Bhang is legal under the NDPS Act** because leaves and seeds of the cannabis plant (when not accompanied by flowering tops) are **excluded** from the definition of "cannabis. Therefore, bhang is **not treated as a narcotic drug** under the Act.
- **However, bhang is not unregulated.** Its production, sale, and consumption fall under **state excise laws**, not the NDPS Act. States may **permit, license, regulate, or ban** bhang- States like Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan license authorized dealers to **sell bhang**, while other states, such as Assam, have banned it entirely under local laws.

Why Leaves Were Excluded in the First Place?

The government left leaves and seeds out because:

- **They contain negligible THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol)**→ lowest psychoactive potential.
- **Cultural & religious significance:** Bhang is mostly used during Holi, Shivratri and is being consumed for centuries; referenced in Ayurveda and Atharva Veda.
- **Indian Hemp Drugs Commission (1894)** held banning bhang was unnecessary, likely to face public backlash and was less harmful than alcohol/tobacco.

Thus, NDPS balanced **international conventions** with **Indian socio-cultural reality**.

Why Can't One Grow Cannabis at Home?

Even though cannabis **leaves** are exempt from the NDPS Act, the **plant itself is not**.

- **Section 8(b)** of the NDPS Act **prohibits the cultivation of any cannabis plant**, except with government permission for medical or scientific use.
- **Section 2(iv)** defines a cannabis plant as **any plant of the genus cannabis** with or without flowers.
- The Kerala High Court clarified that the law criminalizes **cultivation**, not the presence of flowering tops. Growing a plant **even in pots or on a terrace** amounts to cultivation.

Article 240 and Chandigarh

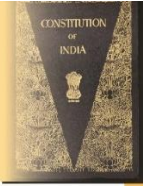
Recently, the Centre's plan to introduce the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2025 in the Parliament to bring Chandigarh under Article 240 of the Constitution received strong opposition from political parties in Punjab, following which it was clarified that no final decision has been taken on the issue.

- ✓ Article 240 of the Constitution empowers the President to make regulations for the peace, progress and effective governance of certain Union territories (UTs), including the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu and Puducherry (when its Assembly is suspended).

Brief History of Chandigarh

- **Post-Partition Need (1947):** After Partition, Punjab lost its historic capital Lahore to Pakistan. A new capital was required for Indian Punjab.
- **Site Selection (1948-1950):** The Government of India selected a site at the foothills of the Shivaliks. Land was acquired from several **villages of Punjab**.
- **Planning the City (1951-1953):** Initially designed by American planner **Albert Mayer**. Later developed by Swiss-French architect **Le Corbusier**, who gave Chandigarh its modernist, grid-based layout.
- **Inauguration (1953):** Chandigarh became the **capital of the erstwhile undivided Punjab**. Jawaharlal Nehru envisioned it as “a new town, symbolic of the freedom of India.”
- **Reorganization of Punjab (1966):** Punjab was bifurcated into **Punjab** and **Haryana** based on linguistic lines. Chandigarh was declared a **UT**, serving as the **shared capital** of both states.
- **Administrative Changes (1984):** The Centre appointed the **Punjab Governor as Administrator** of Chandigarh to ensure coordination during militancy. Before 1984, Chandigarh was administered by a **Chief Commissioner**.
- **Unresolved Claims:** Punjab has long claimed Chandigarh as its rightful capital. The **1985 Rajiv-Longowal Accord** promised Chandigarh's transfer to Punjab, but it was never implemented.
- **Present Day:** Chandigarh remains a **UT with a unique shared-capital arrangement**, central to Punjab-Haryana political sensitivities.

What did the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2025 seek to do?



- **To Bring Chandigarh under Article 240 of the Constitution.**
- **Appointing an independent Administrator/ Lieutenant Governor similar to other UTs.**
- **Give the Centre sweeping powers to make/amend laws for Chandigarh:** Once under Article 240, the **President (Centre)** could amend or repeal any law applicable to Chandigarh **through regulations**, bypassing Parliament. Even small changes like altering the Mayor's tenure or municipal powers could be made through **executive regulation**, not legislation.
- **Dilute Punjab and Haryana's influence:** by giving overriding power to the Centre.

Why Did the Centre Rethink Its Move?

The Union Home Ministry clarified that **no final decision has been taken**, mainly due to:

- **Intense Political Opposition in Punjab:** Across parties- AAP, Congress, Shiromani Akali Dal, there was strong backlash. They saw it as a direct attack on Punjab's rights, a threat to federalism and as a move to “snatch” Chandigarh from Punjab.
- **Chandigarh's Emotional and Historical Significance:** Punjab's narrative emphasizes Chandigarh was built on “Punjab's land”. It symbolizes Punjabi identity & aspirations after Partition.
- **Internal Opposition Within the Punjab BJP:** They were concerned about political fallout ahead of upcoming local elections (Zila Parishad & Block Samiti polls). Many leaders felt the timing was politically damaging.
- **The Move Could Destabilize Centre-Punjab Relations:** The AAP-led state government is already in conflict with the Centre over Punjab University, BBMB disputes, Deployment of central forces and Flood-relief funds. Introducing the Bill risked further escalation.
- **Risk of Reviving Old Unresolved Issues:** The Centre feared that the Bill would reignite the Punjab-Haryana territorial dispute, reopen the Chandigarh transfer controversy and lead to statewide protests.

Row Over Selecting DGP In Tamil Nadu

For the first time in years, Tamil Nadu (TN) failed to appoint a regular Director-General of Police (DGP) before the incumbent retired. In the interim, G. Venkatraman (1994-batch IPS), sixth in seniority, has been made the in-charge DGP.

Reasons for the Delay

- **State's Objections to Officers:** During the Union Public Service Commission's (UPSC) empanelment process, Tamil Nadu **withdrew the integrity certificate of one officer** and expressed unwillingness to include **three others**, without giving reasons.

- **Rejection of UPSC Panel:** Despite the objections, the UPSC shortlisted the senior-most officers and sent the panel. The State rejected it, calling the officers “not acceptable,” and sought another meeting.
- **Centre-State Disagreement:** The State accused the Centre and UPSC of ignoring its inputs and choosing officers of their preference.
- **Legal Complications:** Two contempt petitions were filed against the Chief Secretary of TN for alleged violation of Supreme Court (SC) guidelines on DGP appointments.

SC Guidelines (Prakash Singh versus Union of India, 2006)

- **Selection from UPSC panel:** State must choose the DGP from the **top three seniormost Indian Police Service (IPS) officers** empanelled by the UPSC.
- **Criteria for empanelment:** Officers are shortlisted based on **length of service, very good record, and diverse policing experience**.
- **Fixed tenure:** The appointed DGP must get a **minimum 2-year tenure**, even if it goes beyond their superannuation.
- **Advance timeline:** States must send the list of eligible officers to the UPSC **at least 3 months before the vacancy**.
 - TN sent its proposal on **August 29, 2025**, just a day before the DGP retired, instead of the required timeline (by June).

Possible Implications of TN's Actions

- **Violation of SC-mandated police reforms:** Undermines the *Prakash Singh* framework aimed at ensuring transparency and autonomy in police leadership.
- **Centre-State tensions:** May worsen institutional friction between State, Centre, and UPSC over appointments.
- **Administrative instability:** Prolonged uncertainty in police leadership may affect continuity, operational decision-making, and morale within the force.
- **Precedent for non-compliance:** Other States might cite this to bypass SC guidelines, weakening national police reforms.
- **Questions on federalism:** Raises concerns about whether States are overstepping or resisting constitutionally mandated procedures.

'Clean Hands' Doctrine

The Delhi High Court (HC) held that once a petitioner proves cruelty, relief cannot be denied by invoking the “clean hands” principle solely based on **unproven** counter-allegations made by the respondent.

- ✓ The ruling came in an appeal by a husband against a Family Court's decision that dismissed his divorce petition. The Family Court had ruled that the *husband* had approached the court with “**unclean hands**” due to the wife's dowry allegations.

Key Features of Clean Hands Doctrine	Related Landmark Cases
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires full and honest disclosure of all relevant facts. • Applies mainly to equitable and discretionary remedies, such as writs under Articles 32 (right to move to the Supreme Court for enforcement of rights), Article 136 (power of SC to grant Special Leave to appeal from any judgment) and Article 226 (power of HCs to issue writs). • Fraud, suppression, false affidavits, or misleading statements disqualify a litigant from relief. • Relief can be denied without examining merits if the litigant has “unclean hands.” • Interim orders obtained through deceit can be vacated, and litigants may face exemplary costs or perjury/contempt proceedings. • Misconduct must be related to the subject matter of the litigation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>S.P. Chengalvaraya Naidu v. Jagannath</i> (1994): Fraud vitiates all judicial acts; decree obtained by fraud is a nullity. • <i>A.V. Papayya Sastry v. Govt. of A.P.</i> (2007): Orders obtained by fraud are non est in law and can be challenged at any stage. • <i>K.D. Sharma v. SAIL</i> (2008): Suppression of material facts in writ petitions leads to dismissal; writ jurisdiction is equitable. • <i>Dalip Singh v. State of U.P.</i> (2009): Courts condemn increasing trend of dishonest litigants; no relief to those who pollute the stream of justice. • <i>Kishore Samrite v. State of U.P.</i> (2012): Elaborates on abuse of judicial process; litigants with unclean hands are not entitled to be heard or to any relief.

What is the Clean Hands Doctrine?

It is an equitable principle which mandates that a **person seeking relief** must not be guilty of fraud, misrepresentation, suppression of material facts, or any dishonest conduct relating to the dispute. Courts deny relief if a litigant has acted unfairly or abused the judicial process.

Significance of the Clean Hands Doctrine

- **Protects the Integrity of the Judiciary:** Ensures courts are not used as instruments of fraud, deceit, or manipulation.
- **Prevents Abuse of Judicial Process:** Discourages frivolous, dishonest, or mala fide litigation by denying relief at the threshold.
- **Promotes Truthfulness and Ethical Conduct:** Places a high obligation on litigants to disclose all material facts and approach courts with honesty.
- **Strengthens Equitable and Discretionary Jurisdiction:** Helps courts exercise writ and appellate powers (Articles 32, 136, 226) more responsibly.
- **Maintains Public Confidence in Justice Delivery:** Reinforces the idea that justice is available only to those who act fairly and in good faith.

Curative Petition

Acting on Surendra Koli's curative petition, the Supreme Court (SC) acquitted him in a Nithari case, reversing its 2011 ruling and noting a "fundamental defect" in the earlier judgment, since he had already been acquitted in 12 similar cases based on the same discredited evidence.

Significance:

- **Prevents miscarriage of justice** even after all regular remedies are exhausted.
- Acts as a **constitutional safety valve** against judicial errors in final judgments.
- Reinforces **fairness, natural justice, and judicial accountability**.
- Ensures that the SC's authority is used to deliver **complete justice** (Art. 142).
- Maintains public confidence in the justice system by correcting rare but serious procedural wrongs.

New Guidelines to Define "Obscenity" In Digital Content

The Union Government has submitted a proposal to the Supreme Court (SC) outlining new guidelines to define "obscenity" in digital content. These guidelines are meant to amend the Information Technology (IT) Rules, 2021

What is a Curative Petition?

It is the **last and extraordinary remedy** after dismissal of a review petition. It **does not re-argue the merits** but questions the **fairness and integrity of the judicial process** that produced the final judgment.

What it is NOT? It is not a second appeal, not a second review and not a way to correct mere legal errors.

Why it Exists? Courts must balance finality of judgments with justice. While litigation must end, finality cannot be used to perpetuate **gross miscarriage of justice**. Thus, beyond appeals and review, the SC evolved the **curative petition**.

Evolution: It originated from Rupa Ashok Hurra vs Ashok Hurra (2002). The case raised the question- Can an aggrieved person seek relief after dismissal of a review petition? A five-judge Constitution Bench held that in rare cases of gross injustice, the SC may reconsider its own final judgment through a curative petition. The Court relied on its inherent powers under Articles 137 and 142 of the Constitution.

✓ **Article 137:** SC may review its own judgments.

✓ **Article 142:** SC may pass orders necessary for "complete justice".

✓ Though not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution, curative petitions are considered an extension of these powers.

Grounds for Filing: A curative petition is entertained only if the petitioner proves:

❑ **Violation of natural justice:** e.g., they were not heard (audi alteram partem) or a judge had a conflict of interest (nemo iudex in causa sua)

❑ **Bias in the judgment:** personal, pecuniary, or undisclosed interest of a judge.

❑ **Abuse of the court's process:** proceedings were fundamentally unfair or oppressive.

❑ **Threshold:** the injustice must be grave, apparent, and must "**shock the conscience**" of the Court.

Procedure

❑ **Prerequisite:** Review petition must have been filed and dismissed.

❑ **Certification:** Must include a certificate from a Senior Advocate confirming strong grounds.

❑ **In-chamber screening:** Circulated to the **three senior-most judges**, and the **judges who delivered the original judgment**, if available.

❑ **Admission:** Heard only if a majority finds prima facie merit.

❑ **Hearing:** Usually in chambers; open-court hearing only if specifically ordered.

❑ **Costs:** Frivolous petitions may attract **exemplary costs**.

(Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code Rules) which govern social media companies and OTT streaming platforms.

Why Now?

- Triggered by the controversy involving comedian Samay Raina & Ranveer Allahabadia, where content was alleged to be obscene.
- The SC in March 2025 asked the Government to draft a framework that balances **free speech (Article 19(1)(a))** and **reasonable restrictions (Article 19(2))**.
- Existing provisions in the IT Rules were seen as inadequate to deal with rising concerns over sexual content, violent or abusive material, “anti-national” attitudes, misinformation or defamatory content.

What Has the Government Proposed?

- **Definition of “Obscene Digital Content”:** For the first time, the Rules will include a formal definition of obscenity online. Digital content would be considered obscene if it-

- appeals to prurient, lustful or voyeuristic interests;
- violates community standards;
- contains indecent, vulgar, suggestive, repulsive or offensive themes, or is generally against good taste or decency.

This mirrors the Cable TV Programme Code, applied now to all digital platforms.

- **Applicability Across Digital Ecosystem:** The guidelines apply to Social media platforms (YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, X), OTT streaming platforms (Netflix, Prime Video, Hotstar), Digital news outlets (web portals, digital journalism).

Significance of the Proposed Guidelines:	Concerns Raised Regarding Proposed Guidelines:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stronger Protection for Minors: Tighter rules on obscene or harmful content may reduce children's exposure to explicit material online.• Greater Accountability for Platforms: Clearer definitions of unacceptable content can push platforms to act responsibly and respond faster to complaints.• Reduction in Harmful or Abusive Content: Stricter norms may curb harassment, hate speech, sexualized content, and misinformation in digital spaces.• Uniform Standards Across Media: Applying similar codes as TV or cinema creates a consistent regulatory framework across traditional and new media.• Enhanced User Safety: Users especially women and vulnerable groups- may benefit from limits on abusive, degrading or exploitative content.• Guidance for Content Creators: A defined Code of Ethics can provide clarity on boundaries, reducing guesswork and legal uncertainty.• Security operations: Restrictions on live anti-terror coverage may prevent compromising national security.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revival of Stayed Provisions: Rules 9(1) & 9(3) enforcing the Code of Ethics are stayed by multiple HCs, yet the proposal attempts to revive them indirectly.<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Rule 9(1)- Digital news and OTT platforms must follow the prescribed Code of Ethics given in the Rules (adapted from Cable TV and Press norms).✓ Rule 9(3)- Creates a three-tier oversight system-<ul style="list-style-type: none">➢ Level I: Publisher self-regulation,➢ Level II: Industry self-regulation,➢ Level III: Government oversight.• Over-breadth & Vagueness: Uses subjective terms like good taste, decency, anti-national attitudes, half-truths, creating scope for arbitrary interpretation and violating Article 14.• Excessive Delegated Legislation: Expands executive powers through rules instead of parliamentary law, raising constitutional concerns.• Over-compliance by Platforms: Platforms may over-censor borderline content out of fear of prosecution, restricting legitimate expression.• Impact on Creative and Political Expression: Satire, political critique, stand-up comedy, investigative journalism, and social-issue documentaries may be targeted.• Risk of Overregulation & Censorship: The wide scope can lead to heavy-handed content control across digital platforms.• Chilling Effect on Free Speech

- **OTT Platforms- Additional Obligations:** OTT platforms must now ensure content is compliant with the Cinematograph Act, fit for public exhibition, similar to films released in theatres. Though a Ministry of Information and Broadcasting official says this applies only to OTT, the draft note does not differentiate, raising fears of uniform censorship across online media.
- **“Code of Ethics”- Expanded List of 17 Prohibitions:** Platforms must avoid content that-
 - violates decency, derides communities or religions;
 - is obscene, defamatory or misleading, incites crime or “anti-national” attitudes;
 - maligns individuals/groups or denigrates women, children, or disabled persons;

○ stereotypes communities or shows objectionable depictions of security forces.

The list is extremely broad- nearly any controversial, satirical or political content may fall under scrutiny.

- **Restrictions on News Coverage:** The government may classify live coverage of anti-terror operations as obscene or harmful. Media will be restricted to official briefings only. This is a major expansion of state control over real-time reporting.
- **Invocation of “Community Standards Test”:** The proposal invokes the SC test in *Aveek Sarkar v. State of West Bengal* (2014)- a content is not obscene if a person with contemporary community standards would not find it sexually titillating, and the content has literary, artistic, political, scientific value in its entirety. However, experts warn the government’s additions far exceed the Aveek Sarkar standard.

Government to Release NH Black Spot Data Based on Real-time e-DAR

Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) will soon publish 2023-24 black spot data using its ambitious Electronic Detailed Accident Report (e-DAR)/Integrated Road Accident Database (iRAD) system, which captures real-time accident details from state police to help reduce road accidents and fatalities.

- ✓ Under current system, only three years of black spot data are collected, and data currently extends only till 2022, which hampers planning for road safety measures.
- ✓ A black spot on National Highways (NH) is a 500-m stretch with five or more serious accidents, or 10 deaths, within three years. Between 2016 and 2022, MoRTH identified 13,795 such spots, of which long-term rectification has been completed on 5,036. The Transport Research Wing physically verifies and validates state data.

What is iRAD/e-DAR?

MoRTH’s national digital platform for real-time road accident reporting rolled out across states during **2021-22**.

➔ iRAD is the backend database for national road safety, and eDAR is the digital interface/module for detailed reporting and claims, built upon iRAD’s data.

Objective:

- To create a **centralized accident database**.
- Enable **data-driven road safety planning** and black spot identification.
- **Speed up compensation** for victims through digital access to accident details.

How the System Works?

- **Real-time Data Capture:** Police record accident details at the spot using the iRAD mobile app (photos, videos, GPS location).
- **Unique ID Generation:** Each accident is assigned a unique ID for tracking.
- **Central Database Upload:** Data is instantly uploaded and shared with relevant engineers and departments.
- **Analysis & Reporting:** Dashboards help identify black spots and analyse accident causes.
- **Compensation Processing (e-DAR):** Families can access verified accident data to file quicker compensation claims.

Cabinet approves Terms of Reference of 8th Central Pay Commission

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister approved the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the 8th Central Pay Commission (CPC).

What is the 8th CPC?

A temporary body constituted by the Union Government to review and recommend revisions in **pay structure, allowances, pension and retirement benefits and service conditions** of Central Government employees. The **8th CPC** was announced in **January 2025**.

- ✓ **Pay Commissions** are set up roughly every **10 years**. (7th CPC in 2016)

Composition: Chairperson (*Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai*) + 1 Part-time Member + 1 Member-Secretary

Timeline: Recommendations to be submitted **within 18 months**; may send **interim reports** if required.

- ✓ Based on tradition, its recommendations are expected to be implemented from **1 January 2026**.

Key Factors the 8th CPC Must Consider (ToR Highlights)

- **Economic conditions & fiscal prudence:** Ensure pay hikes do not destabilize the fiscal balance.

- ✓ The extent of salary and pension increases under the Eighth Central Pay Commission (CPC) will mainly depend on the fitment factor. The fitment factor is a multiplier used when pay scales are revised.
- ✓ 7TH Pay Commission, this factor was 2.57, meaning basic pay was raised to 2.57 times the previous level.
- **Need to preserve resources for development & welfare:** Salaries shouldn't crowd out capital/social spending.
- **Burden of non-contributory pension schemes:** Examine sustainability of existing pension liabilities.
- **Impact on State finances:** States usually adopt CPC recommendations; fiscal stress must be assessed.
- **Comparison with CPSUs & private sector:** Maintain competitiveness and fairness across sectors.

Why the 8th CPC Matters?

- Affects over **one crore people** (48.62 lakh Central employees + 67.85 lakh pensioners).
- Influences **State Government pay** as most adopt CPC recommendations.
- Impacts **inflation, government expenditure, and overall fiscal health.**
- Shapes motivation, efficiency, and morale of government workforce.

Online Tournaments May Be Excluded from Gaming Ban

The Supreme Court (SC) orally suggested that **regular competitions and online tournaments** may fall *outside* the **Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025**, since they **do not amount to betting or gambling**. This came during the plea of an online chess player who said he participates in tournaments for livelihood.

What the 2025 Online Gaming Act Does?

It **bans real-money online games**, related banking/payment services, and their advertisements and aims to curb addiction, financial losses, money laundering, and other harms linked to online money games. Government claims **45 crore people** have been negatively affected and losses exceed **₹20,000 crore** every year.

Status of Legal Challenge: Multiple online gaming platforms have challenged the Act as violating equality, freedom of expression, federalism, and the skill vs. chance distinction.

Government's Stand: The law was necessary due to:

- Rapid rise of harmful real-money games
- Addiction, debt, suicides
- Money laundering and **terror-financing risks**
- Exploitation of legal loopholes
- Betting and gambling are already restricted under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) 2023 and State laws, but the online space was **largely unregulated**.

