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Centre Unveils Draft Labour Policy

The Ministry of Labour and Employment has released the draft **National Labour & Employment Policy — Shram Shakti Niti 2025** for public consultation, aligning with India's Viksit Bharat @2047 vision.

Marking a shift from **regulation to facilitation**, the policy redefines the ministry's role as an "employment facilitator**"** focused on creating a fair, inclusive, and technology-driven labour ecosystem. It seeks to promote collaboration among workers, employers, and training institutions through data-driven and integrated systems.

Shram Shakti Niti 2025: Blueprint for a Fair, Inclusive, and Future-Ready Workforce

- Labour" as a subject is in the **Concurrent List of the Constitution** of India.
  - Hence, both the Central Government as well as State Governments can make rules/laws on this subject.
- As a result, the Union Ministry of Labour and Employment has released the draft National Labour and Employment Policy — Shram Shakti Niti 2025 for public consultation.
- **National Career Service (NCS): Digital Public Infrastructure for Employment**
  - At the heart of the policy is the NCS, envisioned as India's Digital Public Infrastructure for Employment. The platform will offer:
    - AI-enabled job matching and career guidance
    - Credential verification and skill mapping
    - Cross-sectoral and regional employment linkages
  - The NCS will serve as a unified interface to connect employers, job seekers, and training providers through trusted digital systems.
- **Core Objectives:** The draft policy emphasizes creating a resilient, skilled, and inclusive workforce ready for emerging global challenges such as technological disruption, climate change, and evolving value chains.
- **Unified Labour Stack: Integrated Digital Ecosystem**
  - The policy proposes integrating major national databases — EPFO, ESIC, e-Shram, and NCS — into a unified labour stack.
  - This integration will enable:
    - Interoperable data systems for better policy coordination
    - Continuous skill development & Lifelong learning opportunities
    - Universal social protection and *income security*
    - Real-time labour market insights for evidence-based governance
- **Complementing Labour Law Reforms**
  - The new policy complements the government's recent consolidation of 29 central labour laws into four simplified labour codes, namely:
    - Code on Wages (2019)
    - Industrial Relations Code (2020)
    - Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code (2020)
    - Social Security Code (2020)
  - Together, these reforms aim to simplify compliance, improve worker protection, and foster formal employment.
- **Guiding Principles and Pillars:** The policy is guided by **four foundational pillars**:

Dignity of labour	Universal inclusion	Cooperative federalism	Data-driven governance

- It envisions a **resilient institutional framework** based on **convergence across digital systems**, ensuring policy coherence and long-term impact.

- **7 Strategic Priorities:** The draft policy identifies seven strategic priorities for achieving its goals:
  - Universal and portable social security
  - Occupational safety and health
  - Employment and future readiness
  - Women and youth empowerment
  - Ease of compliance and formalization
  - Technology and green transitions
  - Convergence through good governance
- **Women and Youth Empowerment**
  - The draft aims to increase women's labour participation to 35% by 2030 and promote youth entrepreneurship and career guidance.
  - Key initiatives include:
    - Single-window digital compliance for MSMEs with self-certification and simplified returns
    - Expanded career services through the National Career Service (NCS) platform
    - Green jobs and just-transition pathways for workers adapting to new industries and technologies
- **Technology-Driven Governance and Data Integration**
  - The policy envisions a unified national **labour data architecture** to ensure inter-ministerial coherence and transparent monitoring.
  - Key digital initiatives include:
    - AI-enabled safety systems
    - Predictive analytics for workforce planning
    - Annual National Labour Report presented to Parliament
    - Labour & Employment Policy Evaluation Index (LPEI) to benchmark State performance
- **Implementation and Accountability Plan**
  - Policy execution will proceed in **three phases**:
    - **Phase I (2025–27):** Institutional setup and integration of social-security systems.
    - **Phase II (2027–30):** Nationwide rollout of universal social-security accounts, skill-credit systems, and district-level Employment Facilitation Cells.
    - **Phase III (Beyond 2030):** Full paperless governance, predictive policy analytics, and continuous renewal mechanisms.
  - Progress will be monitored through **real-time dashboards**, the **LPEI index**, and **third-party evaluations** to ensure **transparency and accountability**.
- **Expected Outcomes**
  - Universal worker registration
  - Social security portability
  - Near-zero workplace fatalities
  - Female labour-force participation at 35% by 2030
  - Reduction in informal employment through digital compliance
  - AI-driven labour governance in all states
  - Creation of millions of green and decent jobs
  - A unified "One Nation Integrated Workforce" ecosystem

Blueprint for Pedestrian Safety

The Supreme Court (SC) recently issued directives to curb road fatalities, focusing on pedestrian safety, helmet use, wrong-lane driving, and regulation of LED headlights, hooters etc.

Case Background

- **Origin of the Case:** The case originated from a **2012 PIL filed under Article 32** by **Dr. S. Rajaseekaran**, an orthopedic surgeon, highlighting the **alarming rise in road accidents** and the **State's indifference** despite multiple statutory provisions and court judgments. He compared the **loss of lives and limbs** from road crashes to the toll of "major national genocides" and criticized the **lack of strict enforcement** and punishment for traffic violations.
- **Judicial Evolution:** In **2014**, SC recognized **road safety as a matter of public health and governance**, not merely traffic regulation and established the **Supreme Court Committee on Road Safety (SCCoRS)** chaired by **Justice K.S. Radhakrishnan**, focusing on the **"4 Es"- Education, Enforcement, Engineering, and Emergency care.** All States and UTs were asked to **report** within three months on licensing, vehicle fitness, enforcement, and trauma-care facilities.
  - By **2017**, seeing continued fatalities, the Court directed all States/UTs to adopt a **State Road Safety**

What are the SC's Directives on Pedestrian Safety?

Pedestrian Infrastructure:

- **Audits:** Authorities (National Highway Authority of India (NHAI), state governments, municipal bodies) must **audit existing footpaths** in the top 50 cities (with millions plus population) focusing first on high-footfall stretches (markets, railway stations, schools etc.) and at least 15-20 spots with past pedestrian accidents in the last 2-3 years.
- **Audit Parameters:** Assess footpath **width, height, surface, continuity, ramps, tactile paving, encroachments** etc. and identify remedial measures.
- **Standards**: Follow Indian Roads Congress (IRC) guidelines for Pedestrian Safety (IRC 103-2022) as the benchmark- e.g. minimum footpath widths, footpath elevation, anti-skid surfaces, tactile pavers for the visually impaired, ramps for wheelchair users, and bollards to deter illegal parking.
  - IRC is a technical body under the aegis of the MoRTH.
- **Online Grievance Redressal Systems:** must be set up for footpath issues (encroachments, defects, crossing problems) with time-bound resolution and escalation mechanisms.

Legislative and Regulatory Measures: All States and UTs are directed to **frame and notify rules under Section 138(1A)** of the Motor Vehicles Act (MVA) (for regulation of non-motorized vehicles and pedestrians) within **six months**, if not already done. Similarly, rules under **Section 210D** (design, construction and maintenance standards for roads other than national highways) must be framed within **six months.**

Enforcement & Traffic Behavior:

- **Helmet rules**: States and NHAI to strictly enforce helmet wearing for riders and pillion riders via e-enforcement (cameras), with reporting to the Court (number of challans, licenses suspended etc.).
- **Wrong lane driving / lane discipline**: Use of automated cameras, graduated fines, coloured/texture lane markings (e.g., for bus and cycle lanes), dynamic lighting, rumble strips, Tyre-killers at critical conflict zones. Authorities may publish real-time dashboards of lane violations to build public awareness, enhance compliance, and improve overall road safety.
- **Vehicle lighting, hooters & accessories**: MoRTH, state transport departments and traffic police must prescribe **maximum luminance and permissible beam angles** for headlights and enforce compliance during fitness/inspection. Ban unauthorized red/blue strobes and illegal hooters: through market crackdowns, seizures, fines.
- **Awareness Campaigns**: MoRTH, state transport departments, and traffic police to conduct nationwide public awareness campaigns to sensitize drivers and pedestrians about the hazards of dazzling LEDs and illegal lighting.