Implications of excluding tournaments from the Online Gaming Act, 2025

- **Relief for esports and skill-based competitions:** Legitimate tournaments (like chess, esports, fantasy leagues with no real-money wagering) can continue without restrictions.
- **Protection of livelihoods:** Professional players who earn through prize money are not criminalized or blocked by the Act.
- **Reduced litigation burden:** Clear separation between tournaments and gambling-based platforms may reduce disputes on "skill vs. Chance".
- **Scope for innovation:** Companies can legally host competitive gaming events, helping the esports ecosystem grow.
- **Potential loophole risk:** Some platforms may try to disguise betting as "tournaments", requiring strict definitions and monitoring.

- **Balanced regulation:** Helps the Act target harmful real-money betting while allowing harmless competitive gaming to flourish.

Can GenAI Models Track Prompts of Officials, Leverage Citizens’ Data?

Government Officials are questioning whether foreign Artificial Intelligence (AI) platforms can analyze sensitive prompts to identify users, infer roles, and detect strategic patterns. These inference risks, combined with the widespread use of free foreign generative AI (GenAI) tools, have sparked a debate within the government over their security implications.

What is the Core Concern?	Why is This Risky?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Privacy: Sensitive official notes or queries may leak when uploaded to foreign AI platforms. • Inference Risk (The Bigger Worry): Even without explicit data, AI systems can infer- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Who the user is? ○ Their role/department ○ Priorities, timelines, weaknesses. ○ Security-sensitive patterns from repeated prompts. This makes high-level government and police usage particularly sensitive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreign AI models may be able to analyze queries at scale and detect strategic intent. • Free AI subscriptions bundled with telecom services can link usage to phone numbers, increasing traceability. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ OpenAI’s ChatGPT Go will be free in India for a year, and Gemini Pro will be free for all 500 million Jio users for 18 months. • Aggregated behaviour of millions of users may give foreign companies insights into India’s digital ecosystem.

What Actions Has the Government Taken?

- **Ban on AI Tools:** Finance Ministry has strictly banned GenAI tools (ChatGPT, DeepSeek, etc.) on official computers due to confidentiality risks. Other departments are considering similar restrictions. A broader debate is ongoing on whether to “shield” government systems from foreign AI tools.
- **Push for indigenous LLMs:** Under the IndiaAI Mission (₹10,370 crore), 12 Indian large language models (LLMs) are being developed. A governance-focused LLM by **Sarvam** is expected soon.
- **Political and Strategic Direction:** Increasing emphasis on swadeshi digital tools over global platforms. Ministers shifting to Indian office suites (e.g., Zoho) is part of this trend. Past examples include: Koo push (2021) and Chinese app bans (2020).
- **Ongoing Regulatory Steps:** An IT Ministry subcommittee has recommended an India-specific AI risk assessment framework, a whole-of-government approach to AI governance and rules based on real-world evidence of harm.

Disclosure of Arrest Grounds for IPC & BNS Offences Mandatory- Supreme Court

The Supreme Court (SC) held that arresting authorities must give written grounds of arrest for Indian Penal Code, 1860 (IPC) and Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS) offences too, not just for special laws like Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA), strengthening personal liberty protections.

Background of the Case

- Case arose from the **2024 BMW hit-and-run incident (Worli, Mumbai)**.
- Accused argued their arrest was **illegal** as written grounds of arrest were **not supplied**.
- Bombay High Court (HC) upheld the arrest and the accused appealed to the SC.
- SC granted bail and focused **only on the legal questions**, not merits of the case.

Significance of the Ruling:

- **Strengthens Procedural Due Process:** Reinforces Articles 21 and 22 obligations for all arrests.
- **Extends Equal Protection:** Removes arbitrary distinction between ordinary penal laws and special statutes.
- **Improves Transparency & Accountability:** Written grounds prevent misuse of arrest powers under CrPC/BNS.
- **Enhances Access to Justice:** Ensures early legal consultation and helps accused challenge illegal detentions.
- **Strengthens Magistrate's Role:** Magistrate becomes a critical checkpoint against illegal arrest/remand.
- **Important for Prison Reforms and Human Rights:** Acknowledges mental health, physical conditions, and dignitarian harms due to arrest.

What did the SC Rule?

- ✓ **Mandatory Disclosure for All Arrests:** Grounds of arrest must be **communicated to every arrestee**, for IPC offences, BNS offences and special statutes (e.g., PMLA, UAPA). This requirement stems from **Articles 21 and 22(1)** and is **not a mere procedural formality**, but a fundamental rights safeguard.

Constitutional Basis

- ✓ **Article 21 (Life & Personal Liberty):** Arrest affects physical liberty; hence procedure must be fair, just and reasonable. Informing grounds of arrest is part of that fair procedure.
- ✓ **Article 22(1) (Rights of Arrested Persons):** Mandates prompt communication of grounds of arrest, right to consult and be defended by a legal practitioner.
- ✓ **Written Communication Requirements:** Grounds must be **provided in writing**, in a **language the arrestee understands** and supplied **within a reasonable time** and **at least 2 hours before production before the magistrate**. **Non-compliance** renders the arrest and remand **illegal**, entitling the person to be released.
- ✓ **Duties of Police and Magistrates:**

Police Obligations:
Record in the station diary **who was informed** about the arrest and ensure **timely supply** of written arrest grounds before remand.

Magistrate's Obligations: Verify during remand whether-

- grounds were communicated,
- they were written,
- they were in a language understood by the accused,
- communication was timely.

Failure to ensure these conditions makes the **remand illegal**.

- ✓ **Exceptions & Practical Flexibility:** The Court acknowledged practical constraints in certain policing situations:
 - ✓ **Normal Cases (Documentary Basis Available):** Police must provide **written grounds at the time of arrest**.
 - ✓ **Exceptional Cases (Caught Red-handed / In Flagrante Delicto):** Immediate written communication may be impossible. Police may convey grounds **orally** at the time of arrest but must supply **written grounds later**, within reasonable time and **at least 2 hours before remand**.
 - ✓ **Balancing Requirement:** Constitutional safeguards must be upheld but cannot become **procedural hurdles** that obstruct legitimate law enforcement.

Aabhar Online Store

- The Indian Railways (IR) has directed its units to utilise the newly launched 'Aabhar' online store to promote indigenous craftsmanship and local artisans.
- Promoted with the '**Vocal for Local**' campaign, the store features gift items and products manufactured by indigenous tribes, handloom weavers and products under the ambit of **One District One Product (ODOP)** and **Geographical Indication (GI)**.
- Hosted by the **Government e-Marketplace (GeM)**, the store sources gift items exclusively from the Central Cottage Industries Emporium (CCIE), Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), and various Central and State Handicraft and Handloom Emporiums.

Significance

- Through this step, IR aims to provide **stable institutional demand by providing market access** to local artisans, rural entrepreneurs and women-led enterprises.
- IR's patronage offers **scale and visibility** to the programme, which can catalyse further growth of artisan enterprises. It will also aid to **preserve and promote India's rich heritage** through handlooms, handicrafts, artisanal goods.

National Beekeeping and Honey Mission

India's honey sector is undergoing a structured transformation as the National Beekeeping and Honey Mission (NBHM) continues to scale scientific beekeeping across the country.

Significance of Beekeeping

- Beekeeping, an **agro-based activity** undertaken by farmers and landless labourers in rural areas, forms an integral part of the **Integrated Farming System**.
 - Integrated farming refers to agricultural systems that integrate livestock, fisheries, crop production, horticulture, etc.
- It plays a crucial role in **pollination**, thereby enhancing **crop yields** and **farmers' income** while

National Beekeeping and Honey Mission (NBHM)



- ✓ NBHM is a **Central Sector Scheme** for **promoting scientific beekeeping** and the production of quality honey and other beehive products. The goal is to bring about a **Sweet Revolution**.
- ✓ Implemented through the **National Bee Board**, the mission has a total budget outlay of **Rs. 500 crores** and is being implemented for the period **FY 2020-21 to FY 2025-26**.

Objectives of NBHM

- ✓ Promote holistic growth in the beekeeping industry for **income and employment generation**.
- ✓ Additional **infrastructural facilities** for developing quality nucleus stock of honeybees and for post-harvest and marketing infrastructures.
- ✓ Promote, develop and disseminate **the latest technologies and skill development** in the beekeeping industry.
- ✓ Setting up of state-of-the-art **Quality Control Labs** for testing of honey & other beehive products at regional levels and Mini/Satellite Labs at district levels
- ✓ Develop **blockchain/ traceability system** for traceability of source of honey & other beehive products.
- ✓ Develop and facilitate **Honey Corridors** in potential areas.
Promote **agri-entrepreneurs & agri-startups**.
- ✓ **Promote trade agreements** between beekeepers & traders/honey processors/exporters.
Empowerment of women through beekeeping.
- ✓ Maximize, **economic, ecological, and social benefits** by diversification through beekeeping.
- ✓ Strengthen beekeepers by developing **institutional frameworks** through collective approaches like formation of SHGs/Farmer Producer Organizations/Beekeepers Cooperatives/Federations, etc.

Sub schemes under NBHM-3 Mini Missions

- ✓ **Mini Mission-I:** Focus is on **production & productivity improvement** of various crops through pollination assisted by **adoption of scientific beekeeping**;
- ✓ **Mini Mission-II:** It concentrates on **post-harvest management of beekeeping/beehive products** including collection, processing, storage, marketing, value addition, etc.
- ✓ **Mini Mission-III:** It works on **research & technology generation** for different regions/states/agro-climatic and socio-economic conditions.

providing honey and other high-value beehive products such as beeswax, bee pollen, propolis, royal jelly, bee venom, etc.

Progress and Achievements

- In 2024, India produced ~**1.4 lakh metric tonnes (MT)** of natural honey. Major Indian states producing honey are Uttar Pradesh (17%), West Bengal (16%), Punjab (14%), Bihar (12%) and Rajasthan (9%).
- India is now the **second-largest exporter of honey** after China, up from the 9th rank in 2020.
- India exported around **1.07 lakh MT** of natural honey worth **USD 177.5 million** in **FY 2023-24**. **Major export destinations** included USA, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Libya.
- A **National Centre of Excellence** in Beekeeping has been sanctioned at **IIT, Roorkee**.
- The **Madhukranti portal** has been launched for online **registration and traceability** of the source of honey and other bee products.

Marine Fisheries Census 2025

The Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying has launched the national **Marine Fisheries Census (MFC) 2025** Household Enumeration.

Key Features

- The **fifth edition** of the census will cover **over 1.2 million fisher households** across 5,000 marine fishing villages, in 13 coastal States and UTs.
- The digital approach enables real-time, granular, geo-referenced data collection, eliminating manual errors and significantly accelerating data processing.
- **Integration with NFDP:** All fishers are registered on the National Fisheries Digital Platform (NFDP), which is crucial for seamless e-governance and direct access to Central Government welfare schemes.
- **Expanded Socio-economic Data:** For the first time, it includes detailed information on crucial indicators like total family income, homeownership, outstanding liabilities, and sources of credit.
- **Focus on Vulnerability:** Data will be gathered on insurance status, major losses or disabilities, specific socio-economic impacts of the COVID on fisher families, and the receipt of benefits from schemes like Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) /Pradhan Mantri Matsya Kisan Samridhi Sah-Yojana (PM-MKSSY).
- **Institutional Mapping:** New schedules focusing on Fish Farmer Producer Organizations (FFPOs) and SHGs are introduced to facilitate collectivization and strengthen the value chain.



Digital Census

- MFC 2025 marks a **complete digital transformation** of the national enumeration process, moving away entirely from conventional paper-based methods. The **slogan** of MFC 2025 is '**Smart Census, Smarter Fisheries**'.
- The digital census is powered by a set of custom-made, multilingual Android applications developed by the **nodal agency, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research–Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI)**:
 - ✓ **VyAS–NAV:** for validation of fishing villages and harbours.
 - ✓ **VyAS–BHARAT:** for household and infrastructure enumeration and
 - ✓ **VyAS–SUTRA:** for real-time supervision & monitoring of households & enumerators
- **Drone technology** will also be utilised to enhance transparency and efficiency in data collection.

Employees Enrolment Scheme 2025

- The **Ministry of Labour and Employment** has launched the Employees Enrolment Scheme (EES) 2025.
- It aims to bring a large number of workers under the ambit of organized social security through Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO).

- It is a **voluntary one-time window** for employers to declare and enroll employees who were eligible under Employees' Provident Funds but had **not been enrolled earlier**. The scheme shall be operational from November 1, 2025, to April 30, 2026.
- A similar enrolment scheme was conducted in the year 2017 for the enrolment of left-out eligible employees from 2009 to 2016.
- The employee's share of provident fund contribution for the period (from July 2017, to October 2025) will be waived, provided it was not deducted from the employee's wages. The employer is only required to pay their own share for such period.
- All establishments are eligible to participate in the scheme irrespective of the fact whether any establishment is facing inquiries.

Significance

- It will enhance **social security coverage** by bringing more employees into the EPFO net — especially those who were left out of formal enrolment in the past.
- It simplifies **regularisation of past omissions** with minimal cost/penalty, thereby encouraging formalisation of labour and compliance by employers.
- For employees, this means access to PF benefits, retirement savings, and other protections under EPF, for periods previously un-covered.
- For employers, it provides an opportunity to reduce legal risk and penalty by taking proactive action during the window.

Foreign Liabilities and Assets Census

- RBI released the provisional results of the **2024-25 census on foreign liabilities and assets (FLA)** covering cross-border liabilities and assets of the Indian entities.
- The FLA census is an annual exercise that captures **information on the foreign liabilities and assets of Indian direct investment (DI) companies** — both inward - FDI into India and outward - Overseas Direct Investment (ODI).
- The data helps the RBI compile India's external sector statistics and assess cross-border investment trends.

Key findings

FDI

- A total of **45,702 Indian entities** were surveyed in 2024-25, and of these, **41,517 reported FDI (inward) and/or ODI (outward)** on their balance sheet. Over **three-fourths** of the companies that reported inward direct investment were **subsidiaries of foreign companies** (single foreign investor holding more than 50% of total equity). The total **FDI (inward)** was **Rs 68,75,931 crore**, up from Rs 61,88,243 crore in the preceding year. In terms of **source-countries for FDI**, the top five countries are **United States (20%), Singapore (14.3%), Mauritius (13.3%), the U.K. (11.2%) and the Netherlands (9%)**.
- The **manufacturing sector accounted for the highest share** of total FDI equity capital at market value (48.4%) as well as at face value (37.8%).
- The services sector was the second-highest shareholder in total FDI equity capital at market value.
- In case of **ODI** the total amount was **Rs 11,66,790 crore**, with **Singapore (22.2%), followed by the U.S. (15.4%), the U.K. (12.8%) and the Netherlands (9.6%)**.
- Non-financial companies held 90.5% of the FDI equity at face value.
- More than **97 % of the responding DI entities** were **unlisted companies**, yet they captured the majority of the FDI equity capital.
- In terms of market value, the growth of ODI (17.9%) outpaced the growth of FDI (11.1%) in India, in rupee terms.
- As a result, the ratio of inward to outward DI stood at 5.9 times in March 2025 as compared to 6.3 times a year ago.

India Development and Strategic Fund (IDSF)

- The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has suggested setting up a **sovereign-backed, professionally managed India Development and Strategic Fund (IDSF)**.
- Conceived as a national fund, IDSF would mobilise patient, long-horizon capital to build India's productive capacity at home and secure critical economic interests abroad.

- **Need:** The proposal is based on the recognition that India's growth ambitions in infrastructure, energy transition, manufacturing, technology, and human development will require funding at a scale that cannot be met by annual budgetary allocations alone.

Funding

- The proposed capitalisation roadmap includes a **modest initial budgetary allocation** to establish credibility.
- This can be followed by systematic channeling of a **share of asset monetisation proceeds** from roads, transmission lines, ports, spectrum etc. into the fund.
- Over time, a **portion of the government's equity in select public sector enterprises** could be transferred to the fund.
- This will also help to turn these enterprises into instruments of India's global expansion instead of mere disinvestment targets.
- In addition, the IDSF could also **issue thematic instruments such as infrastructure, green, and diaspora bonds** to mobilise long-term domestic and international savings, while co-investing with multilateral and bilateral partners.
- Later on, a small portion of **India's foreign exchange reserves** can be considered for overseas strategic acquisitions in areas like critical minerals and energy.
- The proposal is not about more borrowing. It is about better capital structuring, recycling existing national strength into future assets instead of one-time fiscal use.
- With disciplined design and funding, IDSF could, over the next two decades, build a managed corpus in the range of **\$1.3 to 2.6 trillion by 2047**, comparable to the world's leading sovereign investors.

Twin arms: IDSF would be a **twin-arm national fund** that would mobilise domestic and global savings and recycle national capital from mature assets into new productive capacity.

Development arm

- The development arm would focus on **financing long-gestation domestic priorities** such as infrastructure, clean energy, logistics, industrial corridors, MSME scale-up, education and skilling, healthcare, and urban infrastructure.
- It would **provide patient equity and blended finance** to commercially viable projects that require long-term commitment.
- It would act as an anchor investor, crowding in pension funds, sovereign wealth funds, and institutional investors from India and abroad.
- The existing National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) could be evolved into this developmental arm, utilising its governance architecture and global investor base.

Strategic arm

- The strategic arm would **acquire and secure overseas assets** critical for India's long-term economic and security interests.
- These range from energy assets and critical minerals to frontier technologies such as semiconductors, Artificial Intelligence, and key global logistics and port assets.
- It would give India the ability to act proactively and own rather than merely buy, in critical supply chains and technologies shaping the future global economy.

Blended Finance

- It is an innovative approach to development financing that strategically combines public, philanthropic, and private capital to fund sustainable development initiatives, particularly in low income and developing countries.
- It is defined as the strategic use of development finance for the mobilisation of additional finance towards sustainable development in developing countries.

Governance

- A statutory **India Development and Strategic Fund Act** should be drafted to define the fund's mandate, capital sources, withdrawal rules, and disclosure norms.
- It should retain **majority ownership and strategic control with the government**, while being run by a professional board combining senior government representation and global investment expertise.
- The fund should publish a **periodic IDSF Review**, with a public dashboard on corpus size, portfolio mix, sectoral and geographic exposure, and performance metrics.
- Annual withdrawal limits should be capped as a percentage of the corpus to prevent fiscal misuse.
- Independent audit and risk frameworks should manage currency, geopolitical, and governance risks.

World Cooperative Monitor 2025

- Two farmer-owned cooperatives of India have emerged as the world's top cooperatives.
- Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd**, which markets dairy products under Amul brand, has been ranked as the number one co-operative in the world.
- The **Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO)** has emerged as the number two cooperative, globally. IFFCO, is a cooperative engaged in the manufacture and marketing of fertilisers.
- The ranking has been done by **International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) World Cooperative Monitor 2025**. The rankings were given based on **GDP per capita performance**.
- Amul is owned entirely by farmers. They manage everything, from milk collection and manufacturing to marketing.
- Amul has a three-tier cooperative structure, encompassing more than 18,600 village dairy cooperatives and 36 lakh milk producers, the majority of whom are women.
- Its impact goes beyond economics, as its model supports multiple SDGs from poverty reduction and gender equality to sustainable communities.



International Cooperative Alliance (ICA)

- ✓ **Headquartered in Brussels**, the ICA is the apex body representing cooperatives worldwide and promotes their sustainable business model.
- ✓ **Founded in 1895**, it is one of the oldest NGOs and one of the largest ones measured by the number of people represented: **1 billion cooperative members**.
- ✓ Its members are international and national cooperative organisations from all sectors of the economy. More than 306 organisations from 105 countries are its members.

World Cooperative Monitor (WCM)

- ✓ WCM is developed annually by **ICA in partnership with EURICSE** (European Research Institute on Cooperative and Social Enterprises).
- ✓ It analyses the economic and social impact of the world's largest cooperatives across sectors.

India Crosses 500GW Power Capacity

- In a landmark achievement for India's power sector, the country's total installed electricity capacity has surpassed 500 gigawatts (GW), with renewable and other non-fossil sources now accounting for more than half of the nation's power mix
- India's installed capacity now stands at 500.89 GW, of which **256.09 GW (over 51%) comes from non-fossil fuel sources** – including renewable energy, large hydro, and nuclear – while **244.80 GW (about 49%) comes from fossil-fuel-based generation**.
- Within renewables, **solar power leads with 127.33 GW**, followed by **wind energy at 53.12 GW**, underlining India's emergence as one of the world's largest renewable energy markets.
- With this achievement, India has already met one of its key COP26 Panchamrit commitments – achieving 50% of installed power capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030 – five years ahead of schedule.

SEBI Flags Digital Gold Risks

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has issued a public advisory for investors against putting money into digital gold or e-gold products, cautioning that such instruments fall outside its regulatory framework and carry significant risks.

Alternatives

- Investors should instead use Sebi-regulated instruments, including Gold Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs), exchange-traded commodity derivatives, and Electronic Gold Receipts (EGRs) that are tradable on recognised stock exchanges.
- These instruments come under regulatory oversight, protecting investors from counterparty risks along with transparent price discovery.
 - Counterparty risk is the chance that a party in a financial transaction will default on its contractual obligations before the final settlement. This can result in a financial loss for the other party.

Starlink Signs Deal With Maharashtra

- Maharashtra became the first Indian state to formally collaborate with Elon Musk-owned Starlink Satellite Communications to deliver satellite-based internet connectivity across remote and underserved regions.
- The collaboration supports the state's flagship Digital Maharashtra Mission and integrates with its EV, Coastal Development, and Disaster Resilience programs.
- It will help to connect tribal schools, primary health centres, disaster control rooms, forest outposts, and aspirational districts such as Gadchiroli, Nandurbar, Dharashiv, and Washim.
- It will power connectivity along key infrastructure corridors such as the Samruddhi Mahamarg, coastal vehicles and ports, and coastal surveillance.

Ybrant Program

- The Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA), in collaboration with WNS Global Services, has launched the Ybrant program.
- It is a six-month learning program on **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG), and Sustainability**.
- It is a **blended learning model** through a strategic collaboration between government, academia and the corporate sector.
- It is a step toward nurturing a new generation of sustainability-driven and socially responsible leaders.
- The idea is to prepare students for leadership roles that align business performance with positive social impact.

Digital Gold



- ➔ Digital gold refers to buying gold without physically possessing it. The price of digital gold is linked to physical gold.
- ➔ Digital gold is created using blockchain technology. It allows investors to buy, sell, and store gold electronically. It is easy to access and allows one to sell it quickly in case of an emergency.
- ➔ Unlike traditional gold purchases which require large investments, digital gold or e-gold products allow investors to invest with smaller amounts.
- ➔ It also eliminates the storage hassle, which is the biggest challenge associated with physical gold.
- ➔ Unlike gold ETF, investing in digital gold does not require a demat account, making it a more convenient option and driving higher investor interest.

Issues with digital gold

- ➔ Several online platforms selling digital gold have grown rapidly, especially among younger investors, offering fractional gold ownership, easy redemption, and store of value appeal.
- ➔ However, many such platforms operate without full transparency on whether the gold is physically backed, where it is stored and how redemption works. If the platform fails or the backing is weak, investors will have to bear the losses.
- ➔ Such digital gold products are different from Sebi-regulated gold products as they are **neither notified as securities nor regulated as commodity derivatives**.
- ➔ Thus, investor protection mechanisms applicable to regulated securities do not extend to such unregulated schemes.

Satellite services

- Terrestrial telecom services rely on fibre-optic cables and cellular towers. These infrastructures are limited to urban and suburban areas, where it is feasible to install physical network infrastructure.
- Starlink's LEO (Low Earth Orbit) satellite technology allows it to provide internet access in areas where traditional broadband infrastructure is impractical or uneconomical.
- Traditionally, internet services via satellite have relied on high-Earth orbit (HEO) or geostationary orbit satellites, positioned over 30,000 km above sea level.
- In contrast, LEO satellite constellations orbit the Earth at a much lower altitude—typically 200–2,000 km.

Benefits of LEO satellites

- **Lower latency:** Signals from geostationary satellites have to travel much farther, leading to delays and slower speeds. LEO satellites, being closer to Earth, reduce signal travel time, resulting in faster and more responsive connectivity.
- **Better efficiency:** The shorter distance means lower signal loss and more reliable communication with lower power requirements and smaller antennas.

Challenges of LEO satellites

- **Limited coverage per satellite:** Since LEO satellites orbit closer to Earth, each one covers a smaller area, requiring a larger constellation to provide global coverage.
- **Higher operational costs:** Maintaining a network of fast-moving satellites requires extensive ground infrastructure, making it more expensive to deploy and operate compared to geostationary satellites.

- India's *CSR expenditure* has grown from Rs 10,065.9 crores in FY 2014–15 to Rs 34,908.75 crores in FY 2023–24, and more than 2.2 lakh crores have been spent on CSR in the last 10 years by the companies,
- At this stage, the CSR ecosystem needs a cadre of professionals who understand the balance between just profit making and a responsible business conduct.
- The program will develop an outlook in which business will be seen not just as a means for profit, but as a force multiplier for sustainable and inclusive development.

Integrated Sohra Circuit Development

- The Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER) laid the foundation stone for the Integrated Sohra Circuit Development under the Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North Eastern Region (PM-DevINE) scheme.
- Conceptualised jointly by MDoNER and the *Government of Meghalaya*, the circuit aims to transform Sohra into a multi-day experiential tourism destination rooted in sustainability and local livelihoods.
- The Sohra Experience Centre will serve as the cultural nucleus of the circuit, showcasing Meghalaya's diverse tribal heritage.
- Supporting projects include the **Nohkalikai Falls precinct, Mawmai Eco Park, Seven Sisters Falls Viewpoint, Shella Riverside Development, and Wahkaliar Canyon.**
- Collectively, these projects are expected to increase tourist spending sixfold, while generating over 4,600 direct and indirect employment opportunities.

PM-DevINE scheme

- Launched in 2022, PM-DevINE is a **Central Sector Scheme** (100% Central funding) to address development gaps in the North East Region (NER).
- The scheme is implemented through the North-Eastern Council (NEC) and covers all the eight North East states.
- Projects under the scheme must be **additional** — i.e. they should not duplicate existing central or state schemes.

Objectives

- Fund infrastructure projects convergently in the spirit of PM Gati Shakti.
- Support social development projects based on the felt needs of the NER.
- Enable livelihood projects for youth and women in the region.
- Fill development gaps in various sectors in the region.

Infrastructure and Connectivity Projects

- Along side the circuit, several critical infrastructure projects were inaugurated to enhance regional mobility and trade.
- **Pynursla–Latangriwan–Mawlynnong road** — providing all-weather access to Asia's cleanest village and boosting cross-border tourism and local trade.
- Upgradation of **Mawshynrut–Hahim (Athiabari) road** to strengthen agricultural connectivity in western Meghalaya.
- A major bridge over the Umngot River on the Jongksha–Wahiajer road linking East Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills for better movement of people and goods.

IPPB EPFO MoU

- India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) has signed an MoU with Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO).
- The MoU aims to provide **doorstep Digital Life Certificate (DLC) services** to its pensioners under the Employees' Pension Scheme, 1995.
- Also known as **Jeevan Pramaan**, DLC is a biometric-enabled digital process that allows pensioners to digitally authenticate their existence to receive their pension.
- IPPB will utilise its wide network of over 1.65 lakh Post Offices and 3 lakh+ postal service providers (Postmen and Gramin Dak Sevaks) equipped with Doorstep Banking devices.

- Face Authentication technology and Fingerprint biometric authentication will be used, to submit DLC digitally, eliminating the need to visit the bank or EPFO offices to submit traditional paper-based certificates.
- EPFO will bear the cost of issuing DLC entirely, making the service free for their pensioners.
- The initiative aligns with the government's '**Digital India**' and '**Ease of Living**' vision, harnessing technology and postal infrastructure to ensure inclusive service delivery for senior citizens and pensioners.

Electronics Development Fund

- India's electronics sector has witnessed a transformation in recent years, driven by a series of government initiatives including the Electronics Development Fund (EDF).
- **Launched in 2016**, EDF aims to promote research, development, and entrepreneurship in the fields of electronics, nano-electronics, and IT.
- It functions as a **Fund of Funds**, designed to invest in professionally managed **Daughter Funds** such as early-stage angel and venture funds.
- These Daughter Funds, in turn, provided risk capital to startups and companies developing new technologies.

Achievements

- EDF has invested **Rs 257.77 crore** in eight Daughter Funds. These Daughter Funds have made further investments of **Rs 1,335.77 crore** across **128** startups and ventures.
- The supported startups have created over **23,600 jobs** in high-technology sectors.
- The startups operate in frontier areas like Internet of Things (IoT), robotics, drones, autonomous vehicles, health-tech, cyber security, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, positioning India as a hub for advanced technological innovation.
- A total of **368** Intellectual Properties (IPs) have been created or acquired by the supported startups.
- Out of the **128 supported startups**, Daughter Funds have exited from 37 investments. The cumulative returns received by EDF from exits and partial exits stand at Rs 173.88 crore.

Objectives

- **Promote Innovation:** To foster R&D in the sector by supporting market-driven and industry-led innovation.
- **Encourage Product and Technology Development:** To nurture entrepreneurship by supporting companies involved in the creation of new products, processes, and technologies within the country.
- **Strengthen Domestic Design Capabilities:** To enhance India's capacity for indigenous design and development in the Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) sector.
- **Build a National IP Resource Pool:** To generate a strong base of intellectual property in key technology areas and encourage ownership of innovation within India.
- **Facilitate Strategic Acquisitions:** To enable acquisition of foreign technologies and companies where such products are imported in large volumes, promoting self-reliance and reducing import dependence.

YUVA AI for ALL

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) under the India AI Mission has introduced 'YUVA AI for ALL'.
- It is a 4.5-hour free online learning programme aimed at making AI accessible and understandable to every Indian—particularly students.
- It is a part of the IndiaAI Mission and aims to reduce digital inequality, promote responsible use of modern tools, and prepare India's youth and workforce for a tech-driven future.
- The course is divided into six short modules and targets empowering one crore citizens with foundational AI skills while promoting ethical, responsible and inclusive adoption of the technology.
- It is available on major learning platforms like FutureSkills Prime, iGOT Karmayogi, and several well-known ed-tech sites.

India re-elected to Codex Executive Committee

- India has been re-elected to the Executive Committee of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CCEXEC) for the Asia region, at the 48th Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC48).
- The move confirms India's collaborative leadership role until the end of CAC50 (2027), ensuring the technical and trade priorities of the Asian continent are represented at the highest level.

Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC)

- It was established in 1963 by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to implement the joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Program.
- The CAC is an intergovernmental body, with 189 Codex Members made up of 188 Member Countries and 1 Member Organization (The European Union). India became a member in 1964.
- The CCEXEC plays a critical role in reviewing proposals for new work and monitoring the progress of standards development.

Codex standards

- The collection of food standards and related texts adopted by the CAC is known as the Codex Alimentarius. The term **Codex Alimentarius** is Latin and means **food code**.
- Codex standards are **international food texts** i.e. standards, codes of practice, guidelines and other recommendations.
- They include provisions covering food hygiene, food additives, residues of pesticides and veterinary drugs, contaminants, labelling and presentation, methods of analysis and sampling, and import and export inspection and certification.
- They are **not a substitute for, or alternative to national laws**. The standards are voluntary. Countries' own laws must still be followed.

Significance of Codex standards

- Codex standards aim at protecting consumers' health and ensuring fair practices in the food trade.
- Thus, the standards help to enhance trust among consumers regarding the safety and quality of the food products they buy.
- It also helps to build trust among importers as the food ordered by them, is in accordance with the required specifications.

Safeguards Introduced by Serious Fraud Investigation Office

- The Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) has introduced new technical and procedural safeguards to prevent misuse of summons.
- During an investigation, SFIO issues summons and notices as per the provisions of the Companies Act, 2013.
- Digitally generated notices with **QR codes**, Document Identification Number (**DIN**) and **online verification systems** have been introduced to ensure authenticity and protect citizens from impersonation.
- Besides, a transparent multi-layer review mechanism has been put in place at SFIO to oversee the issuance of summons and notices.

Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO)

- The SFIO is a **statutory corporate fraud investigating agency**, set up to solve serious, complex frauds under the Companies Act, 2013. It is under the jurisdiction of **Ministry of Corporate Affairs**.
- It is a multi-disciplinary organization having experts from financial sector, capital market, accountancy, forensic audit, taxation, law, information technology, company law, customs and investigation.
- SFIO is headed by a Director as Head of Department in the rank of Joint Secretary to the Government of India
- The SFIO also has the **powers to arrest people** for violations of the company law.

Impact RISE Initiative

- IIT Kharagpur has launched Impact RISE (Research, Innovation, Skilling, and Entrepreneurship), an initiative that focuses on sustainable technological and management practices for societal transformation.
- Its aim is to move beyond academic publications to build solutions in labs, pilot them on campus, and extend sustainable technologies and impact models to the whole world.
- The initiative has **four pillars** – research, innovation, skilling, and entrepreneurship.

- It will involve research aligned with SDGs and India's climate and development priorities.
- The initiative will be activated through missions focusing on:
 - Climate resilience in the Sundarbans;
 - Use of IIT Kharagpur's AI health diagnostics;
 - Women's health with a focus on low-cost devices for screening of anaemia and oral cancer;
 - Use of arsenic filters and smart soil scanners to provide safe water.

Digital Initiatives for PDS

- The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution has launched several digital initiatives aimed at modernizing warehousing operations, improving supply chain efficiency, and enhancing transparency across the Public Distribution System (PDS).
- The initiatives include Bhandara 360 a cloud-based platform, Smart EXIM Warehouse, Anna Darpan an integrated cloud-based operations system and ASHA a holistic AI solution.

Bhandaran 360	Smart EXIM Warehouse System
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) platform of the Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC). • The system integrates 41 modules covering HR, finance, marketing, warehouse management, contract management, project monitoring and other core functions. • It is also linked with 35 external systems, including ICEGATE, port systems and Food Corporation of India (FCI), enabling seamless digital connectivity across the food storage and movement ecosystem. • It offers real-time dashboards showing operations from warehouse level to corporate level and also provides predictive analytics for faster decision making. • It helps to standardize operations across all CWC warehouses and support faster expansion, better service quality and improved accountability. • It aids ease of doing business and ease of living for farmers, Farmer Producer Organizations, cooperatives, traders, MSME's and large enterprises including e-commerce players. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CWC has also introduced the Smart EXIM Warehouse System for container freight stations (CFS) and general warehouses. It uses AI, IoT, FASTag, Optical Character Recognition (OCR) and other technologies to automate key processes. • Major components <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Gate Automation System integrated with port and rail systems for auto-fetching vehicle and container details, FASTag-based entry, and automatic record generation. ◦ Yard management with Digital Twin, providing real-time tracking of containers & equipment and optimizing movement inside the yard. ◦ Smart Inventory Management, which counts and tracks cargo in real time and auto-updates records with ERP-WMS (Warehouse Management System) integration. • These tools reduce manual intervention, speed up cargo handling and bring end-to-end transparency to logistics operations, improve turnaround time, and employee productivity.
ANNA DARPAN	Anna Sahayata Holistic AI Solution (ASHA)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced by FCI, ANNA DARPAN is a new microservices-based platform that replaces the existing Depot Online System. • It connects key activities such as procurement, storage, movement, sales, quality checks, labour management, and contract monitoring under one integrated system. • It serves as a single unified source of information for both FCI and Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD). • It provides reliable information flow for faster decisions and improved transparency and is expected to significantly improve the efficiency of India's food supply chain. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DFPD has launched ASHA, an AI-based platform that allows beneficiaries to share their feedback on ration distribution through AI enabled calls in their preferred language. • It is developed in partnership with Wadhvani foundation and backed by India AI mission via Bhashini's multilingual AI infrastructure. • It helps beneficiaries report whether they received their full entitlement, the quality of foodgrains, and any difficulty faced at Fair Price Shops. • In doing so, it aids citizen participation in the PDS and supports evidence-based decision-making. • It uses multilingual translation, sentiment analysis, automated grievance categorization, and real-time dashboards for administrators.

Womaniya Initiative

- Government e-Marketplace (GeM) and the *UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)* have signed an MoU.
- The MoU aims to enhance the empowerment and integration of women entrepreneurs from the informal sector into the country's public procurement ecosystem.
- It focuses on promoting **gender-responsive procurement** by encouraging increased sourcing from women-led businesses and expanding market access for women entrepreneurs under GeM's Womaniya initiative.
- Under the collaboration, UN Women will design training materials, recommend global best practices, and assist in developing validation criteria for women-led businesses.

- UN Women will also support onboarding of UN programme participants and encourage MSME Udyam Registration.
- GeM will engage women trainers and align women entrepreneurs with Government Labs and R&D institutes to support product development, improvement and market readiness.
- Together, GeM and UN Women, will contribute to achievement of **Sustainable Development Goal 5 – Gender Equality and Empowerment of All Women and Girls**.

Womaniya

- Womaniya was **launched in 2019 by GeM** to encourage the participation of women entrepreneurs and SHG on the GeM portal and facilitate the sale of their products directly to various government buyers without intermediaries.
- It seeks to address the triple challenge of **access to markets, access to finance** and **access to value-addition** faced by women entrepreneurs.
- This helps to strengthen hyper-local procurement thereby integrating local value-chains through Vocal for Local and Make in India initiatives.
- It also aids the government's target of **3% in public procurement from women-owned** and led Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs).

Shaping Deep-Tech Revolution in Agriculture

- The World Economic Forum's Artificial Intelligence for Agriculture Initiative (AI4AI) has released a report titled *Shaping the Deep-Tech Revolution in Agriculture*
- The agricultural sector globally faces converging pressures: a shrinking workforce, intensifying climate extremes, natural resource degradation, rising food demand, and geopolitical instability.

Highlights

The report identifies seven promising deep-tech domains for tackling current and future agricultural challenges. These are:

- **Generative AI:** Offers tailored farmer advisory and pest management to agentic AI systems and climate risk simulations.
- **Computer Vision:** Provides real time pest and disease identification or plant stress detection.
- **Edge Internet of Things (IoT):** On-farm sensors/devices processing data locally for irrigation, fertilisation, pest control especially in remote/low-connectivity areas.
- **Robotics:** Permits the automation of labour-intensive tasks such as precision planting, weeding, and harvesting. It can improve decisions related to irrigation, fertilization, and disease management, while automating farm processes
- **Satellite-enabled remote sensing:** Allows continuous and large-scale monitoring of farm conditions at affordable costs, aiding data-driven decision making.
- **CRISPR:** Accelerates the development of crops with enhanced traits such as drought tolerance and pest resistance, bypassing lengthy traditional breeding cycles.
- **Nanotechnology:** Offers precision in nutrient and pesticide delivery, reducing input use and environmental impact.

These technology domains have the potential to trigger fundamental shifts in how crops are grown, monitored, protected, and distributed, consequently improving productivity, sustainability, and resilience across the sector.

Use Cases

- The report showcases use cases such as:
 - Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has developed CRISPR edited climate resilient rice varieties that emit 20% less emissions;
 - Precision agriculture in sugarcane that has improved yields by 40%; and
 - Use of remote sensing to predict supply chain risks and promote carbon finance to farmers.

Way Ahead

Report highlights the importance of industry, research and investor collaboration and cross learning to bring in multi-disciplinary expertise, manage early-stage risks, and unlock research capital.

AI4AI

- **Established in 2021**, AI4AI builds public-private partnerships to accelerate digital agriculture.
- It has been working across multiple regions to help stakeholders utilise emerging technologies to make agriculture more inclusive, sustainable, and efficient.
- By 2030, it aims to equip 10 million farmers, including 30% women—with emerging agri-tech solutions.

Tex-RAMPS Scheme

- The Union Government has approved the Textiles Focused Research, Assessment, Monitoring, Planning and Start-up (Tex-RAMPS) Scheme, to strengthen research, innovation and competitiveness in the textiles sector.
- It has a total outlay of Rs 305 crore for the period **FY 2025-26 to FY 2030-31** and will be implemented as a **Central Sector Scheme**, fully funded by the Ministry of Textiles.
- It is designed to address critical gaps in research, data systems, innovation support and capacity development and position the nation as a global leader in sustainability, technology, and competitiveness

Key Components

- **Research & Innovation:** Promotion of advanced research in smart textiles, sustainability, process efficiency, and emerging technologies to boost India's innovation capacity.
- **Data, Analytics & Diagnostics:** Creation of robust data systems including employment assessments, supply chain mapping, and India-Size study to facilitate evidence-based policymaking.
- **Integrated Textiles Statistical System (ITSS):** A real-time, integrated data and analytics platform to support structured monitoring and strategic decision-making.
- **Capacity Development & Knowledge Ecosystem:** Strengthening State-level planning, dissemination of best practices, capacity building workshops, and organisation of sectoral events.
- **Start-up & Innovation Support:** Support for incubators, hackathons, and academia-industry collaborations.

Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics 2025

- The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying released the Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics (BAHS) 2025 on the National Milk Day on November 26, 2025.
- National Milk Day is celebrated to commemorate the birth anniversary of Dr. Verghese Kurien, the Father of the White Revolution in India.
- BAHS provides comprehensive data on the livestock and dairy sector trends. It is based on the outcomes of the Integrated Sample Survey conducted for the period from March 2024 to February 2025.
- The survey generates production estimates of Major Livestock Products (MLPs) such as milk, eggs, meat, and wool, which plays a pivotal role in research and policy formulation in the livestock sector.

Milk Production

- India **ranks 1st** in milk production globally. The total milk production in the country was **247.87 million tonnes** in 2024-25.
- **Per capita availability** has increased to **485 gm/day** in 2024-25.
- **Top 5 milk producing States** are: Uttar Pradesh (15.66%), Rajasthan (14.82%), Madhya Pradesh (9.12%), Gujarat (7.78%), Maharashtra (6.71%). They together contribute 54.09% of total milk production.

Egg Production

- India **ranks 2nd** in egg production globally. The total egg production in the country was 149.11 billion nos. in 2024-25.
- **Per capita availability** of eggs increased to 106 nos/annum in 2024-25.
- **Top egg producers** are Andhra Pradesh (18.37%), Tamil Nadu (15.63 %), Telangana (12.98%).

Meat Production

- India **ranks 4th** in meat production globally. Total meat production in the country was 10.50 million tonnes during 2024-25.
- Meat production from poultry is 5.18 million tonnes, contributing about half of total meat production.
- The **top meat producing States** are West Bengal (12.46%), Uttar Pradesh (12.20%), Maharashtra (11.57%).

Wool Production

- The total wool production in the country was **34.57 million kg** during 2024-25.
- Major contribution in the wool production comes from Rajasthan (47.85%) followed by Jammu & Kashmir (22.88%), Gujarat (6.22%).

International Maritime Organisation

- India has been re-elected to the Council of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) for 2026-27.
 - IMO is a **specialized agency of the United Nations** with a mission to promote **safe, secure, and environmentally sound shipping**.
 - It was founded as the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO) in 1948 and became a specialized agency of the UN in 1959. It was renamed the International Maritime Organization in 1982.
 - **Headquartered in London**, IMO has 176 Member States and three Associate Members. India has been a member since **1959**.
- IMO's main role is to create a regulatory framework for the shipping industry that is fair and effective, universally adopted and universally implemented.
- It is also involved in legal matters, including liability and compensation issues and the facilitation of international maritime traffic.
- The IMO Assembly consists of all Member States and is the highest governing body of the Organization.
- The IMO Council acts as the executive organ of IMO and is responsible, under the Assembly, for supervising the work of the organization.

Guidelines for Digital Banking Channels

- RBI has issued final guidelines for digital banking channels.

- Digital banking channels are **electronic platforms** through which customers can access banking services without visiting a physical branch.
- Common examples include internet banking, mobile banking apps, digital wallets, ATMs.