Accountability & Monitoring:

- **Liability:** Officials or contractors can be **held responsible** for pedestrian deaths from design or infrastructural failures under Section 198A of the MVA.
- **Review:** The court will monitor the implementation of these directions and review it after seven months.
- **District Committees: DRSCs** to make pedestrian safety a **standing agenda** in monthly meetings.

Policy, constitute **State Road Safety Councils** and **District Road Safety Committees (DRSCs) and** create **Road Safety Funds** and **district trauma-care centres**. Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) later launched an online **Road Safety Committee Portal** to track compliance.

- **Subsequent Developments:** In **2024**, the Court reviewed the **Hit-and-Run Compensation Scheme (2022)**, raising compensation to **₹2 lakh for deaths** and **₹50,000 for grievous injuries**, directing police to inform victims of their entitlements. In **January 2025**, the Court mandated the **cashless "Golden Hour" treatment scheme** for accident victims to ensure prompt medical care within the first critical hour.
- **Court's Concern:** It emphasized that **pedestrians remain the most unprotected road users**, suffering due to **poor footpath infrastructure, encroachments, lack of safe crossings, and negligent driving** including **wrong-lane use, dazzling headlights, and non-compliance with helmet rules**.

Implications of the Directives:

Legal & Constitutional Implications	Governance & Administrative Implications	Policy & Urban Planning Implications
• Strengthens **Right to Life (Article 21)** by recognizing **safe mobility and pedestrian protection** as a fundamental aspect. • **Demonstrates judicial activism:** to ensure executive accountability while relying on statutory provisions. • **Clarifies federal balance:** allowing States to implement rules while setting **national minimum standards**. • **Liability Norms**: Holding officials/contractors personally accountable elevates deterrence and nudges stricter compliance.	• **Requires Coordination:** among municipal bodies, traffic police, transport departments, PWD, and urban authorities. • **Highlights Capacity Gaps**: many local bodies lack **GIS data, footpath inventories, and technical staff**. • **Financial Burden & Prioritization**: Upgrading and maintaining pedestrian infrastructure is capital- and operation-intensive. States must allocate dedicated funds or re-prioritize existing budgets (e.g. under Smart Cities, AMRUT). • **Enforcement & Data Systems**: E-surveillance, automated enforcement, dashboards, grievance portals demand digitization, integration of traffic and public works data systems, and transparency. • **Resistance & Social Challenges**: Clearing encroachments (vendors, informal uses) carries sociopolitical sensitivity- requiring stakeholder engagement, alternative livelihoods, and phased approaches.	• **Promotes Pedestrian-First Urban Design:** integrating safe footpaths, crossings, and traffic discipline into city planning. • **Encourages Data-driven Governance:** via audits, dashboards, and grievance redressal systems. • **Supports Sustainable Mobility:** and non-motorized transport initiatives. • **Precedent for Other Safety Domains:** This might serve as a template for judicial direction in other areas (e.g. bus safety, overloading, vehicle emissions safety) when executive response is inadequate.

- ✓ **Data Highlights:** As per MoRTH's "Road Accidents in India 2023" report- India saw **1.72 lakh road deaths**, including **35,221 pedestrians (20.4%)**, up from **10.4% in 2016**, showing growing vulnerability.
- ✓ Over **54,000 two-wheeler deaths** resulted from **non-helmet use**.

Possible Challenges to Effective Outcome

- **Implementation gaps:** Good orders may lag at ground level if local bodies are weak or unwilling.
- **Maintenance & Sustainability:** Even after upgrades, footpaths and crossings need continuous upkeep, not just one-time fixes.
- **Equity in Urban vs Rural Areas:** The focus is initially on large cities; rural and small towns may lag behind.
- **Monitoring & Compliance Audits:** The Court must ensure genuine audits (not token compliance), periodic review, and corrective action.

SC Allows Experienced Judicial Officers to be Appointed as District Judges

In a landmark ruling (*Rejanish KV vs K Deepa*), a five-judge Supreme Court (SC) bench led by Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai held that sitting **subordinate judges** with **seven years** of prior Bar experience can directly apply for District or Additional District Judge positions.

✓ The verdict overturns earlier rulings that reserved this quota solely for **practicing** lawyers with 7 years at Bar.

What did the SC Rule?