Guidelines

- Banks cannot make it mandatory for customers to opt for any digital banking channel to avail facilities like debit cards.
- **Explicit consent:** It is mandatory for banks to **obtain explicit consent** from the customer for providing digital banking services. The consent must be recorded/documented.
 - However, banks can continue to obtain and record mobile numbers of customers to send transaction alerts and for other purposes in line with KYC requirements at the time of opening the accounts.
- **Risk controls:** Banks must put in place appropriate risk mitigation measures, risk-based transaction monitoring and surveillance mechanisms for transaction limits, transaction velocity limits, and fraud checks.
 - Study of customer transaction behaviour pattern and monitoring unusual transactions or obtaining prior confirmation from customers for outlier transactions may be incorporated in the systems.
- **Network independent:** Banks offering mobile banking service must ensure that the service is available across mobile networks and the service is network independent.
- **Third-party products and services,** including those of promoter groups or bank group entities cannot be displayed on banks' digital banking channels except when specifically permitted by the RBI.
- **Policy:** Banks must put in place a comprehensive policy for digital banking channels, taking into account all statutory and regulatory requirements.

New Rules for Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana

- The Ministry of Agriculture and Family Welfare has approved rules to cover crop losses due to **wild animal attacks** and **paddy inundation** under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY).
- Until now, such losses often went uncompensated as they were not covered under crop insurance.
- Paddy farmers in flood-prone and coastal States had been repeatedly affected by inundation during heavy rains and overflowing waterways.
- Paddy inundation was removed from the localised calamity category in 2018 due to concerns about moral hazard and the difficulty of assessing submerged crops.
- However, its exclusion led to a significant protection gap for farmers in districts prone to seasonal flooding.
- The new guidelines will be implemented from the **kharif season of 2026**.
- States will notify the list of wild animals responsible for crop damage and identify vulnerable districts or insurance units based on historical data.
- Farmers will be required to report localized crop losses (like wild animal damage or inundation) within 72 hours using the Crop Insurance App by uploading geotagged photographs.

{For more details on PMFBY, Refer-The Recitals, July 2025}

Scheme to Promote REPM Manufacturing

- The Union Cabinet has approved the **Scheme to Promote Manufacturing of Sintered Rare Earth Permanent Magnets (REPM)**.
- REPM is a strong permanent magnet made from alloys of rare-earth elements. REPMs like **neodymium magnets** and **samarium-cobalt magnets** are among the strongest permanent magnets in the world.

- REPMs are vital for electric vehicles, renewable energy, electronics, aerospace, and defence applications.
- Yet, their manufacturing is concentrated in just a few countries (Japan, Vietnam, China).
- India's consumption of REPM is expected to double by 2030, driven by the government's push for large-scale renewable energy expansion and EV adoption. Yet, India's demand for REPMs is met primarily through imports.

Scheme Details

- The scheme aims to establish **6,000 Metric Tons per Annum (MTPA)** of integrated REPM manufacturing in India.
- The total financial outlay of the scheme is Rs.7280 crore, comprising a **sales-linked incentives of Rs. 6450 crore** on REPM sales for five years and **capital subsidy of Rs.750 crore** for setting up REMP manufacturing facilities.
- The total duration of the scheme will be **7 years** from the date of award, including a **2-year gestation period** for setting up an integrated REPM manufacturing facility, and **5 years for incentive disbursement** on the sale of REPM.
- The scheme specifically focuses on sintered REPMs, which are primarily **neodymium, iron and boron (NdFeB) magnets**, considered the strongest and most commercially demanded.
 - These magnets use light rare-earth elements like **neodymium (Nd) and praseodymium (Pr)**, combined with **iron (Fe) and boron (B)**, for their strong magnetic properties.
 - They also use heavy rare-earth elements such as **dysprosium (Dy) and terbium (Tb)** to improve susceptibility to demagnetisation, especially at high temperatures.
- The production of these magnets involves various steps: mining, beneficiation, processing, extraction, refining to rare earth oxide, conversion of oxides to metal, then metal to alloy, and finally magnet manufacturing.
- The scheme aims to support integrated REPM manufacturing facilities which are capable of undertaking final three stages: Converting rare earth oxide to metal, metal to alloy, and alloy to REPM.

IMF Grading of India's National Accounts

- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has given **C grade** to India's national accounts statistics, which includes key figures such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross Value Added (GVA).
- While national accounts received a C rating, the overall rating was a B due to the rest of the aspects – prices, government finance statistics, external sector statistics, monetary and financial statistics, and inter-sectoral consistency – all receiving the B grade.
- The assessment is part of IMF's annual bilateral discussions with its members, which is required by Article IV of the **IMF's Articles of Agreement**.
- In these consultations, an IMF staff team visits the country, collects economic and financial information, and discusses with officials the country's economic developments and policies. A report is prepared following the consultations

Rating Scale

- The ratings range from A to D:
 - A: Data provided is adequate for IMF surveillance.
 - B: Data has some shortcomings but is **broadly adequate**.

	Country	Median rating	National accounts	Prices	Government finance	External sector
1	Brazil	A	A	A	A	A
2	China	B	C	B	C	B
3	India	B	C	B	B	B
4	South Africa	B	A	A	B	A
5	UK	A	A	A	A	A
6	US	A	A	A	A	A

Brazil, India, UK ratings from 2025 reports; China, South Africa, US from 2024.
Source: IMF Article IV consultation reports • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

- C: Data has “some” shortcomings which **somewhat hamper surveillance**.
- D: Data has “serious shortcomings that **significantly hamper surveillance**.

Key findings

- **Outdated base year:** India still uses 2011-12 as the base year for calculating real GDP. An economy as dynamic as India's changes significantly over a decade.
 - Using such an old structure of relative prices and economic weights means GDP growth may be misstated, as it doesn't fully capture the rise of new sectors like digital services.
- **Flawed deflation methods:** To calculate real (inflation-adjusted) GDP, India uses Wholesale Price Indices (WPI) due to a lack of Producer Price Indices (PPI).
 - More critically, it relies heavily on single deflation. The single deflation method can introduce cyclical bias, especially when wholesale inflation diverges from consumer or production price inflation
- **Unexplained discrepancies:** There are often large, unexplained gaps between the GDP calculated from the production side and the expenditure side.
 - This suggests problems in data coverage, particularly in capturing the full picture of the vast informal sector and certain types of expenditure.
- The Indian government has, from the beginning, used the income approach to measure GDP by measuring the incomes of the government, people, and companies.
 - However, it also provides an estimate based on the expenditure approach, which attempts to quantify GDP through the spending done by these entities.
 - Often, due to the differing data sources and their coverage, the two estimates of GDP differ, which has attracted criticism from experts.
- **Missing Consolidated Data:** Consolidated central and state government fiscal data have not been published since mid-2019. Further, consolidated general government data, which would include local government and extrabudgetary funds, are not compiled.
 - This means it is impossible to accurately assess India's true fiscal deficit and public debt, as state-level borrowing is a significant component.
- **Data lag:** The RBI publishes a limited set of consolidated fiscal aggregates with a lag of more than one year.
 - Monthly data on fiscal operations for the central government and individual states are published on a timely basis, but consolidated fiscal accounts across all states are available with a long lag. This hampers real-time fiscal surveillance.
- **Outdated CPI:** Consumer Price Index is available at adequate frequency and timeliness. But, the rating granted (B) to coverage reflects the outdated CPI base year, items basket, and weights (2011-12) implying that the CPI basket likely fails to accurately represent current spending habits.

Corrective measures

- The IMF has acknowledged that India is actively working to address these issues.
- An update to 2022-23 base year for GDP and to 2024 base year for CPI, from February 2026, along with methodological improvements, is a welcome step.

Coal India Limited

- Coal India Limited (CIL) completed a milestone of 50 years of its establishment.
- CIL is a **Maharatna** Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) under the **Ministry of Coal**.
- It was **established in 1975** to consolidate India's coal mining operations and ensure energy security through organized, efficient, and sustainable coal production.

- **Headquartered in Kolkata**, it is the **largest coal-producing company** in the world.
- It contributes to **80% of total domestic coal production** and 75% of total coal based power generation.
- Across eight Indian states, CIL operates in 85 mining areas, managing a total of 310 working mines.

GI Tag for Ambaji Marble

- The Ambaji Marble – found in Banaskantha district of north Gujarat – has been granted a GI Tag by the Union Government.
- Ambaji Marble is known for its milky white colour, high calcium content, durability and natural beauty.
- It has been used in the construction of Ambaji temple and many other religious places, memorials and grand buildings.

President Murmu's State Visit to Angola

President of India, Droupadi Murmu, paid a State visit to Angola. This was the first ever State visit by an Indian Head of State to Angola and Botswana.

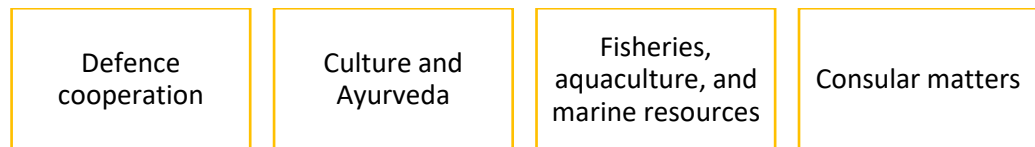
Key Highlights

- **Energy at the Core of India–Angola Partnership**

- President Murmu underscored that **energy cooperation forms the backbone of bilateral trade**, reaffirming Angola's importance in India's energy security.
- Both sides agreed to **diversify trade and investment** across technology, agriculture, health, defence, and infrastructure.

- **Signing of Key Agreements and MoUs**

- India and Angola signed several MoUs to institutionalise cooperation:



- Both sides also agreed to advance the Air Services Agreement to enhance connectivity.

- **A Milestone Moment in Bilateral Relations**

- Angola is marking its 50th Independence Day, and both countries celebrate 40 years of diplomatic ties in 2025.
- India is Angola's **second-largest trading partner**, accounting for about 10% of its external trade.
 - ♣ Bilateral trade **crossed USD 5 billion** last year, marking a historic milestone.

- **Role of Indian Community Recognised:**

- President Murmu acknowledged the contributions of the **8,000-strong Indian diaspora** in Angola, praising their entrepreneurship, hard work, and professional excellence.

India Pulls Out of Ayni Airbase

- India has withdrawn its personnel and equipment from the Ayni airbase in Tajikistan, its only full-fledged overseas military base, which it had developed and maintained for nearly two decades.
- The base had provided **strategic access to Central Asia** and a geopolitical advantage over Pakistan, while symbolising India's growing influence in a region shaped by Russia and China.
 - Located near **Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor**—bordering China's Xinjiang and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir—the base offered India valuable security and intelligence advantages in a geopolitically sensitive region.



- The withdrawal marks a significant shift in India's regional military presence and strategic outreach in Central Asia.

Why India Withdrew from the Ayni Airbase?

- India stated that its bilateral agreement with Tajikistan for the rehabilitation and use of the Ayni airbase had ended, and the facility was formally handed back in 2022.
- The Tajik government reportedly declined to renew the lease, influenced by pressure from Russia and China, both of which have strong strategic interests in the region.
- India's withdrawal of personnel and equipment followed quietly, with the development becoming public only recently.

Ayni Airbase: India's Strategic Outpost in Central Asia

- Initially used during India's support to the Northern Alliance against the Taliban, it also facilitated the evacuation of Indian nationals from Kabul in 2021.
- Originally a Soviet-era base, Ayni was renovated by India at a cost of around \$80 million under a 2002 bilateral agreement, with work led by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO).
- India upgraded it with a 3,200-metre runway, hangars, fuel depots, and air traffic control systems.

India's Overseas Military Presence: Limited but Strategically Expanding



- ◆ With the withdrawal from **Ayni airbase in Tajikistan**, India currently **does not operate any full-fledged overseas military base** in another country.
- ◆ **Strategic Infrastructure in Mauritius**
 - In 2024, India and Mauritius inaugurated an airstrip and jetty on **Agaléga Island** in the western Indian Ocean.
 - These facilities extend India's maritime reach across the Indian Ocean and enhance surveillance over waters near Africa's east coast, countering China's growing influence.
 - The upgraded airstrip now allows operation of P-8I maritime reconnaissance aircraft, strengthening India's naval capabilities.
- ◆ **Military Cooperation with Bhutan**
 - India maintains a training team in Bhutan, responsible for training the Royal Bhutan Army (RBA) and the Royal Bodyguard (RBG), symbolising deep military cooperation.
 - India has previously operated overseas during specific missions — from **Bangladesh** and **Sri Lanka** during the **1971 war** and the **IPKF** (Indian Peace Keeping Force) **deployment**, respectively.
- ◆ **Global Context**
 - While India has a modest overseas footprint, China operates a base in Djibouti and is reportedly expanding in Tajikistan.
 - The United States, by contrast, maintains over 100 overseas bases across key regions like South Korea, Qatar, Germany, and Japan, underscoring the global disparity in military reach.

Japan Shows the Way to Reduce China's Rare Earth Control

- China's one-year pause on export controls offers only temporary relief to global rare earth users, serving merely as a brief window to recalibrate strategies before Beijing tightens its grip again.
- Japan provides a proven model for resilience. Japan was the first to face China's coercive rare-earth export tactics.

Background: China's 2010 Rare Earths Blockade

- In 2010, after a collision involving a Chinese fishing boat and Japanese coast guard vessels, China halted rare earth exports to Japan.
- This created panic in Japan's automobile industry, which relied heavily on rare earth magnets and imported nearly 90% of these minerals from China.
- Though the dispute was later resolved, rare earth prices skyrocketed tenfold within a year, exposing Japan's extreme vulnerability and triggering its long-term push for supply chain resilience.
- Japan responded to China's 2010 export halt by stockpiling rare earths, boosting recycling & alternative technologies (cutting rare earth usage), and rapidly diversifying supply chains.
- It invested in mines in Australia and Vietnam and achieved partial **independence in critical minerals and fossil fuels by 2022**.
- Japan continues to import rare earths from China mainly for advanced materials but is now **building resilient networks**.

Japan's Self-Reliance Package: Reducing Dependence on China

- This multi-layered policy approach shows that no single solution can reduce vulnerability; instead, long-term planning, diversification, and strategic stockpiles are essential.

China's Expanding Global Control Over Rare Earths

- China's dominance is growing: **its share in global rare earth mining rose from 38% (2020) to 70% (2023), supported by investments in Africa and Latin America.**
- It also controls processing capacity in Malaysia and stakes in Australia's Lynas.
- This consolidation threatens global supply chains, especially in energy transition technologies and defence applications.



Implications for India: Limited Immediate Impact but Long-Term Challenges

- China's restrictions will not severely affect India now, but India needs a refreshed strategy as demand rises.
- India possesses significant rare earth reserves of about 6.9 million tonnes, mainly in Odisha, Andhra Pradesh & Tamil Nadu.
- **Despite being among the world's top five holders**, India's output remains very small — only 2,700 tonnes of rare earth oxides in 2023, compared to China's 2,24,000 tonnes.
- Although India has strong potential, especially for mineral and defence applications, exploration has been slow and conservative.
- Recent reforms now aim to boost private sector participation in exploring and extracting critical minerals, signalling scope for future expansion.
- Production has begun to rise and projected to grow to **around 5,000 tonnes** in coming years.

US Government Shutdown

- US President Donald Trump signed a stopgap bill, ending the longest government shutdown in US history.
 - A shutdown occurs when the government runs out of funds, forcing federal agencies to halt operations and hurting the economy.

Why Government Shutdowns Happen in the US but Not in India?

- A US government shutdown occurs not because the country runs out of money, but because the **government loses legislative permission to tax and spend.**
- Unlike India — where the Executive is part of Parliament and a budget failure forces the government to resign — the **US President is separate from Congress.**
- This separation means the President cannot ensure passage of the budget and need not resign if it fails.
- When Congress, divided along party lines, cannot agree on the budget, the federal government shuts down.

How the US Budget Cycle Works?

- The US fiscal year runs from **October 1 to September 30.**
 - ▶ The shutdown began on October 1 because the Trump administration could not get its budget approved by Congress in time.
- **Budget Preparation Begins in February**
 - ▶ The budget process starts much earlier. By the **first Monday of February**, the President must submit the budget proposal to Congress.
 - ▶ Both chambers then engage in months of deliberations, debates, and amendments on taxation and spending priorities. These discussions often become contentious.
- **Source of Conflict in the Recent Budget Debate**
 - ▶ A key point of disagreement during this shutdown was the scope and funding of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the food stamps programme.
 - ▶ Such policy disagreements create delays in approving appropriations.
- **Why a Shutdown Happens?**
 - ▶ If Congress does not approve funding by October 1 — creating a "funding gap" — federal agencies must begin shutting down affected programmes and activities.
 - ▶ This legal requirement triggers a government shutdown until a new budget or stopgap bill is passed.

- Since the budget system began in 1976, the US has faced 11 shutdowns, with the latest lasting 43 days — surpassing the previous record of 35 days during Trump’s earlier term.

Presidential vs Parliamentary System: A Warning for India

- The US shutdown illustrates how a Presidential system can suffer severe governance breakdowns when the executive and legislature disagree.
- In contrast, India’s parliamentary system ensures continuity of government, even with its own limitations.
- While system choice depends on many factors, this episode highlights why a developing country like India may struggle to withstand long, disruptive shutdowns that a Presidential model can trigger.

International Crimes Tribunal Verdict Against Sheikh Hasina

- Bangladesh’s former PM Sheikh Hasina has been sentenced to death by the International Crimes Tribunal for crimes against humanity committed during the 2024 student-led protests.
- Living in India since her government collapsed in August 2024, Hasina was convicted for ordering the killing of unarmed protesters in Dhaka and Ashulia on August 5, 2024.
- The **International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) of Bangladesh** was established in 2009 by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to prosecute individuals accused of war crimes during the 1971 Liberation War, fulfilling a key 2008 election promise.
- The tribunal primarily targeted alleged collaborators with Pakistan, including leaders of the *Jamaat-e-Islami*.
- However, international human rights organisations, such as Human Rights Watch, criticised the tribunal for political bias, lack of judicial independence, and procedural fairness concerns.

Morocco’s Plan for Western Sahara

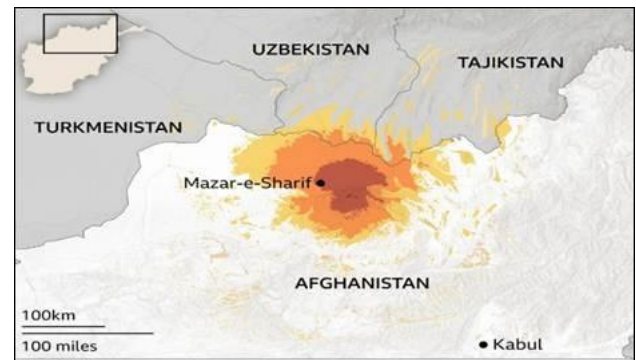
- The United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution indicating that genuine autonomy **under Moroccan sovereignty** could be the most realistic solution to the long-standing conflict in Western Sahara.
- The resolution, drafted by the United States, urges **Morocco** and the **Polisario Front** to engage in meaningful negotiations on the basis of Morocco’s 2007 autonomy plan.
- **Background: Africa’s Longest Territorial Dispute**
 - Western Sahara has remained disputed since Spain’s withdrawal in 1975 and Morocco’s subsequent annexation.
 - ♣ Morocco — Claims sovereignty over the region.
 - ♣ Polisario Front — Seeks full independence as the Sahrawi Republic.
 - ♣ Algeria — Backs the Polisario and hosts Sahrawi refugee camps in Tindouf
- Polisario Front insisted the resolution does not validate Moroccan sovereignty and will announce its stance after internal discussion.
- Algeria criticized the resolution for ignoring Polisario’s proposals and asserted that the Sahrawi people must determine their future.

Magnitude 6.3 earthquake strikes Afghanistan

- Recently, a 6.3-magnitude earthquake struck near **Mazar-e-Sharif** in northern **Afghanistan**.
- The tremor follows a series of deadly quakes in August, highlighting the region’s continuing vulnerability to seismic disasters.

- **Geographical Location of Mazar-e-Sharif**

- Mazar-e-Sharif, the capital of Balkh province, lies in northern Afghanistan, close to the **borders with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan**.
- Located in a broad alluvial plain of the Amu Darya basin, making it a key urban and economic centre in the region.



- **Geophysical Characteristics**

- Mazar-e-Sharif lies near the **boundary zone between the Eurasian and Indian tectonic plates**, an area of intense crustal compression caused by the northward movement of the Indian plate.
- This collision zone creates active fault lines running through northern and northeastern Afghanistan, where seismic stress accumulates and releases through frequent earthquakes.
- The recent quake near Mazar-e-Sharif is linked to **shallow crustal faults within this convergence zone**, where compressional forces **generate strike-slip and thrust faulting** — common mechanisms for strong tremors in the region.

Mount Semeru Volcanic Eruption

- Indonesian authorities safely rescued over 170 climbers who were stranded at the Ranu Kumbolo area after Mount Semeru, East Java, erupted violently.
- The camping site lies outside the immediate danger zone, though climbers were exposed to volcanic ash.
- Mount Semeru, also known as **Mahameru**, is among the **129 active volcanoes** in Indonesia.
- Indonesia lies on the **Pacific Ring of Fire**, making it highly prone to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

Renewed U.S.–Saudi Strategic Partnership

- Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS) undertook an official visit to the United States.
- The longstanding “oil-for-security” partnership, originally established in 1945, has been significantly revitalised during this visit.
- Despite previous strains arising from developments such as the Yemen conflict, the killing of Jamal Khashoggi, and U.S. support for Israel’s military operations in Gaza, the latest summit has resulted in a substantial reset and strengthening of bilateral relations.

Key Outcomes of the U.S.–Saudi Summit

- **Major Defence & Security Boost**
 - \$142 billion U.S. military equipment deal
 - Saudi Arabia designated “major non-NATO ally”
 - U.S. commits to defend Saudi territory in case of attack
- **Large-Scale Investment Commitments**
 - Saudi pledges to raise planned investments in the U.S. to \$1 trillion
 - Huge commercial MoUs worth \$270 billion signed
- **Emerging Tech & Energy Cooperation**
 - Progress on civil nuclear energy cooperation

- Supply of advanced AI chips to Saudi Arabia
- **Regional Geopolitical Maneuvering**
 - Strengthens U.S. influence in West Asia after China's diplomatic outreach
 - U.S. signals willingness to engage in Syria and Sudan through Saudi mediation
- **Oil Coordination and Stability**
 - Joint efforts to maintain a moderate and stable global oil price
 - U.S. sanctions on Iran, Russia, Venezuela indirectly benefit Saudi exports

Implications for India

- **Pakistan Angle** — Saudi mutual defence pact with Pakistan may enable advanced U.S. arms supply to Islamabad.
- **Oil Market Stability** — Moderate oil pricing helps India manage energy transition while reallocating supplies away from Russia.
- **Economic Opportunities** — Saudi Vision 2030 (AI, data centres, digital infra) offers new investment and cooperation prospects.
- **Reducing China's Influence** — Stronger U.S. footprint in Riyadh could create more space for India strategically and economically.
- **IMEC Corridor Push** — Better U.S.–Saudi alignment may accelerate the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor that runs through Saudi Arabia.

Conclusion

- The summit marks a shift from “oil-for-security” to diversified strategic cooperation — defence, investments, tech, and regional diplomacy.
- With MbS positioned to lead for decades and Trump resetting ties decisively, the partnership enters a new but uncertain strategic phase — one India must closely watch and strategically leverage.

Pakistan Passes 27th Constitutional Amendment Bill

- Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari has signed the 27th Constitutional Amendment making it a law in Pakistan.
- The amendment significantly expands military authority and weakens judicial independence, triggering domestic controversy.
- **Military Power Expanded: Asim Munir Elevated**
 - Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir becomes **Chief of Defence Forces (CDF)**, gaining command over Army, Navy, and Air Force.
 - A new post, **Commander of National Strategic Command**, will oversee nuclear and strategic assets — appointed on CDF's recommendation.
 - Five-star officers granted:
 - ♣ Lifelong immunity from legal proceedings
 - ♣ Permanent rank, privileges, and uniform
 - ♣ Removal only via two-thirds majority in Parliament
 - This places Munir above civilian leadership, strengthening the military's dominance in Pakistan's governance structure.
- **Judicial Powers Curtailed: New Top Court Created**

- o Establishment of Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) with its own Chief Justice and judges appointed by the government
- o FCC becomes the highest authority on:

Constitutional interpretation

Federal–provincial disputes

Fundamental rights enforcement

Constitutional appeals and writ petitions

- o Supreme Court downgraded to mainly civil and criminal appeals
- o High Court judges can be transferred without consent; refusal may result in forced retirement
- **Broader Concerns:** Analysts warn this may push Pakistan further toward military dominance and weaken democratic accountability.

Global Gen Z Uprisings Challenge Governments

- Across **Asia, Africa, and Latin America**, young protesters — mostly **Gen Z** — led major uprisings in 2025, fuelled by frustration over unemployment, inequality, poor governance, and lack of opportunities.
- In several countries such as **Nepal** and **Madagascar**, protests resulted in the collapse of governments.

Key Features

- **A Common Symbol: ‘One Piece’ Skull & Crossbones**
 - o A striking unifying symbol emerged — the skull-and-crossbones in a straw hat from the Japanese manga series One Piece.
 - o Protesters said it represented resistance to oppressive regimes and solidarity among youth movements.
- **Social Media as a Mobilisation Weapon**
 - o Unlike earlier youth movements (Indignados, Arab Spring), Gen Z harnessed **real-time mobilisation** through: TikTok, Instagram, Discord.
 - o This helped the movement scale rapidly and draw in wider sections of society.
- **Recurring Challenge: Leaderless Movements Struggle After Victory**
 - o Gen Z revolts resemble earlier mass uprisings (e.g., Arab Spring):
 - ♣ Governments fall, but systemic reform often fails
 - ♣ Lack of structure and leadership leads to political exclusion after change
 - ♣ Old power networks reassert themselves
 - o Cases:
 - ♣ **Bangladesh:** Jubilant after Hasina’s ouster, youth now frustrated with caretaker government
 - ♣ **Nepal:** Activists sidelined despite initiating political transition
 - ♣ **Indonesia:** Reforms stalled; state crackdowns intensified
 - o Governments increasingly use **digital surveillance, censorship and intimidation** to weaken movements.

Conclusion

- Gen Z has clearly shown its ability to mobilise large numbers rapidly and to exert significant pressure on political systems, even toppling governments in some cases.
- However, despite its strength on the streets and online, the **generation still lacks the organisational structures and institutional tools** needed to shape governance after the protests end.

- For their movements to translate into lasting democratic change, Gen Z activists will need to build strong internal organisation, develop and support institutions, form sustained alliances with civil society and political actors, and embrace patience in navigating democratic processes.
- Only then can their momentum be converted into durable reform rather than temporary disruption.

India Launches Operation Sagar Bandhu for Cyclone-Hit Sri Lanka

- Following the devastation caused by **Cyclone Ditwah** across Sri Lanka, India initiated Operation Sagar Bandhu to provide urgent Search & Rescue and Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief (HADR) support.
- India acted swiftly in coordination with Sri Lankan authorities:
 - 53 tons of relief material delivered so far
 - Includes emergency rations, tents, blankets, hygiene kits, medicines, and **BHISHM medical** cubes
 - Three Indian Air Force aircraft deployed
 - 80-member NDRF Urban Search and Rescue teams sent for rescue operations
- Over 2,000 stranded Indian citizens have been flown back.
- Guided by **Neighbourhood First** and **Vision MAHASAGAR**, India reaffirmed its role as a **First Responder** in the region, extending unwavering solidarity with Sri Lanka and assisting in relief, rescue, and early recovery efforts.

Afghanistan Offers 5-year Tax Break for Indian Investors

- Taliban-led Afghanistan's Commerce and Industry Minister Nooruddin Azizi concluded a six-day visit to India.
- During this visit, he held meetings with several leaders and Indian businesses to enhance bilateral economic cooperation.
- **Strengthening Trade Mechanisms**
 - Key steps announced:
 - ♣ Appointment of an **Afghan Commercial Attache** in India within a month
 - ♣ Reactivation of the **Joint Working Group on Trade, Commerce & Investment**
 - ♣ Expansion of bilateral trade beyond the current **\$1 billion** level
- **Investment Push with Tax Incentives**
 - Afghanistan invited Indian companies to invest in: Gold mining; Agriculture; Pharmaceuticals and health; IT; Energy; Textiles.
 - Afghanistan has offered:
 - ♣ **5-year tax exemptions** for new sector investments
 - ♣ **1% tariff** on imported machinery
 - ♣ Land availability and tariff support
- **Air Cargo Corridor to Resume Soon**
 - To overcome trade bottlenecks, India announced:
 - ♣ Reactivation of air freight corridors: Kabul–Delhi; Kabul–Amritsar.
 - Cargo flights to start soon
- **Broader Objective: Resetting Economic Ties**
 - With both sides seeking to revive commercial engagement, India signaled practical cooperation while Afghanistan aims to attract investment despite governance and recognition concerns under Taliban rule.

India Signs First Structured LPG Import Contract with U.S.

- Indian PSU oil companies have finalised a one-year structured contract to import **2.2 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) of LPG** from the U.S. Gulf Coast for 2026 — around 10% of India's total LPG imports. Purchases will be benchmarked to **Mount Belvieu** prices.
 - Mont Belvieu prices refer to the spot and futures market prices for various NGLs (natural gas liquids), particularly propane, which is a benchmark for the U.S. market
- This marks the first such long-term U.S. LPG contract for India.
- The agreement comes as India aims to **narrow its trade surplus with the U.S.**, which had been flagged by President **Donald Trump** while imposing **50% tariffs** on Indian imports.
 - India is expected to **increase energy imports from the U.S.** as part of discussions toward securing tariff reductions and finalizing a new trade pact.
- This move supports:
 - Diversification away from traditional LPG suppliers (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Kuwait)
 - Better price security
 - Reduced dependence on West Asian markets
- The development aligns with U.S. commitments to become a major supplier of oil and gas to India.
- LPG Demand and Energy Security Context**
 - India is world's 3rd-largest oil consumer (after US and China) with 88% import dependence
 - Over 60% of LPG demand is met through imports
 - U.S. is already:
 - ♣ 5th-largest crude supplier
 - ♣ 2nd-largest LNG supplier to India
- The U.S. LPG contract marks a **strategic shift** in India's energy sourcing policy, reinforcing energy security and supporting broader **India–U.S. trade normalization**, with a potential trade deal reportedly close.

India–Nepal Amend Treaty of Transit

- India and Nepal have amended the Treaty of Transit to allow smooth movement of rail-based freight, including bulk cargo, between **Jogbani** (India) and **Biratnagar** (Nepal).
- Major Transit Corridors Expanded**
 - The liberalised transit provisions now apply to:

Kolkata–
Jogbani

Kolkata–Nautanwa
(Sunauli)

Visakhapatnam–
Nautanwa (Sunauli)
 - This expansion enhances **multimodal connectivity** and strengthens Nepal's access to **third-country trade** through Indian ports.
- India, being Nepal's **largest trade and investment partner**, expects the updated transit arrangements to further reinforce **economic and commercial linkages** and promote regional integration.

India Rolls Out Upgraded Passport Seva Programme and e-Passports

- The Ministry of External Affairs has successfully launched the upgraded **Passport Seva Programme (PSP V2.0)**, **Global Passport Seva Programme (GPSP V2.0)**, and **e-Passports** for citizens in India and abroad.

- PSP V2.0 was implemented in May 2025 across: 37 Passport Offices; 93 Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs); 450 Post Office PSKs. GPSP V2.0 was launched in October 2025 across Indian Embassies & Consulates globally
- PSP V2.0 aims to build a **digitally integrated service ecosystem** with:
 - AI-powered chat and voice bots for application assistance
 - Redesigned portal & mobile app
 - Auto-filled forms
 - Simplified document uploads
 - Online UPI/QR-based payment options
 - ♣ The upgrades ensure **greater transparency and faster processing**.
- **Introduction of Secure e-Passports**
 - A major feature of the rollout is **e-Passports**, which include:
 - ♣ The e-Passport is a hybrid passport that combines both paper and electronic elements.
 - ♣ Embedded **Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) chip** and antenna
 - ♣ Data storage compliant with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards
 - ♣ Enhanced authentication & anti-fraud features
 - All future passports will be **e-Passports**, while existing traditional ones remain valid until expiry.

India–UAE to Establish ‘India House’ in Abu Dhabi

- Nearly 20 months after the opening of the Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi, India and the UAE are now preparing to build **India House** — a major cultural landmark expected to come up within a couple of years.
- Planned in the UAE capital, the centre will strengthen cooperation in **art, culture, student exchanges**, and highlight shared historical ties. It will also serve as a hub for **yoga training**.
- **Yoga to Gain Competitive Sport Status in UAE**
 - UAE is moving to declare **yoga as a competitive sport** — becoming the **first Gulf country** to give yoga full sporting recognition.
 - A national framework is being developed by the **UAE Yoga Committee** under the Ministry of Sports.

India–U.S. Sign 10-Year Major Defence Partnership Framework

- India and the United States have signed a **10-year Framework for the India–U.S. Major Defence Partnership** on the sidelines of the **12th ADMM-Plus (ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus) meeting in Kuala Lumpur**, marking a new phase in bilateral defence cooperation.

Background of Expanding Defence Ties

- India–U.S. defence cooperation has strengthened over two decades, anchored by:
 - **Defence Framework Agreements** (2005, renewed 2015)
 - Foundational pacts enabling interoperability:

LEMOA (2016) – Logistics support	COMCASA (2018) – Secure communications	BECA (2020) – Geospatial intelligence sharing	SOSA (2024) – Defence supply chain security
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 - 2025 Framework builds on these to promote long-term technological and strategic coordination.

Key Highlights of the New Framework

- **Strategic Roadmap** for deeper collaboration across operational, industrial and technological domains
- **Co-development & Co-production** of advanced defence systems under Make in India, Make for the World
- **Enhanced intelligence sharing** to counter cyber, maritime and emerging threats
- **Expansion of joint military** exercises such as Malabar, Yudh Abhyas, and Tiger Triumph
- Reinforced commitment to a free, open, rules-based Indo-Pacific

Significance

- Supports regional stability amid China's assertive actions in Indo-Pacific
- Encourages U.S. defence technology transfers and investments in India through iCET
- Strengthens resilient defence supply chains and reduces dependence on single-source imports
- Demonstrates that defence cooperation remains strong despite trade tariff disputes
- The partnership deepens India's role as a:
 - net security provider in the region
 - core pillar of Quad cooperation
 - key part of U.S. strategy to maintain integrated deterrence & freedom of navigation in Asia

India-Botswana Strengthen Ties

- During President Droupadi Murmu's State visit to Botswana, India & Botswana formally announced the translocation of 8 cheetahs to India under Project Cheetah and a shared wildlife conservation initiative.
- Five of the cheetahs were symbolically released into a quarantine facility at Mokolodi Nature Reserve, with the remaining to join soon. After quarantine formalities, the big cats will be sent to India within months.
- **Bilateral Cooperation Expands Beyond Wildlife**
 - The leaders also witnessed the signing of a Health Sector MoU:
 - ♣ Focus on pharmaceutical cooperation and generic medicines
 - ♣ India to supply antiretroviral (ARV) medicines to Botswana
 - Other key areas of cooperation reaffirmed: Trade & investment; Agriculture & education; Defence & digital technology; Diamond sector partnership.
- **Diplomacy and Strategic Significance**
 - President Murmu's visit is the first by an Indian President to Botswana
 - Comes ahead of the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations (2026)

Project Cheetah: Current Status in India

- First translocation: 8 cheetahs from Namibia (2022)
- Second batch: 12 from South Africa (2023)
- India now has 27 cheetahs (including 16 born in India)
- 19 deaths reported since launch
- Net population gain: +7 compared to initial imports
- Cheetahs currently housed at Kuno National Park and Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary

SUMMITS AND ORGANISATIONS

New Fund to Protect World's Tropical Forests

- **COP30 climate summit in Belém**, Brazil unveiled the **Tropical Forest Forever Facility (TFFF)** — a new **\$125 billion fund** to reward developing countries for **conserving tropical forests**.
- India has joined the Brazil-led TFFF as an observer
- While the TFFF is expected to reshape global environmental policy, experts remain uncertain about its implementation mechanisms and how funds will be distributed and managed in practice.

Concerns Over Financial Stability & Accountability of TFFF

- **Vulnerability to Market Fluctuations**
 - Critics warn that the TFFF is highly exposed to financial market volatility, as it relies on bond investments—including in developing nations prone to instability.
 - A major market crash, like during COVID-19 or the 2008–09 financial crisis, could jeopardise returns and disrupt payments to forest-conserving countries.
- **Weakening of Developed Nations' Obligations**
 - Experts argue that the TFFF could dilute the legal responsibility of developed countries to provide climate finance.
 - Since the **fund is not part of the UNFCCC framework**, it is not bound by international accountability standards governing climate finance commitments.
- **Risk of Undermining UN Climate Mechanisms**
 - TFFF might undermine existing global climate finance systems under the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement, by shifting focus away from public funding obligations toward voluntary market-based mechanisms.

Tropical Forest Forever Facility (TFFF): A Global Investment for Conservation

- TFFF is a self-sustaining investment fund aimed at rewarding up to 74 developing countries for preserving old-growth tropical forests.
- The fund **seeks to raise \$125 billion** — including \$25 billion from governments and philanthropists and **\$100 billion in private investments**.
- The money will be **invested in public and corporate bonds**, with the annual returns distributed to forest nations based on satellite-tracked canopy data.
- Initial contributions include \$1 billion each from Brazil and Indonesia, \$250 million from Colombia, \$3 billion over a decade from Norway, \$5 million from the Netherlands, and €1 million from Portugal.

TFFF Aims to Make Forest Conservation More Valuable

- The TFFF was launched to reverse the economic incentives driving deforestation, where forests are often worth more dead than alive.
- By rewarding countries and landowners for keeping forests intact, the fund seeks to make conservation financially competitive.
- It marks a turning point in tropical forest protection, as it creates a global, permanent incentive mechanism recognising the true value of forest ecosystem services, including carbon storage and climate regulation.

Bhutan Launches Global Peace Prayer Festival

- Bhutan hosted its first-ever Global Peace Prayer Festival (GPPF) in Thimphu, bringing together Buddhist leaders from Mahayana, Theravada, and Vajrayana traditions.
- The event aimed to promote peace, healing, and global harmony.
- Representatives from China, Taiwan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, India, Bhutan, and the Tibetan region attended. The organisers emphasised that interfaith collaboration is essential for lasting peace.
- One of the key events of the festival was Jabzhi, a profound Vajrayana Buddhist ritual believed to cleanse negative karma and dispel destructive forces
- India supported the festival financially and logistically, including transporting Buddha relics from New Delhi for public veneration.

- o In a historic and deeply spiritual gesture, the Sacred **Piprahwa Relics** of Lord Buddha, enshrined at the National Museum in New Delhi, arrived in Thimphu as a “goodwill gift” from India to Bhutan during the GPPF. It was later returned to India after the festival.

IBSA Summit 2025

- The 2025 IBSA summit for 2025 was held in Johannesburg, South Africa (on the sidelines of G20 Summit). South Africa is the current IBSA Chair.
- Speaking at the IBSA Leaders’ Summit, PM Modi asserted that reforming the United Nations Security Council has become a **necessity**, not a choice.

Proposals to Strengthen IBSA Collaboration

- The Prime Minister put forward multiple initiatives:
 - o Institutionalising IBSA NSA-level meetings for deeper security cooperation
 - o No double standards in counter-terrorism
 - o Establishing an IBSA Digital Innovation Alliance for sharing digital public infrastructure such as UPI, CoWIN, cybersecurity tools, and women-led tech initiatives
 - o Creating an IBSA Fund for Climate-Resilient Agriculture to enhance support for developing nations
 - ♣ PM Modi noted the success of the existing IBSA Fund, which has supported development projects in over 40 countries.

About IBSA Dialogue Forum

- The IBSA Dialogue Forum is a trilateral cooperation mechanism between **India, Brazil, and South Africa**, established in 2003 and formalised through the Brasilia Declaration.
- It connects three major multicultural democracies across Asia, South America, and Africa with the objective of enhancing coordination on global issues and deepening collaboration in various sectors.
- **IBSA Fund:** Created in 2004, the IBSA Fund supports human development initiatives to combat poverty and hunger in developing countries.
 - o It is administered by the UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) and serves as a major pillar of IBSA’s development cooperation efforts.
- **IBSAMAR Exercise:** IBSA defence cooperation includes IBSAMAR, a joint maritime exercise involving the navies of the three member countries.

APEC Summit 2025

- Leaders of 21 Asia-Pacific economies concluded the APEC Summit in **Gyeongju, South Korea**, reaffirming their commitment to economic cooperation amid global uncertainty.
- The joint statement acknowledged mounting challenges to the global trading system caused mainly by **U.S.–China trade tensions** and pledged stronger collaboration to sustain growth and investment.
 - o A key development was the meeting between U.S. President Trump and China’s President Xi Jinping, where both agreed to **dial down the trade war**.
- While avoiding explicit mention of “free and open trade,” the declaration supported multilateralism and endorsed the **Putrajaya Vision 2040** aimed at creating a fair, transparent, non-discriminatory trading environment over the next two decades.
- Two additional statements addressed:
 - o **Artificial Intelligence** — as a growth catalyst requiring coordinated oversight

- **Demographic shifts** — ageing populations, low birth rates, and rapid urbanisation
- Founded in **1989**, APEC promotes free trade and regional integration. However, current dynamics — including U.S.–China rivalry, supply chain disruptions, demographic pressures, and AI-driven labour changes — pose major challenges to its vision.
- The “**America First**” approach and U.S. tariff policies continue to strain multilateral trade cooperation.

G-2: A New Shockwave in Global Diplomacy

President Trump’s claim that “the G-2 will be convening shortly” reignited debates about a possible U.S.–China duopoly.

- The framing raised alarm among American allies, especially amid deep geopolitical tensions.

Implications for the Global Order

- A G-2 world risks marginalising smaller states and weakening multilateral institutions.
- Could shift decision-making power to two superpowers.
- Some experts say temporary cooperation might stabilise trade, semiconductor supply chains, and climate negotiations.

Conclusion: Trump’s G-2 remark reopened major geopolitical anxieties. For allies, it raises hard questions about America’s long-term strategy in the Indo-Pacific and the future of the rules-based international order.

Lucknow Declared UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy

- Lucknow has been officially recognised as a **UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy** (the practice or art of choosing, cooking, and eating good food) during the 43rd UNESCO General Conference in Uzbekistan.
- The honour acknowledges the city’s **rich Awadhi cuisine**, its centuries-old culinary heritage, and vibrant cultural traditions.
- The recognition places Lucknow among the world’s leading gastronomic destinations and highlights how food heritage can drive cultural diplomacy and sustainable tourism.

UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)

- UCCN is a project launched by UNESCO in 2004 to “promote cooperation among cities which recognized creativity as a strategic factor in their urban development”.
- UNESCO designates the creative cities in **seven fields** — Craft & Folk Art, Media Arts, Film, Design, Gastronomy, Literature and Music.
- The network has 408 cities in more than a hundred countries. In addition to Lucknow, the following eight Indian cities are a part of the network:

Origins of the G-2 Concept

- ✓ Proposed in 2005 by economist C. Fred Bergsten.
- ✓ Suggested U.S.–China pre-coordination to stabilise global economy and energy flows.
- ✓ Gained traction after the 2008 financial crisis.
- ✓ Intended to supplement—not replace—multilateral bodies like the G-20.
- ✓ Obama administration also explored it briefly.

Trump’s G-2 Pivot: A Reversal

- ✓ Marks contrast to Trump’s earlier confrontational stance toward China (tariffs, decoupling).
- ✓ Signals possible recognition of China as an equal power.
- ✓ Raises fears of transactional bilateralism—U.S.–China dealing directly on global issues, sidelining allies.

Reactions from Global Allies

- ✓ **India**
 - ✓ Already strained by U.S. tariffs of 50%.
 - ✓ Quad Leaders’ Summit postponed.
 - ✓ Discussions surfaced about replacing India temporarily with the Philippines.
 - ✓ Analysts insist India remains indispensable to the Indo-Pacific architecture.
- ✓ **Japan & Australia**
 - ✓ Concerned that G-2 talk weakens the Quad.
 - ✓ Fear reduced U.S. commitment in countering China’s assertiveness.
- ✓ **ASEAN**
 - ✓ Cautiously optimistic about reduced tensions.
 - ✓ But wary that a U.S.–China bilateral framework could undermine regional autonomy.