- **Overturned Precedents**: The five-judge Constitution Bench delivered a unanimous verdict, overturning the previous interpretation of Article 233(2) by ruling that Judicial officers with 7 years of prior Bar experience are eligible for direct appointment as District or Additional District Judges under the Bar quota.
  - ✓ The Bench noted that earlier rulings in Rameshwar Dayal v State of Punjab (1960), Chandra Mohan v State of UP (1966), were incorrectly interpreted in Satya Narain Singh v High Court of Judicature at Allahabad (1985)- a ruling that eventually resulted in Dheeraj Mor.
- **Eligibility Criteria**: The minimum age for being considered and appointed as a District Judge/Additional District Judge for both advocates and Judicial Officers would be 35 years of age as on the date of application.
- **Amendment of Recruitment Rules**: State governments, in consultation with the HCs, are directed to frame new rules and amend any existing rules within three months to align with the judgment.
- **Prospective Application**: The judgment operates prospectively and does not affect any applications or selections that took place prior to this decision, except where interim orders have been passed by HCs.

Case Background

- **Dual Pathways to District Judgeship:** Historically, there were two pathways to become a District Judge:
  - **Direct recruitment for advocates** with at least seven years of practice under Article 233(2).
  - **Promotion from subordinate judicial service** based on seniority or competitive examinations.
- **Debate on Fairness and Meritocracy:** This bifurcation often led to debates about fairness, equal opportunity, and merit-based recruitment within the judicial system.
- **Rejanish KV vs K Deepa Case:** Rejanish KV was a **practising** advocate with 7+ years of experience at the bar when he applied for appointment as a district judge through the direct recruitment route reserved for advocates. However, before his **appointment was finalised**, he was appointed as a munsiff, a judicial officer in the subordinate judiciary.
  - The appointment was **annulled** by Kerala High Court (HC) citing earlier SC precedent in Dheeraj Mor vs High Court of Delhi (2020) that restricted direct recruitment as District Judges exclusively to practicing advocates under bar quota. The matter was subsequently taken to the SC for constitutional interpretation of Article 233(2).

Article 233 of the Constitution deals with the Appointment of District Judges

Article 233(1) empowers the Governor to appoint, post, and promote District Judges in consultation with the concerned HC.

Article 233(2) states that a person not in government service is eligible for appointment as District Judge only if they have at least 7 years of experience as an advocate or pleader and are recommended by the HC.

Justice M.M. Sundresh's Concurring Opinion: He viewed the issue through **judicial independence** and **constitutional silence**. The framers, he argued, intentionally set eligibility only for advocates and left it open-ended for in-service judges. Treating judges as mere state employees, and barring them from higher posts, would weaken judicial independence. The Constitution's silence on this eligibility was deliberate, giving **HC's discretion** in such matters. Imposing a total bar would create an **unconstitutional quota for advocates** and violate **Article 14 (equality)**.

Key Legal Reasoning

- **Interpretation of Article 233**: The Court emphasized a holistic reading of Article 233, noting that Article 233(1) deals with appointments, promotions, and postings to the post of District Judge, and Clause (2) specifies qualifications for advocates and pleaders. The Court found that the earlier interpretation, which excluded judicial officers with prior Bar experience from the Bar quota, was inconsistent with the constitutional intent.
- **Doctrine of Stare Decisis (*to stand by decided matters*)**: The Court rejected the argument that previous judgments should be

Implications of the Judgment:

- **Expanded Eligibility for District Judge Posts:** Judicial officers with **7 years of prior Bar experience** can now directly compete for District or Additional District Judge positions, ending the earlier monopoly of practicing advocates over the Bar quota.
- **Greater Career Mobility for Judicial Officers:** The ruling opens new avenues for **junior and mid-level judges** in the subordinate judiciary to rise faster through merit, not just seniority-based promotion.
- **Promotion of Meritocracy and Inclusivity:** By **attracting the best legal talent** into higher judicial ranks and strengthen the quality of justice delivery.
- **Judicial Independence Strengthened:** By ruling that judges are **not mere state employees**, and allowing them to compete for higher posts, the judgement preserves the **independence of the judiciary**.
- **Prospective Implementation:** Minimizes administrative disruption.
- **Constitutional Clarification:** By redefining interpretation of Article 233, the judgement reinforces that the Constitution's silence on eligibility for in-service judges was intentional- leaving flexibility to HCs.

followed merely based on the principle of stare decisis. It held that the doctrine cannot perpetuate an incorrect interpretation of law, especially when it leads to exclusion of qualified candidates.