2nd World Summit for Social Development

- 2nd World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) was held in **Doha, Qatar**. India was represented by Union Minister of Labour and Employment, Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya.
- While speaking at the summit, Indian minister strongly criticised Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari's accusations that India was "weaponising water." He asserted that Pakistan was misusing an international platform to spread misinformation instead of focusing on social development.
- **India's Social Development Achievements Highlighted**
 - The Minister showcased India's progress in welfare and poverty reduction:
 - ♣ ~25 crore (250 million) people uplifted from multidimensional poverty in the last decade
 - ♣ 118 million schoolchildren receiving mid-day meals
 - ♣ 800 million citizens under food security coverage
 - ♣ 425 million covered under health insurance
 - ♣ 37 million affordable houses provided
 - ♣ Unemployment rate reduced from 6% (2017–18) to 3.2% (2023–24)
 - ♣ Women's employment nearly doubled
 - ♣ Self-help groups and microcredit driving women-led development
 - ♣ Social security coverage expanded from 19% (2015) to 64.3% (2025)

About WSSD

- WSSD is a United Nations-convened series of summits aimed at fostering global social development, poverty eradication, and social justice.
- The first summit in 1995 (Copenhagen) led to a consensus to prioritize people-centered development.
 - ✓ The 1995 summit established the foundation with a new consensus on prioritizing social development.
 - ✓ It resulted in the adoption of **The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development** and its **Programme of Action**.
- The second summit in Doha, Qatar (November 2025), aimed to accelerate progress on the SDGs by addressing persistent challenges like inequality and lack of social protection.

7th NSA-Level Meeting of Colombo Security Conclave

- The 7th National Security Adviser (NSA) level meeting of the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) took place in New Delhi, hosted by India's NSA Ajit Doval.
- Delegations from **Maldives, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh participated** as member states, while Seychelles joined as an Observer and Malaysia attended as a Guest for the first time.
- During the conclave, cooperation progress was assessed across **five security pillars of CSC**:
 - Maritime Safety and Security
 - Countering Terrorism and Radicalisation
 - Combating Trafficking & Transnational Organised Crime

- o Cyber Security & Critical Infrastructure Protection
- o Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)

Colombo Security Conclave (CSC): Overview

- It is a regional security grouping comprising India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius, and Seychelles.
- It aims to strengthen cooperation against shared security challenges and ensure stability in the Indian Ocean Region.
- **Origin & Evolution:** Began as a Trilateral Maritime Security Cooperation framework in 2011 between India, Maldives, and Sri Lanka.
 - o Activities stalled after 2014 due to political tensions in the Maldives.
 - o Revived and rebranded as the CSC in 2020.
 - o Membership expansion: Mauritius joined in 2022; Bangladesh joined in 2024.
 - o Seychelles recently became the sixth member
- **Permanent Secretariat:** Colombo, Sri Lanka
- **Core Objectives & Structure** - The CSC brings together National Security Advisers (NSAs) and Deputy NSAs for collaboration on transnational threats.

Red Fort Blast: A New Warning Signal in India's Fight Against Terrorism

- A powerful blast near Delhi's Red Fort Metro Station killed 13 people, breaking years of relative peace in the national capital. Initial confusion gave way to confirmation that it was a terror attack, though likely unplanned or triggered in panic.
- The attack appears connected to the recent busting of a Faridabad-based terror module, where agencies seized 2.9 tonnes of ammonium nitrate.
- With agencies chasing remaining suspects, the bomber may have acted out of desperation.

Expanded Challenge for Security Agencies

- Agencies must now rethink their approach:
 - Monitoring must adapt to detect radicalisation among professionals.
 - Greater investment in **technology, surveillance, behavioural analysis, and human intelligence** is essential.
 - Radicalisation ecosystems are evolving, requiring a new counter-terror strategy.
- Despite major successes, the Red Fort blast is a reminder that terror remains a persistent threat. Sleeper cells may evolve, adapt, and strike unpredictably.

Rise of the 'White-Collar Terrorist' A New and Dangerous Trend

- A striking revelation is the involvement of **four to five doctors** in the sleeper cell.
- This signals a disturbing shift:
 - ▶ Terror groups are no longer targeting only unemployed or vulnerable youth.
 - ▶ They are now **radicalising educated professionals** with respected jobs, who do not appear on traditional watch-lists.
 - ▶ This strategy allows terror networks to operate more discreetly and evade surveillance.
- The Faridabad module allegedly had:
 - ▶ **9-10 members**, including **5-6 doctors**
 - ▶ Women participants, including one doctor organising a **women's terror cell**
 - ▶ Operations spread across **J&K, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana**, showing multi-state penetration.
- This "white-collar radicalisation" poses a serious challenge, as educated individuals are more resourceful, mobile, and harder to detect.

FATF Releases Global Asset Recovery Guidance

- Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has issued its updated '**Asset Recovery Guidance and Best Practices**'.
- With this, it introduced a strengthened global framework to combat financial crimes by facilitating effective tracing, freezing, confiscation, and repatriation of criminal assets.

Key Reforms in FATF Guidance

- The framework expands asset recovery mechanisms to cover the entire lifecycle — identification to return.
- Major enhancements include:
 - **Non-Conviction-Based Confiscation** - Allows asset confiscation even without a criminal conviction, where prosecution is impractical.
 - **Extended Confiscations & Unexplained Wealth Orders** - Suspects must prove the lawful origin of assets if linked to criminality.
 - **Stronger Interim Measures** - Ex parte freezing powers, early intervention tools, and professional management of seized assets to preserve value.
 - **Faster Cross-Border Cooperation** - Emphasis on informal, real-time information sharing among jurisdictions.
 - **Victim-Centric Asset Return** - Ensures proceeds are utilised for public benefit or victim compensation.

India's Prominent Role and Global Recognition

- India actively contributed to drafting the revised FATF standards and guidelines.
 - Multiple Enforcement Directorate (ED) case studies are showcased as global best practices. This includes:
 - ♣ **Agri Gold Group** - ₹6,000 crore restored to victims in coordination with Andhra Pradesh Police.
 - ♣ **BitConnect Ponzi Scheme** - Cryptocurrencies worth ₹1,646 crore seized; additional ₹489 crore attached
 - ♣ **Rose Valley Chit Fund** - Attached assets worth ₹538 crore reimbursed to 75,000+ investors
- The recognition highlights India's growing stature in international financial crime enforcement.
- **Strengthening Institutional Capacity**
 - FATF praises Indian innovations such as:
 - ♣ Technology-based financial analytics for asset tracing
 - ♣ Coordination among ED, FIU, tax and police authorities
 - ♣ Strong legislative support via PMLA and Fugitive Economic Offenders Act

Inside Southeast Asia's Scam Compounds

- Around 500 Indian citizens who recently escaped the KK Park cybercrime hub in **Myawaddy, Myanmar**, near the Thailand border, have been repatriated by the Indian government.
- The episode underscores the rapidly growing crisis of transnational scam centres in Southeast Asia, where thousands are trafficked or coerced into running online fraud operations across the region.

KK Park: Myanmar's Infamous Scam Hub on the Thai Border

- It is controlled by the Border Guard Force (BGF) led by warlord Saw Chit Thu, who is closely linked to Myanmar's junta chief, Min Aung Hlaing.
- As per analysts, the BGF coordinated the operation with the junta, highlighting the **deep collusion between military authorities and criminal networks**.

Inside the Scam Centre Business Model

- ✓ According to the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC), scam centres are large, jail-like compounds where thousands of people are trafficked and forced to commit cybercrimes.
- ✓ These facilities operate like factories — highly organised, guarded, and profit-driven.
- ✓ **How Victims Are Trapped?**
 - ✓ Scammers post fake job ads online for high-paying IT or marketing roles.
 - ✓ Victims — mostly from India, China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Africa, and Latin America — are flown to major hubs like Bangkok and then smuggled across borders into Myanmar or Cambodia.
 - ✓ Once inside, their passports are seized, and they are told they've been "sold" and must work to repay a fake debt.
 - ✓ Under constant watch, they face 12-hour workdays and threats of torture — including beatings, electric shocks, starvation, and solitary confinement — if they resist.
- ✓ **Common Types of Scams**
 - ✓ The most notorious scheme is "**pig butchering**" — a mix of romance and investment scams.
 - Scammers build emotional trust with targets online, pretend to offer profitable crypto investments, and show fake early profits to gain confidence.
 - Once the victim invests larger sums, the scammers vanish with all the money.
 - ✓ Other common frauds include impersonation scams (posing as police or bank officers) and sextortion or blackmail scams.

Indians Trapped and Targeted in Southeast Asia's Scam Crisis

- ✓ India has been hit both as a victim & a target of the growing scam hub network in Southeast Asia.
- ✓ In March 2025, the Indian Air Force rescued 283 citizens from Thailand, while over 1,600 Indians have been repatriated from Myanmar's scam compounds since July 2022.
- ✓ The 500 who recently escaped KK Park are part of this continuing trend.
- ✓ Indians have become major targets of "pig butchering" and impersonation scams, turning the issue into both a consular emergency and a domestic cyber security challenge.

Modern Terrorism and Digital Tradecraft

- The investigation into the recent Red Fort car explosion in Delhi — one of the deadliest attacks in recent years — has revealed the **evolving nature** of terrorism in India.
- The case highlights **critical gaps** in India's digital surveillance and **counter-terrorism** architecture.

Major Findings of the Investigation:

- **Use of encrypted communication:**
 - Primary communication through Threema, a Swiss-based end-to-end encrypted (E2EE) app with -
 - No phone number/email needed
 - Random user IDs
 - No metadata retention
 - Two-end message deletion
 - Suspected use of a private Threema server, possibly offshore.
- **Spy-style 'Dead-Drop' email technique:** Use of a shared email account accessed via unsent drafts. Leaves almost no digital transmission footprint, complicating forensics.
- **Physical reconnaissance and explosive stockpiling:**
 - Multiple recce missions across Delhi before the attack.
 - Ammonium nitrate stockpiling traced to a red EcoSport vehicle.
 - Use of familiar vehicles to avoid suspicion.
- **Reflecting Patterns consistent with counter-terrorism research:**
 - Growing use of **end-to-end encryption platforms**, VPNs, private servers.
 - Use of digital dead-drops, blending old spycraft with new technologies.
 - Adoption of multi-domain operational security: **phygital** (physical + digital).
- **Challenge for States:** Traditional surveillance tools (phone tapping, metadata scraping, email intercepts) are becoming ineffective.

Implications for National Security:

- **Traditional surveillance offers limited insights:** Encrypted apps and decentralised servers bypass law enforcement touchpoints.
- **App bans are insufficient:** Threema, banned in India under **Section 69A** of the IT Act, still accessible via VPNs.
- **Need for advanced technical capabilities:** Device seizure alone is insufficient without memory forensics, server tracking, and reverse engineering capabilities.
- **Potential transnational handlers:** Possible JeM link indicates cross-border operational networks.

Challenges

- **Lack of specialised cyber forensics:** Limited expertise in analysing encrypted servers, private-network communication.
- **Regulatory gaps:** No clear framework for self-hosted communication infrastructure.
- **Detection of digital dead-drop methods:** Existing intercept systems cannot detect draft-based email communication.
- **Radicalisation in professional spaces:** Highly educated individuals (doctors, academics) are harder to monitor.
- **Weak international coordination:** Terror cells exploit jurisdictional limitations of foreign apps and servers.

SC Flags Rising 'Digital Arrest' Scams

- Highlighting the need for global collaboration to tackle cybercrime, the Supreme Court asked the Centre to clarify whether India has ratified the **UN Convention against Cybercrime**.
- During a hearing on a **suo motu** case related to a '**digital arrest**' scam, the apex court questioned Solicitor General on India's status regarding the treaty, stressing its importance in addressing rising online frauds.
 - The Solicitor General informed the Court that **India has not yet ratified the treaty**.
- Concerned by the sharp rise in cyber fraud, the Supreme Court proposed moving all digital arrest cases nationwide to the CBI, asking states to submit case details.

United Nations Convention against Cybercrime

- Adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2024, the Convention is the world's first comprehensive global treaty on cybercrime.
- It establishes a unified framework for countries to prevent, investigate, and combat a wide range of cyber offences.
- A key objective of the treaty is to enhance international cooperation, especially in the sharing of electronic evidence across borders for cybercrimes and other serious offences.
- **The Treaty Structure**
 - It consists of a Preamble and nine chapters, covering General Provisions, Criminalization, Jurisdiction, Procedural Measures, International Cooperation, Preventive Measures, Technical Assistance, Implementation, and Final Provisions.
- **Major Provisions**
 - The Convention requires states to **criminalise core cyber offences**—illegal access, data interference, system interference, online fraud, forgery, child sexual abuse material, grooming, non-consensual intimate image sharing, Laundering of proceeds.
 - It obligates countries to align domestic laws and cooperate through extradition, mutual legal assistance, and 24/7 contact points for quick evidence preservation.
 - It also empowers authorities to secure electronic evidence through expedited preservation, search and seizure, production orders, and interception, while respecting human rights.
- **Implementation**
 - A Conference of States Parties will monitor compliance, review progress, and adopt future protocols.
 - Treaty was opened for signature in October 2025 and will become binding once 40 states ratify it.
 - The **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime** serves as the secretariat to the Ad Hoc Committee and to the future Conference of the States Parties.

First Use of 1950 Act: Assam Orders Immediate Deportation of Five Persons

- Assam has invoked the *Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950* for the first time since the state cabinet **approved its use** earlier this year.
- The Sonitpur district administration has ordered five people—four women and one man—who were declared foreigners by a tribunal in 2024, to leave India within 24 hours.

About Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950

- The Immigrants Expulsion from Assam Act (IEAA) was enacted on March 1, 1950, in response to the Assam government's demand for a legal mechanism to control large-scale migration from East Pakistan after Partition.

- **Why the Centre Drafted the Law?**

- Since citizenship is a Union subject, the Central government drafted the Act and delegated specific powers to Assam.
- Originally, it was even named the Undesirable Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, highlighting its intent.
- Recognising post-Partition instability, the Act **excluded refugees**, stating that people displaced due to “civil disturbances” in Pakistan would not be subject to expulsion under the law.

- **Powers Granted Under the Act**

- The Act empowered the Centre to order anyone:
 - ♣ who was ordinarily a resident outside India,
 - ♣ who entered Assam before or after 1950, and
 - ♣ whose presence was deemed “detrimental” to India’s general public or to any Scheduled Tribe in Assam,
- to **remove themselves from Assam or India** within a specified time and through a designated route.
- The law authorised any officer of the Union government or Assam government to implement these expulsion orders.

Centre Moves to Streamline Security Rules Across 250 Seaports

- The Union Government has appointed the **CISF (Central Industrial Security Force) as the security regulator** for more than 250 **seaports** to strengthen coastal security.
- The move aims to bring even private cargo-handling ports under a single, **sovereign security framework** and ensure a uniform, standardised security architecture across India’s maritime infrastructure. This brings all ports under a unified architecture.

Key highlights

- **CISF to act as sovereign security force at seaports**

- In the first phase, 80 **export-import (EXIM) ports** will be placed under CISF control for access management, cargo screening, and waterfront patrolling.

- **CISF to Conduct New Security Assessments**

- For all EXIM ports CISF will carry out:
 - ♣ Port Facility Security Assessments (PFSA)
 - ♣ Port Facility Security Plans (PFSP)
- This will ensure compliance with global standards and eliminate vulnerabilities.

- **Hybrid Security Model for Port Operations**

- A new multi-layered model has been proposed:
 - ♣ **CISF** → core security roles (access control, patrolling, screening)
 - ♣ **State Police / SISF / Private Security** → non-core duties (traffic, gate operations)
- This ensures uniformity while optimising manpower across port ecosystems.

Seaport Security in India: A Brief Overview

- Seaport security is a critical component of national security, economic stability, and international trade, particularly as the ports handle a vast majority of the country's international trade.

- **Key Framework and Organisation**

- **International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code:** India's port security measures are largely compliant with the mandatory ISPS Code, a global framework established after 9/11 to safeguard ships and port facilities from terrorism and other threats.
- **CISF - The New Regulator:** In a significant recent reform, the Government of India has designated CISF as the Recognised Security Organisation (RSO) for ports.

- **Challenges to Port Security**

- The security environment in the maritime domain presents several ongoing challenges:
 - ♣ **Non-standardised Security:** Historically, security arrangements at many non-major ports lacked uniformity and expert oversight, which the new CISF mandate aims to address.
 - ♣ **Transnational Threats:** Ports remain vulnerable to non-traditional threats, including:
 - Maritime Terrorism
 - Smuggling and Drug Trafficking (Ports are often routes for large hauls of narcotics).
 - Cyberattacks on port IT infrastructure and systems.
 - ♣ **Infrastructure Gaps:** Ensuring uniform, high-quality infrastructure and sufficient skilled manpower across over 250 ports remains an operational challenge.

ITBP to Establish 10 All-Women Border Posts Along LAC

- The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), responsible for guarding the 3,488 km India-China Line of Actual Control (LAC), is expanding its deployment under a major “forwardisation” plan initiated after the 2020 Ladakh clash.
- **Strengthening Forward Deployment**
 - Forward-deployed Border Outposts (BOPs) have increased from **180 to 215**.
 - **41 more** advanced bases are planned to further enhance coverage, security and coordination.
 - Government sanctioned **7 new battalions and a sector HQ** (about 9,400 personnel), improving supervision of high-altitude areas.
- **All-Women Combat Posts**
 - 10 all-women BOPs to be set up along the LAC.
 - First two in **Lukung (Ladakh)** and **Thangi (Himachal Pradesh)** already underway.
 - Aim: strengthen the role of women in frontline border security.
- **ITBP: Operational Context**
 - Established post-1962 war, functions under Union Home Ministry.
 - Current strength: over 1 lakh personnel.

INS Mahe

- INS Mahe, the first of the indigenously designed Mahe-class Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC), was commissioned in Mumbai.
- Designed and built by Cochin Shipyard Ltd. (CSL).
- Named after Mahe on the Malabar Coast, symbolising India’s coastal heritage.
- Ship’s Crest features Urumi (flexible sword of Kalaripayattu), mascot: Cheetah; Motto: Silent Hunters.

- **Design & Capabilities**

- Largest Indian warship with diesel engine–waterjet propulsion.
- Key roles:
 - ♣ Anti-submarine warfare in littoral/shallow waters
 - ♣ Underwater surveillance
 - ♣ Search & Rescue
 - ♣ Low-intensity maritime operations (LIMO)
 - ♣ Advanced mine-laying capability

Indian Army's 2047 Transformation Roadmap Unveiled

- Chief of Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi launched a three-phase roadmap to transform the Indian Army into a fully integrated, technologically advanced force by 2047.
- This transformation is anchored in PM Modi's 5S guiding philosophy: Samman (Respect), Samvad (Dialogue), Sahyog (Cooperation), Samridhi (Prosperity), Suraksha (Security)
- It was announced at the Chanakya Defence Dialogue 2025.

Three-Phase Modernisation Plan

- **Phase 1 (Till 2032) — Decade of Transformation**
 - Major improvements in **capabilities, structure and operational readiness**.
- **Phase 2 (2032–2037) — Consolidation Phase**
 - Reinforcing gains from the first decade.
- **Phase 3 (2037–2047) — Next-Generation Integrated Force**
 - Fully networked, joint-force architecture equipped for future warfare.

Four Transformation Springboards

- **Self-Reliance (Swadeshikaran Se Sashaktikaran)**
 - Atma Nirbharta through indigenous defence production & emerging space capabilities.
- **Innovation (Anusandhan)**
 - Harnessing AI, cyber, quantum tech, and autonomy through iDEX & ADITI (Acing Development of Innovative Technologies with iDEX).
- **Adaptation (Anukulan)**
 - Reforming institutional and operational ecosystems.
- **Integration (Ekikaran)**
 - Stronger **industry–academia–military** collaboration and civil-military fusion.

60th DGSP/IGsP Conference

- Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Shri Amit Shah inaugurated the three-day 60th DGP/IGP Conference in **Raipur**, Chhattisgarh.
- The Conference is an annual, high-level event in India that serves as the country's primary platform for discussing internal security and policing issues.
- PM Modi also participated in the conference and conferred President's Police Medals for Distinguished Service.

- **Purpose of the Conference**
 - Review progress on key policing challenges.
 - Draw a **forward-looking roadmap** for a '**Surakshit Bharat**' aligned with **Viksit Bharat** goals.
 - Strengthen coordination and strategic thinking among senior police leadership.
- **Key Themes and Areas of Deliberation**
 - Left Wing Extremism
 - Counter-terrorism
 - Disaster Management
 - Women's Safety
 - Use of Forensic Science & Artificial Intelligence in Policing
 - Best practices on crime prevention & internal security management.

Commissioning of INS Ikshak

- INS Ikshak, the third Survey Vessel Large (SVL) class ship, was formally commissioned into the Indian Navy at Kochi Naval Base.
- The vessel is equipped with **advanced hydrographic and oceanographic systems**, enabling it to conduct precise seabed mapping, support maritime navigation safety, and boost India's operational presence in key sea lanes.
- It can also serve as a platform for Humanitarian Assistance, Disaster Relief (HADR) and medical support.
- Built by **Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE)**, INS Ikshak reflects **Aatmanirbhar Bharat**.
- Notably, it is the **first SVL class vessel** designed with **dedicated women's accommodation**.

China Commissions Indigenous Aircraft Carrier 'Fujian'

- China has officially commissioned its first fully indigenously designed aircraft carrier, named **Fujian**. The name holds strategic significance, as **Fujian province faces Taiwan** across the strait.
- Fujian is China's **third aircraft carrier** and significantly more advanced than Liaoning and Shandong.
- Features: Flat flight deck; Electromagnetic catapult launch system; Ability to carry more and heavier-armed fighter jets.

Delhi Defence Dialogue

- During the Delhi Defence Dialogue (DDD), Defence Minister emphasized the need to create a defence ecosystem that makes the creation and adoption of new technology "natural, swift & self-sustaining".
- He stressed that India must transition from being a consumer of technology to a creator and ultimately a leader in the field.
- The DDD is an annual platform organized by the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA) to discuss India's defense and security challenges.
- The most recent dialogue in November 2025 focused on "**Harnessing New-Age Technology for Defence Capability Development**," and increased collaboration with startups.

AJEYA WARRIOR-25

- The **8th edition** of the India–UK Joint Military Exercise “AJEYA WARRIOR-25” was held at the Mahajan Field Firing Ranges, Rajasthan.
- Conducted under a United Nations mandate, the exercise focused on counter-terrorism operations in semi-urban environment.
- Held biennially since 2011, AJEYA WARRIOR has evolved into a flagship engagement between the Indian Army and the British Army.

The UNEP Emissions Gap Report 2025

The United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) Emissions Gap Report 2025, titled "Off Target: Continued Collective Inaction Puts Global Temperature Goal at Risk", serves as a stark annual assessment of the global community's progress toward fulfilling the Paris Agreement's ambitions.

Key Findings and the Emissions Gap

- **Projected warming:** Current pledges and policies point to **2.3–2.5°C** warming by 2100 if fully implemented — a major overshoot of the 1.5°C aim.
- **Emissions trend:** Global GHG emissions rose in 2024 (UNEP notes a rise around **2.3%** in 2024), reaching roughly **~57.7 Gt CO₂-eq** (order of magnitude reported). Continued year-on-year increases undermine chances of peaking soon.
- **G20 responsibility:** The G20 accounts for the bulk of emissions (about 77% in 2024, excluding the African Union), and collectively is not on track to meet its 2030 NDCs.
- **Country-level shifts:** The report highlights that some large emitters recorded year-to-year increases in 2024; UNEP flagged India among those with large absolute year-on-year growth.
- **Scale of cuts needed:** To align with Paris pathways large, rapid cuts are required — UNEP quantifies very large % reductions (e.g., steep cuts by 2030/2035 compared to 2019 baselines) to hit 1.5°C or 2°C pathways.

India's Perspective: Balancing Development and Equity

As a G20 heavyweight and voice for the Global South, India exemplifies the report's equity imperative under the UNFCCC's "common but differentiated responsibilities" (CBDR). India's emissions (7% global share) are low per capita (1.9 tCO₂e vs. US's 14t), yet rising with growth. Positives include:

- Renewable capacity: targeting 500 GW non-fossil by 2030.
- Updated 2022 NDC: 45% emissions intensity reduction by 2030; 50% cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030.

New Ramsar Site

India's **Gogabeel Lake**, located in **Katihar district, Bihar**, has been newly designated as a **Ramsar Site** (Wetland of International Importance), bringing the total number of Ramsar sites in India to **94**.

Geographical and Ecological Significance Gogabeel Lake

- **Type and Location:** Gogabeel is a **natural Oxbow Lake**, a U-shaped body of water formed when a wide meander of a river is cut off, creating an isolated body of water.
 - ✓ It is located in the **Trans-Gangetic Plains** of Bihar, situated between the **River Ganga** to the south and the **River Mahananda** to the north-east.
- **Hydrological Role:** It is a vital **floodplain wetland**. During the monsoon, the lake connects with both the Ganga and Mahananda rivers, which is crucial for:
 - ✓ **Flood Mitigation:** Acting as a natural buffer or 'sponge' to absorb excess floodwater in the flood-prone North Bihar region.
 - ✓ **Groundwater Recharge:** Replenishing the deep aquifers in the Gangetic basin.
- **Biodiversity Hotspot:** It serves as an **Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA)**.

- ✓ **Threatened Species:** It is a habitat for globally vulnerable and near-threatened species such as the **Smooth-Coated Otter** (Vulnerable), **Lesser Adjutant Stork** (near threatened), and the **Helicopter Catfish** (Vulnerable).

India's Wetland Conservation Framework and Global Commitments

India's approach integrates international obligations with domestic policies. The **Ramsar Sites Information Service (RSIS)** facilitates monitoring, while the MoEFCC's **Wetlands Division** oversees implementation via state wetland authorities.

- **Recent additions:** Bihar's Gokul Jalashay and Udaipur Jheel (92nd & 93rd)

Cold Wave in India & IMD Criteria

- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) defines Cold Wave and Severe Cold Wave conditions based on two primary factors: **Departure from Normal** and **Actual Minimum Temperature** (especially for plains).
- A Cold Wave is typically declared when the conditions are satisfied by **at least two stations** in a region for **two consecutive days**.

Condition	Plains Station (Minimum Temp $\leq 10^{\circ}\text{C}$)	Hilly Region (Minimum Temp $\leq 0^{\circ}\text{C}$)
Cold Wave (CW)	Departure from Normal: -4.5°C to -6.4°C	Departure from Normal: -4.5°C to -6.4°C
Severe Cold Wave (SCW)	Departure from Normal more than -6.4°C	Departure from Normal more than -6.4°C

Additional Criteria for Plains (Based on Actual Minimum Temperature):

- **Cold Wave:** Actual minimum temperature is $\leq 4^{\circ}\text{C}$.
- **Severe Cold Wave:** Actual minimum temperature is $\leq 2^{\circ}\text{C}$.

Coastal areas suffer cold waves when the minimum temperature is **15°C or less** and the negative departure from the minimum is **4.5°C** .

Mechanism and Causes of Cold Wave

Cold waves in India, especially over the Northwest and Central plains, are complex synoptic events resulting from the advection of cold air masses combined with local factors.

Synoptic-Scale Mechanism (Large Scale)	Local Factors (Enhancement)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Westerly Disturbances (WDs): Cold waves are often observed after the passage of a strong Western Disturbance (WD). The WD clears the sky and the trough associated with it enhances the flow of cold, dry air. • Incursion of Cold Air: The primary cause is the inflow (advection) of extremely cold air masses from the high latitudes (Siberia/Central Asia) or the extreme northwestern parts of the Indian subcontinent. • High-Pressure System (Ridge): A strong, high-pressure ridge builds up in the upper troposphere over Northwest Asia, and a surface high-pressure system forms over North and Central India. This system: Leads to subsidence (sinking) of cold, dry air. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear Skies: The absence of thick cloud cover allows for maximum terrestrial (longwave) radiation to escape the atmosphere during the night (Radiative Cooling), leading to a rapid drop in minimum temperature. • Dry Air: Low humidity/dry air has a lower heat-holding capacity, allowing temperatures to drop faster. • Fog/Smog Cover: In some intense Cold Day events (where the <i>maximum</i> temperature drops severely), prolonged, dense fog and smog (like in

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive Snow Cover: Fresh and extensive snow over the Himalayas and adjoining regions reflect solar radiation (high albedo), leading to less heating and sending very cold surface winds (northerlies/north-westerlies) down into the plains. 	the Indo-Gangetic Plains) block incoming solar radiation during the day, preventing surface heating and keeping the days extremely cold.
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Global Methane Status Report 2025

The **Global Methane Status Report (GMSR) 2025**, produced by the **UN Environment Programme (UNEP)** & **Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC)** and launched at **COP30 of UNFCCC** in Belém, Brazil.

- ✓ This Report provides the first mid-term assessment of progress under the Global Methane Pledge (GMP- launched at COP26 in 2021)

Key Insights: Global Methane Status Report 2025

Theme/Component	Key Findings / Data (2025 Report)
Purpose of Report	Tracks global progress toward the Global Methane Pledge (30% cut by 2030 relative to 2020) ; assesses policies, data, & sectoral trends.
Overall Trend	Global methane emissions are still rising ; some progress but insufficient for pledge targets.
Policy Impact	Current legislation lowers projected 2030 emissions compared to earlier forecasts, due to waste reforms + slower gas growth.
Expected Reduction	if NDCs + Methane Action Plans fully implemented then, 8% reduction by 2030 (vs 2020) —largest ever historical decline.
Gap to Global Methane Pledge	Still far from 30% by 2030; large “pledge gap.”
Cost-Effective Mitigation Potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 80% of total methane mitigation is low-cost. • Sectoral Potential: The energy sector holds 72% of the 2030 technical mitigation potential, followed by agriculture (18%) and waste (10%).

Key Mitigation Measures Highlighted in the Report

- The report underscores the rising importance of **empirical data** (especially satellite-based) for tracking methane: via the UNEP’s **International Methane Emissions Observatory (IMEO)**.
- The **Oil & Gas Methane Partnership (OGMP) 2.0**, under IMEO management, is growing: more companies are reporting their emissions more transparently.
- UNEP’s **Methane Alert and Response System (MARS)** has issued **over 3,500 satellite-based alerts** across 33 countries

Major Global Methane Emission Sources

Methane emissions from human activities are primarily distributed across three major sectors.

Sector	% Share	Primary Sub-Sources
Agriculture	42% (Largest Source)	Dominated by enteric fermentation from livestock (76% of agricultural emissions) and rice cultivation (21%).
Energy	38% (Second Largest)	Primarily from oil and gas production (64 Mt upstream, 17 Mt downstream) and coal mining (43 Mt).

Waste	20% (Third Largest)	Mainly generated by municipal solid waste in landfills (37 Mt) and wastewater (domestic and industrial, 30 Mt).
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Specie in News

<p>Dugong (Sea Cow)</p> 	<p>A new report launched at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi, highlighted the growing threat to the dugong population in India.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Exclusively Herbivorous marine mammal</i>; feed only on seagrass (30-40 kg/day). • Dugongs are essential Ecosystem Engineers and are often called "Gardeners of the Sea" or "Farmers of the Sea". • Distribution in India: Confined to Gulf of Mannar & Palk Bay (largest and most stable population), Gulf of Kutch (critically low), and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The Tamil Nadu government established India's first Dugong Conservation Reserve in the Palk Bay region. • IUCN Red List: Vulnerable (Globally); Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972-Schedule I
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Leprosy

Recently, the Maharashtra government has officially declared leprosy a “notifiable disease.”

About Leprosy (also known as Hansen’s Disease)

- **Cause:** *Mycobacterium leprae* (bacterial).
Nature: Infectious; affects skin, peripheral nerves, eyes and other organs; a **Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD)**.
India: Notifiable since 2005 under National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP), Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- **Transmission:** Droplets from nose/mouth of untreated patients; requires **prolonged close contact**; **not spread by casual contact**. Infectivity stops once treatment begins.
- **Symptoms:** Long incubation (3–5 yrs); persistent skin lesions; loss of sensation → injuries.
- **Treatment:** Curable with **Multi-Drug Therapy (MDT)**- dapsone, rifampicin, clofazimine.

Encephalomyocarditis Virus

Recently, an autopsy report from the Indian Veterinary Research Institute revealed that lone African elephant at the National Zoological Park in Delhi died in due to the rare rodent-borne virus- encephalomyocarditis virus (EMCV).

About Encephalomyocarditis Virus (EMCV):

- **Characteristics:** Non-enveloped, positive-sense single-stranded RNA virus
- **Disease:** Causes encephalomyocarditis in swine and multiple mammals; African elephants highly vulnerable.
- **Zoonotic Nature:** Zoonotic infection; human cases mostly asymptomatic.
- **Transmission:** Through food/water contaminated by rodent feces/urine.
- **Hosts:** Pigs, non-human primates, elephants, zoo animals, various wildlife.
- **Treatment:** No specific antiviral; supportive care only.

Silicon Carbide

Recently, the Chief Minister of Odisha performed the groundbreaking ceremony for the country’s first end-to-end silicon carbide semiconductor production plant.

About Silicon Carbide (SiC):

- It is a synthetically produced **crystalline compound of silicon and carbon**; most widely used **non-oxide ceramic**. It was discovered by **E.G. Acheson (1891)**.
- **Properties:** Hardest ceramic material; excellent thermal conductivity, low thermal expansion; Semiconductor; strong wear & oxidation resistance.
- **Uses:** Abrasives (main use), refractory linings, furnace heating elements, wear-resistant parts for pumps and rocket engines and semiconductor substrates for LEDs.

Melatonin

Recently, concerns have been raised by doctors about melatonin supplements being taken by a large number of people with no medical supervision.

What is Melatonin?

A natural hormone made by the pineal gland that regulates the sleep-wake cycle (circadian rhythm).

Synthetic melatonin (called exogenous melatonin) is available as Over the Counter (OTC) supplements, often misused.

Functions & Working:

- Darkness triggers pineal gland to release melatonin which acts on the hypothalamus to slow body activity and induce sleep.
- Light suppresses melatonin, promoting wakefulness.
- Regulates sleep-wake cycle, body temperature, mood, and hormonal rhythms.
- Supports brain health, menstrual regulation, and has antioxidant effects.

Key Concerns: Easy availability leads to self-medication and overuse, causing dependency-like behaviour, hormonal and mood disturbances, disruption of the circadian rhythm, and masking of underlying issues like anxiety or depression.

VAIBHAV Fellowship Programme

Recently, the Union Minister of State for Science and Technology interacted with **VAIshvik Bhartiya Vaigyanik** (VAIBHAV) Fellows from across the world.

What is VAIBHAV Fellowship Programme?

It enables scientists from the Indian diaspora to collaborate with Indian HEIs and public research institutions, allowing selected fellows to work with a host Indian institution for up to **2 months a year** over **3 years**.

Funding: ₹4 lakh/month.

Aim: Strengthen research ecosystem; boost global-Indian research linkages.

Eligibility: PhD/M.D./M.S.; from **top 500 QS-ranked institutions**.

Nodal Ministry: Department of Science and Technology (DST), **Ministry of Science and Technology**.

Project Suncatcher

Recently, Google announced a new research initiative called Project Suncatcher.

What is Project Suncatcher?

It is Google's "moonshot" project to build **AI data centres in space** using **solar-powered satellites** carrying Google's Tensor Processing Units (TPUs).

Objective: To solve **huge energy + water use** of Earth-based data centres.

Key Features:

- Space solar panels with **8× more power**, near-continuous sunlight.
- Satellites in **LEO cluster** linked by **ultra-high-speed optical links** (tested up to **1.6 Tbps**).
- TPUs tested to survive **5-year radiation** exposure.
- **Launching two prototype satellites** in partnership with Planet Labs by early 2027 to test the hardware's durability and performance in space.

Key Challenges: Thermal control, radiation reliability, Tbps communication, precise station-keeping, launch cost drop.

Alprazolam

Recently, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has busted a clandestine factory manufacturing alprazolam in Valsad under “Operation White Cauldron”.

What is Alprazolam?

Alprazolam, a psychotropic substance under the Narcotics, Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act 1985, is a benzodiazepine tranquillizer and central nervous system (CNS) depressant used to treat anxiety, panic disorders, and anxiety linked to depression.

Melanin

Melanin tells the tale of how our ancestors survived from Sun’s heavy UV rays 50000 years back.

What is Melanin?

It is a natural pigment produced in *melanosomes* within *melanocytes*. It is present in human and animal skin to varying degrees, and is responsible for **your unique eye, hair and skin color**.

Types:

- **Eumelanin:** Brown-black pigment in skin, hair, eyes.
- **Pheomelanin:** Red-yellow pigment; common in red hair/light skin.
- **Neuromelanin:** Brain pigment formed from dopamine & noradrenaline (a fight-or-flight hormone) oxidation.

Related Conditions:

- **Vitiligo:** Loss of melanocytes resulting in white patches.
- **Albinism:** Genetic absence of melanin.
- **Hyperpigmentation:** Excess melanin

Functions: **UV Protection**, **Camouflage** (Survival advantage in animals) and **Thermoregulation** (helps regulate heat)

Visible Emission Line Coronagraph

Recently, scientists at the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) have collaborated with NASA to estimate the crucial parameters of a coronal mass ejection (CME) by using Visible Emission Line Coronagraph (VELC) payload onboard India’s Aditya-L1 mission.

What is VELC?

It is the primary payload of the **Aditya-L1 Mission** built by the **Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA)** at its **CREST** (Centre for Research and Education in Science and Technology) campus at Hosakote, **Karnataka**.

- ✓ Aditya-L1 Mission is India’s first mission to observe the Sun from a vantage point 1.5 million kilometres from the earth.

Features:	Objectives:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internally occulted coronagraph with simultaneous imaging, spectroscopy & spectro-polarimetry.• Can image corona as close as 1.05 solar radii.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observe the solar corona (outer atmosphere).• Study coronal temperature, plasma velocity, density.• Monitor CMEs and solar wind.

Enshittification

The term ‘enshittification’ coined by Cory Doctorow in 2022 describes how digital platforms worsen over time as updates and business decisions degrade user experience instead of improving it.

Process: **User friendly** (gives great service, few ads, useful features) → **exploit users** (more ads and paid subscriptions) → **exploit business partners** (overcharging advertisers, sellers, creators etc.) → **platform decline** (trust falls, quality drops, people leave).

Drivers: Weak competition & regulation, Big Tech dominance, limited user control, weak tech-worker pushback.

Key Features: More ads, paywalls, biased search, self-preferencing, downgrading free features, low-quality content.

Examples: Facebook/Instagram (ads > friends), Google (AI mashups).

Batten Disease

Researchers recently have found that male and female brains show different responses as the Batten Disease progresses and have found a model of the disease that could transform future treatments.

What is Batten Disease?

It is a very **rare, genetic, progressive & fatal** neurodegenerative disorder (group: **NCL- neuronal ceroid lipofuscinoses**) that **affects the brain and nervous system**.

Cause: By mutations in **CLN genes (CLN1-CLN14)**; most common: **CLN3**.

Onset: infancy/childhood (rarely adulthood).

Symptoms: early **vision loss**, seizures, developmental regression, loss of motor & language skills.

Course: progressive blindness → inability to walk/talk/swallow.

Treatment: no cure; only **symptomatic** (anti-seizure meds, physio).

Ricin

The Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad recently busted a suspected terror module by arresting a 'doctor' allegedly preparing the deadly poison *ricin*.

About Ricin: It is a highly toxic poison derived from **castor beans**.

- **Forms:** **powder, mist, pellet**, or dissolved in liquid.
- **Properties:** **Stable** normally; inactivated above **80°C**.
- **Exposure Routes:** inhalation, ingestion, injection.
- **Mechanism:** blocks protein synthesis → cell death → organ failure.
- **Lethal dose:** ~5-10 micrograms/kg of body mass.
- **Concern:** potential **biological weapon**; accidental cases rare.
- **Treatment:** **No antidote**; only supportive care.

Vanadium

Recently, the union Minister for Power inaugurated India's first MWh-scale Vanadium Redox Flow Battery (VRFB) system at NTPC's NETRA (Greater Noida).

About Vanadium (V and atomic number 23)

- **Properties:** **silver-gray**, ductile, and malleable metallic element, **harder** than most metals and **corrosion resistant** against alkalis and acids.
- **Occurrence:** 22nd most abundant; in >60 minerals (vanadinite, carnotite, roscoelite); also in coal & petroleum.
- **Uses:**
 - **Steel alloying** (strength & corrosion resistance).

- **Vanadium Flow Batteries (VFBs)** for renewable energy storage.
- **Catalysts** (e.g., sulfuric acid production).
- **Nuclear materials** (reactors).

National Database for Emergency Management

Recently, the Ministry of Road Transport and has made it mandatory for all Detailed Project Reports of highway projects to include analysis using the National Database for Emergency Management (NDEM).

About National Database for Emergency Management:

- It is a unique **Geo-portal to disseminate space-based inputs** along with services of forecasting organizations addressing all natural disasters in India.
- It is a **national repository of multi-scale geospatial database** coupled with decision support system tools.
- **Developed by: Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** under the guidance of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA).
- **Maintained by: National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC).**
- **Operational Since: 2013**
- **Key Features of National Database for Emergency Management**
 - Provides **multi-temporal satellite data** and thematic layers that help identify areas vulnerable to floods, landslides, earthquakes, and other natural hazards.
 - Offers decision-support tools for monitoring and managing such hazards.
 - National, uniform database for **States/UTs, NDRF, SDRF** for preparedness, hazard/risk zonation, **damage assessment and emergency response.**

Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy

Recently, a report explained how experts use the Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy (FTIR) to analyze post-blast forensic investigations.

About Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy (FTIR Analysis or FTIR Spectroscopy):

- It is an analytical technique to identify chemical constituents via **molecular vibrational modes**.
- **Working:** Uses **infrared light** to produce absorption/emission spectra of solids, liquids, gases. It detects **functional groups** and **chemical composition**, works even for small particles (10–50 microns).
- **Applications:**
 - **Industry:** Quality control of materials.
 - **Environment:** Air, water, soil analysis.
 - **Chemicals:** Identifying organic, polymeric, and some inorganic compounds.

ESCAPEDE Mission

Recently, Blue Origin has successfully launched Nasa's highly anticipated Escapade mission to Mars.

About ESCAPEDE (Escape and Plasma Acceleration and Dynamics Explorers) Mission:

- **Type:** First **coordinated dual-spacecraft** Mars orbital science mission
- **Orbiters:** **Blue** and **Gold**
- **Program:** Part of NASA's **SIMPLEX** (Small Innovative Missions for Planetary Exploration)

- **Launch Strategy:** Uses a “launch-and-loiter” strategy to launch the spacecraft into an orbit around Earth’s L2 region. Spacecraft loiter there until the late-2026 Earth-Mars alignment, then head to Mars.
- **Objectives:**
 - Study Mars’ hybrid magnetosphere and space-weather response.
 - Measure solar wind interaction with Mars’ atmosphere and crust.
 - Explain solar-wind–driven atmospheric escape and implications for habitability.

Man-Portable Autonomous Underwater Vehicles

Recently, new generations of man-portable autonomous underwater vehicles (MP-AUVs) have been successfully developed by the DRDO.

About Man-Portable Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (MP-AUVs):

- **Developer:** DRDO- Naval Science & Technological Laboratory (NSTL), Visakhapatnam
- **Purpose:** Mine Countermeasure (MCM) missions
- **Key Features**
 - **Rapid Response:** Quick deployability; reduces operational risk and logistics burden.
 - **Autonomous Target Classification:** Deep-learning algorithms for automatic recognition of Mine-Like Objects.
 - **Advanced Sensors:** Multiple AUVs with Side-Scan Sonar & underwater cameras for real-time detection and classification of Mine-Like Objects.
 - **Enhanced Situational Awareness:** Robust underwater acoustic communication enabling inter-AUV data exchange.
 - **Validated:** Field trials at NSTL/Harbour successful; production-ready soon.

RuTAG Initiative

Recently, the Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) to the Government of India chaired the 2nd annual review meeting of the Rural Technology Action Group (RuTAG) 2.0 initiative.

About RuTAG Initiative:

Launched in 2004, it is a mechanism to deliver higher-level Science & Technology (S&T) interventions in rural areas, focusing on demand-driven, grassroots-based technological solutions.

Objectives:

- Upgrade traditional practices with institutional technologies.
- Identify rural tech needs via NGOs/SHGs/start-ups.
- Develop demand-based tech, validate prototypes, and ensure scalable commercialisation.

RuTAG 2.0 (2023): Focuses on commercialization, wider dissemination, and field deployment of technologies with measurable rural impact; stronger inter Centre and stakeholder collaboration.

Sentinel-6B Satellite

Recently, the Sentinel-6B was launched from the Vandenberg Space Force Base in California.

About Sentinel-6B Satellite:

- It is an ocean-monitoring orbiter to measure sea-level rise and ocean conditions.
- **Joint Mission:** NASA, NOAA, ESA, EUMETSAT, EU Commission (funding), CNES (tech).

- **Role:** High-precision **sea-level altimetry** (~1 inch accuracy over 90% oceans). Improves **weather, storm, flood forecasts**; aids coastal protection & undersea networks.
- **Key Features:** Travels at 7.2 km/s, completing one Earth orbit in 112 minutes; expected to spend next 5.5 years in orbit; 6 onboard instruments. Works with twin **Sentinel-6 Michael Freilich** (launched in 2020).
- **Importance:** Extends decades-long satellite sea-level record; key for **climate change assessment**.

DRISHTI System

The Indian Railways is planning to install a new AI-based Locking Monitoring System called – ‘DRISHTI’.

What is DRISHTI?

AI-enabled real-time surveillance system to monitor wagon door locking conditions in moving freight trains.

Objective: To enhance safety & security; detect unlocked/tampered doors automatically; and reduce manual checks (time-consuming, impractical for long rakes).

Developed by: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) + IIT Guwahati Technology Innovation and Development Foundation (IITG TIDF).

Working: AI cameras/sensors detect door position + tampering in real time.

Ammonium Nitrate

Ammonium nitrate (NH_4NO_3), one of the substances responsible for the Delhi explosion recently, was used in deadly blasts in Mumbai city in the past after being mixed with other products.

About Ammonium Nitrate (AN)

AN is a **white crystalline salt** of **ammonia + nitric acid**, produced in large quantities and used mainly as a **high-nitrogen fertilizer** and as an **oxidizing agent** in explosives.

Properties: melts at 170°C ; soluble in water; heating decomposes it into nitrous oxide (N_2O - laughing gas).

Explosiveness: Not explosive alone; needs fuel + detonator; key ingredient in slurry/mining explosives.

India Rules: >45% AN = explosive; **District Magistrate** can allow ≤ 30 MT; larger quantities need **Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organization (PESO)** license.

African Swine Fever

The Assam Government recently banned the inter-District movement of live pigs in the State to arrest the spread of African swine fever.

What is African Swine Fever?

It is a highly contagious viral disease of pigs with a **mortality rate of ~100%**.

Spread: Virus survives on clothes, vehicles, pork products → rapid cross-border spread. **Not transmitted to humans.**

Impact: Major economic loss; pork shortages; trade disruption.

Treatment: **No vaccine or treatment.**

Control: Strict **biosecurity**; restrict pork imports; culling infected pigs.

Pharmacogenomics

Pharmacogenomics transforms drug therapy from a one-size-fits-all approach to precision medicine, tailoring treatments to individual genetic profiles.

What is meant by Pharmacogenomics?

It is the study of how an individual's genetic inheritance affects the body's response to drugs. It is a key part of genomic and precision (personalized) medicine.

Major Uses-

- **Oncology:** Gene-based cancer drug selection.
- **Cardiology:** Gene-guided dosing of blood thinners.
- **Psychiatry:** Choosing antidepressants with fewer side effects.
- **Infectious diseases:** Predicting response to antivirals.

Significance:

- **Improving safety:** Enhances drug safety, boosts treatment effectiveness, and reduces costs.
- **Targeted drug development:** Helps develop drugs that directly target specific gene variants causing disease.

Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission

Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission signs 3 MoUs with Nagaland Medical Council, Nagaland State Drugs Control Administration (NSDCA) and Nagaland State Pharmacy Council.

The **Pharmacopoeias** are **official compendia** of quality standards of the drugs being imported, manufactured sale, stocked or exhibited for sale or distributed in India.

About Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC)

- **Autonomous body** under Ministry of Health; sets **drug standards** in India.
- **Publishes Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP):** updates drug monographs & quality standards.
- **Publishes National Formulary of India:** promotes rational generic use.
- Sets standards for **identity, purity, strength** of human & veterinary drugs.
- Provides **IP Reference Substances (IPRS)** for drug identification and purity checks.

Vikram-I Rocket

Recently, the Prime Minister of India unveiled Skyroot Aerospace's first orbital rocket, Vikram-I.

What is Vikram-I?

It is **India's first private orbital launch vehicle**, named after **Dr. Vikram Sarabhai**.

Built by: Skyroot Aerospace (founded by ex-ISRO scientists).

Key Features:

- India's first private rocket with multi-satellite & multi-orbit insertion; rapid launch in 24-72 hrs.
- All-carbon-fiber body; 20 m tall; 1200 kN thrust.
- Payload: 350 kg to low Earth orbit (LEO), 260-290 kg to sun-synchronous orbit (SSO).
- Launch expected by early 2026.

Stages:

- Kalam-1200 (solid)
- Kalam-250 (solid)
- Kalam-100 (solid, vacuum)
- Raman engines (hypergolic, precise orbiting)

Significance: Boosts India's private space sector post-2023 reforms; targets global small satellite launch market.

Young Stellar Objects

Recently, a team of researchers has decoded the early lives of young stars called Young Stellar Objects (YSO) using a decade of data from NASA satellites Wide-field Infrared Survey Explorer (WISE) and its extended mission NEOWISE

What are Young Stellar Objects?

They are early-stage stars *before* entering the main sequence; still contracting and not yet stably fusing hydrogen.

Location: Found in dense molecular clouds rich in gas and dust. Formation: Formed by collapse of molecular clouds , triggered by supernova shocks, radiation, or turbulence. Types: Protostars and Pre-main sequence stars. Stages: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Class 0 & I: Thick dust; seen in Infrared/Radio wavelengths.• Class II & III: Dust disperses; visible in optical wavelengths	Significance: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help understand star formation processes (magnetic activity, outflows).• Key to studying planet formation and early solar system evolution.
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Auramine O

India continues to face recurring episodes of chemical adulteration in food, particularly through the use of non-permitted synthetic dyes and one of the most persistent among them is auramine O.

What is Auramine O?

It is a **bright yellow synthetic industrial dye** (used in textiles, leather, paper, inks, microbiological staining). It is **banned for food use** in India, EU, USA and is a **non-permitted colour** under FSSAI.

Why in news? Repeatedly found in **sweets/snacks**, especially in unorganised sector and festive seasons.

Why used? **Cheap, easily available**, mimics saffron/turmeric; weak enforcement.

Health impacts:

- **Toxic:** liver & kidney damage, spleen enlargement
- **Mutagenic; IARC: possible carcinogen (Group 2B)**

Regulatory concern: Reflects broader **food adulteration problem** + weak surveillance in informal markets.

Global context: Classified strictly as **industrial dye**

UNESCO- Global Ethics Framework on Neurotechnology

UNESCO issued the first global normative framework on the ethics of neurotechnology recently.

What is Neurotechnology? It refers to devices/procedures that access, assess, act on neural systems (e.g., AI-driven BCIs (brain-computer interface), Neuralink, neuroimaging). They are used in tumour detection, stroke prediction, enhancing capabilities, and aiding disabilities.

Objective: To maintain a balance between innovation and human rights to protect the human brain and brain-related data from misuse.

Key Principles	Implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Human dignity & rights• No harm, beneficence, proportionality• Mental privacy, autonomy, freedom of thought• Protection of neural data• Non-discrimination, transparency, accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsible Research & Innovation (RRI)• Balance open science vs IPR• Encourage private-sector ethics-by-design.

It prohibits manipulative/deceptive use of neural data (political/medical/commercial).	
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Cyber Security Innovation Challenge (CSIC) 1.0

In a landmark initiative to strengthen India's cybersecurity ecosystem, MeitY launched the **Cyber Security Innovation Challenge (CSIC) 1.0** under the **Information Security Education and Awareness (ISEA) Project** of MeitY.

Objective: To build **skilled students/professionals, homegrown solutions, and Atmanirbhar cyber tech.**

Collaboration: Joint effort of **MeitY, CERT-In, NSCS, C-DAC, DSCI, IITs/NITs** to shift India from reactive to **proactive cyber defence.**

Structure:

- **Five-stage challenge** → ideas to Minimum Viable Product (**MVP**), with mentorship from industry & experts.
- Covers **10 key domains** (network, mobile, hardware/software security, cryptography, fintech, forensics, etc.).

ISEA Project is a MeitY initiative to build skilled manpower in information security and promote cyber hygiene awareness. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims to create a safe, trusted, secure cyberspace. • Implemented through 50 premier institutions (IITs, NITs, IIITs, C-DAC) with C-DAC Hyderabad & DSCI as nodal agencies. 	Data Security Council of India (DSCI) is a not-for-profit body set up by NASSCOM for data protection and cybersecurity best practices in India. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It works with government, law enforcement, industry, and regulators for standards, policy advocacy, capacity building, and awareness in cybersecurity and privacy.
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Solaras S-2

Grahaa Space (Bengaluru startup) received **IN-SPACe** authorisation for its **1st nano-satellite mission: Solaras S2.**

Launch: Brazil, Alcântara Space Center via **Hanbit-Nano rocket (Innospace, S. Korea spacecraft).**

Purpose: Tech demo - qualify **nano-satellite bus/platform** for future missions.

Future: **2026 missions with Skyroot** (test communication module, optical payload, inter-satellite links).

Aim: Build **near-real-time EO (earth observation) nano-satellite capability.**

GSAT-7R Satellite (CMS 03)

ISRO successfully launched the Indian Navy's advanced communication satellite **GSAT-7R (CMS-03)** from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.

About CMS-03 / GSAT-7R

- **Type:** Multi-band **military communication satellite** (successor to GSAT-7).
- **Launch Vehicle:** LVM3-M5 rocket (India's heaviest rocket nicknamed Bahubali).
- **Weight:** **~4,400 kg- India's heaviest communication satellite** launched from Indian soil.

Functions / Capabilities:	Significance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides secure voice, data, video links. • Coverage: Indian landmass + Indian Ocean Region. • Supports ships, submarines, aircraft etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boosts naval network-centric warfare & secure communication. • Shows LVM3's capability for >4-ton satellites; supports Gaganyaan prep.

• Enhances maritime domain awareness & strategic communications.	• Strong push to Aatmanirbhar Bharat & indigenous space technology.
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Perseverance Rover

In a significant breakthrough, NASA's Perseverance rover recently detected electrical activity in Mars' atmosphere for the first time.

About Perseverance Rover ("Percy")

It is a semi-autonomous, car-sized robotic explorer and the centerpiece of **NASA's Mars 2020 Mission**.

Launch/Landing: Launched 2020. Landed on Mars' **Jezero Crater** (ancient river delta) in 2021.

Primary Mission: Seek signs of **ancient microbial life** and collect samples (rock/regolith) for a future return to Earth.

✓ Built on Curiosity's design, Perseverance is the **first rover** to land in an ancient Martian river delta, **record and transmit Mars sounds**, and **produce oxygen** on Mars using the MOXIE instrument.

About Ingenuity Helicopter: It is a small, autonomous aircraft that travelled to Mars attached beneath the Perseverance rover. It made history as the **first aircraft to achieve powered, controlled flight on another planet**. Its role is technology demonstration to test the first powered flight on Mars.

Museum of Royal Kingdoms of India

The Prime Minister laid the foundation stone for the **Museum of Royal Kingdoms of India**, at the Statue of Unity in Gujarat.

Background

- At the time of India's Independence, the subcontinent comprised British-administered territories and over 550 princely states and kingdoms.
- The political integration of these states into the Indian Union, represents one of the most defining achievements of the nation post-Independence.
- Under the leadership of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the princely states were persuaded to accede to India through the Instrument of Accession.

Objectives

- Document and display the rich legacy of India's royal and princely states.
- Preserve artefacts and archival materials that reflect India's royal traditions and their contribution to the nation's unity and cultural identity.
- Educate and engage the public on the historical process of integration, the contribution of the princely states and the evolution of India's governance and cultural unity.
- Serve as a centre for research, preservation, and public learning on India's regal and democratic heritage.

150th Birth Anniversary of Birsa Munda

The Prime Minister paid tribute to Birsa Munda on his 150th birth anniversary.

Birsa Munda

- Birsa Munda was born into the **Munda tribe on November 15, 1875, in Ulihatu village of Bengal Presidency** now in Jharkhand.
- Known as '**Dharti Aaba**' or '**Father of the Earth**,' his birth anniversary is celebrated across India as **Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas (Tribal Pride Day)**.
- Revered today as Bhagwan (Lord) Birsa Munda, he was an exceptional leader who recognised the impact of British rule on tribal traditions.
- He realised the erosion of tribal rights as a school student. His activism led to his expulsion from school in 1890.
- He led a **socio religious tribal movement** known as **Ulgulan (The Great Rebellion) in 1899** asserting tribal identity and rights over water, forests and land.
- During this uprising his followers proclaimed in their native language: "**Diku Raj Tuntu Jana – Abua Raj Ete Jana**", meaning "**The rule of outsiders is over, our own rule has begun.**"
- The Ranchi jail where Birsa Munda died has since been converted into the **Birsa Munda Smriti Sangrahalaya (Memorial Museum)**.

Holy City Status Given To Three Cities In Punjab

- The Punjab government has passed a resolution according the **status of holy cities** to **Anandpur Sahib, Talwandi Sabo and Amritsar Walled City**.

- The three places hold religious significance for Sikh religion as they host three of the five Takhts in Sikhism.

Key Provisions of the Resolution

- The resolution bans the sale and consumption of liquor, meat, tobacco and other intoxicants in these areas.
- An interfaith committee related to all religious institutions in these holy cities will be formed.
- The state government will make efforts for the development, cleanliness, security and promotion of religious tourism in the holy cities.

The Five Takhts

- In Sikhism, a Takht (throne) is a **seat of spiritual and temporal (worldly affairs) authority**, and the "Panj Takht" are the five most important seats of power for the Sikh community.
- These sites are not just places of worship but also institutions that issue religious decrees, address community issues, and hold significant historical importance, often connected to the Sikh Gurus.
- The five Takhts are:
 - **Akal Takht**: Located in **Amritsar**, it is the most prominent of the five Takhts and was established in 1609 by **Guru Hargobind**.
 - **Takht Sri Kesgarh Sahib**: Located in **Anandpur Sahib**, it is the place where **Guru Gobind Singh established the Khalsa Panth in 1699**.
 - **Takht Sri Damdama Sahib**: Located in **Talwandi Sabo, Bathinda**, it is the place where Guru Gobind Singh finalised the **compilation of the Guru Granth Sahib**.
 - **Takht Sri Harimandir Ji Patna Sahib**: Located in Patna, it is revered as the **birth place of Guru Gobind Singh**, the tenth guru.
 - **Takht Sachkhand Sri Hazur Sahib**: Located in **Nanded, Maharashtra**, it holds immense significance as the **final resting place of Guru Gobind Singh**.

150 Years Of Arya Samaj

The Prime Minister addressed the **International Arya Mahasammelan 2025**. The Mahasammalen is a key part of the **Jyāna Jyoti Festival** commemorating the 200th birth anniversary of Swami Dayanand Saraswati and **150 years of Arya Samaj**.

Arya Samaj

- The Arya Samaj is a socio-cultural organization **founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in 1875, in Bombay**.
- It is not a separate religion but a **monotheistic Hindu reform movement** within Hinduism.
- It rejected overly ritualistic traditions, superstitions and social dogmas of orthodox Hinduism and promoted a united Hindu society on the basis of Vedic teachings.
- Its principle is in its motto **Krinvanto Vishwam Aryam** (Let us make this world a noble place to live in). It is guided by 10 fundamental principles.

10 principles of Arya Samaj

- God is the efficient cause of all true knowledge and all that is known through knowledge.
- God is existent, intelligent and blissful. He is formless, omniscient, just, merciful, unborn, endless, unchangeable, beginningless. He alone is worthy of being worshiped.
- The Vedas are the scriptures of all true knowledge.
- One should always be ready to accept the truth and to renounce untruth.
- All acts should be performed in accordance with Dharma, that is, after deliberating what is right and wrong.

- The prime object of the AryaSamaj is to do good to the world, that is, to promote the physical, spiritual, and social good of everyone.
- One's conduct towards all should be guided by love, righteousness and justice.
- One should dispel Avidya (ignorance) and promote Vidya (knowledge).
- One should look for his/her good in promoting the good of all.
- One should regard oneself under restrictions to follow the rules of society calculated to promote the well-being of all.

Contributions of Arya Samaj

Social reforms

- **Promotion of women's rights** through widow remarriage, opposition to child marriage, and the practice of Sati, and advocacy of female education. Spread of education through the establishment of the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic (DAV) schools and colleges. Campaigns against caste discrimination and untouchability.

Impact on Nationalism

- While primarily a socio-religious movement, Arya Samaj had significant influence on the **Indian national movement**.
- Many nationalist leaders, including **Lala Lajpat Rai** and **Swami Shraddhanand** were associated with it.

Dayanand Saraswati

- Born on 12th February, 1824, Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883) was one of the most influential figures of 19th-century India.
- A major part of his mission was to address the fragmented nature of Hindu society. According to him, the brahmins were primarily to blame for this – they had corrupted the Sanatan Dharma in order to maintain and grow their own status and influence in society.
- His book, **Satyarth Prakash** (1875), emphasised the “return to Vedic principles” that Dayanand Saraswati believed had been lost over time.
- Even before the establishment of the Arya Samaj, Dayanand Saraswati had founded multiple Vedic schools. These Gurukuls provided an Indian alternative, based on principles of the Vedas. For Dayanand Saraswati, this was crucial to break the monopoly of brahmins on Vedic knowledge.

Dayanand's Philosophy

- Citing the Vedas, he claimed that **caste is not supposed to be hereditary** but rather on the basis of an individual's talents.
- Furthermore, he was **against the practice of untouchability**, which he believed was an outcome of centuries of brahmanical domination.

Dayanand's Legacy

- Dayanand Saraswati is **credited to have first used the term swaraj (self-rule) in 1875**.
- His work was also important for the consolidation of Hindus. Through the organisation of Arya Samaj, he was among the first to advocate conversion into the Hindu fold.
- Today, Dayanand Saraswati's legacy carries on through the Arya Samaj centres found across India as well as the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic schools and colleges.
- Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, India's second President called Dayanand Saraswati “**a maker of modern India**”.

Raulane festival

- Raulane is an ancient traditional festival celebrated in the hills of **Kinnaur district, Himachal Pradesh**.
- The festival honours **celestial fairies**, known as **Saunis**. It is believed that the Saunis protect the villagers and their homes during harsh winters.
- As spring approaches, villagers organise Raulane as a ceremonial farewell to the Saunis, expressing gratitude.
- During the festival, two men symbolically marry and become vessels for the Saunis, embodying a divine couple, the **Raula (groom) and the Raulane (bride)**.
- They get dressed in heavy woollen robes, ornaments and unique face masks and perform a slow, meditative dance at the Nagin Narayan Temple.

AWARDS/ PERSONALITIES IN NEWS

Indira Gandhi Peace Prize 2024

- The Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development for 2024 has been awarded to **Michelle Bachelet**, the first and only woman President of Chile and a former chief of UN Human Rights
 - ✓ **Indira Gandhi Peace Prize** was instituted in **1986** by **Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust**.
- Bachelet was instrumental in the creation of the National Institute for Human Rights and the Museum of Memory and Human Rights and establishment of the Ministry of Women and Gender Equality.
- She has worked for advancing LGBT rights. She is also credited with education and tax reforms in Chile.

Booker Prize 2025

- **David Szalay**, the Hungarian-British author has won the 2025 Booker Prize for his novel **Flesh**.
- The Booker Prize is the **world's leading literary award** for a single work of fiction.
- It was formerly known as the **Booker Prize for Fiction** (1969–2001) and the **Man Booker Prize** (2002–2019).
- **Founded** in the **UK** in **1969**, it initially rewarded Commonwealth writers but is now **open to anyone regardless of origin**.
- It is awarded each year for the **best novel written in English** and **published in the United Kingdom or Ireland**.
- A sister prize, the International Booker Prize, is awarded for a book translated into English and published in the United Kingdom or Ireland.

Bal Sahitya Puraskar 2025

- The **Bal Sahitya Puraskar** is a prestigious literary award presented annually by the **Sahitya Akademi**, India's National Academy of Letters.
- Instituted in **2010**, the award recognises outstanding contributions to children's literature in India's **24 officially recognised languages**.
- Works considered for the award typically include **stories, novels, poems, plays, picture books**, and literature rooted in India's diverse traditions and values.

Sahitya Akademi

- **Inaugurated in 1954**, Sahitya Akademi - **India's National Academy of Letters**, is the central institution for literary dialogue, publication and promotion in the country.
- **Headquartered in New Delhi**, it functions as an **autonomous organization**, under the **Ministry of Culture** and is the only institution that undertakes **literary activities in 24 Indian languages, including English**.
- In addition to Bal Sahitya Puraskar, Sahitya Akademi gives the following literary awards:
 - Sahitya Akademi Award;
 - Yuva Puraskar for young writers;
 - Translation Prize for literary translation;
 - Bhasha Samman to significant contribution to the languages not formally recognized by the Akademi and for contribution to classical and medieval literature.