- **Inclusivity and Meritocracy**: The judgment underscored the importance of drawing the best talent into the district judiciary.

SC Verdict Upheld Equal Inheritance Rights for Tribal Women

Recently in *Ramcharan vs Sukhram (2025)*, the Supreme Court (SC) affirmed that **Gond tribal women can inherit ancestral property** even without **explicit customary recognition**- a landmark step toward gender equality among Scheduled Tribes (STs).

Case Background

- **Case Facts:** The case involved *Dhaiya*, a deceased Gond tribal woman whose five brothers' inheritance rights were recognized, but hers was denied. Her children (Ram Charan & Others) claimed a share in the ancestral property of their maternal grandfather, citing Hindu succession principles and equitable grounds.

The HSA 1956 was enacted to amend and codify the law of **intestate succession** (inheritance without a will) among Hindus.

Applicability (Section 2(1)): Applies to-	**Exception (Section 2(2)):** The Act does not apply to members of any ST unless the Central Government issues a notification extending it to them.
• Hindus, including Virashaivas, Lingayats, Arya Samajists, Brahmo Samajists, and also to Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs. • Children of Hindu, Buddhist, Jaina or Sikh parents and converts/reconverts to these religions.	✓ No such notification exists for the Gonds, leaving them to the governance of their own customs (mostly unwritten, localized and uncodified).

** Section 3 of Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 defines "**Custom**" as a long-standing, continuous, and uniform practices that have gained the **force of law** among Hindus in a specific area, tribe, community, group, or family- **provided** they are **certain, reasonable, not against public policy**, and, in case of family customs- it has **not been discontinued**.

- **Core Issue:** Whether a tribal woman from Gond community, a Scheduled Tribe (ST- under **Article 342**) and her heirs were entitled to inherit ancestral property when the **Hindu Succession Act, 1956 (HSA)** does not apply to STs under **Section 2(2)** and no clear customary rule governed succession?
  - ✓ **Article 342** empowers the **President** with respect to any State or UT**, and where it is a State**, after consulting the **Governor** of a State, to issue a **public notification** specifying the tribes or tribal communities (or their parts/groups) that shall be deemed **STs** for that State/UT. Only **Parliament** has the power to **add or remove** any tribe or community from this notified list.
- **Trial & First Appellate Court:** Both courts **rejected the claim**, holding that there was **no evidence of Gond custom allowing daughters to inherit** and **no adoption of recognized Hindu practices**.
- **Chhattisgarh High Court (2022):** It also rejected the plea that in the absence of evidence of custom, the

Constitutional Principles:

- **Article 14:** Denying women inheritance violates equality; no rational basis for excluding them.
- **Article 15(1):** Prohibits sex-based discrimination.
  - The 2005 HSA Amendment's rationale reinforces gender equality as a guiding principle.
- **Articles 38:** urges the state to eliminate inequalities in status, opportunities, and facilities, both among individuals and among different groups across regions or professions.
- **Article 46:** Protection of Scheduled Castes (SCs), STs and other weaker sections from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.
- **Relevant equality cases**: **Maneka Gandhi (1978), Air India v. Nergesh Meerza (1981), Shayara Bano (2017)** relied upon to reinforce the constitutional imperative against arbitrary gender discrimination.

Impact of the Judgment

- **Strengthening Gender Equality**: Affirms that tribal women are equally entitled to inherit ancestral property
- **Clarifying the Law**: Even when the HSA does not apply, equity and constitutional principles ensure women's property rights among STs.
- **Expanding Equity Jurisprudence**: Reaffirms courts' authority to apply justice, equity, and good conscience where legislation or custom is silent.
- **Upholding Constitutional Morality**: Demonstrates that constitutional values override patriarchal customs, making equality the default legal norm.
- **Wider Precedent:** Sets a legal benchmark for other tribal and minority groups with unclear inheritance norms.
- **Shifts the burden** away from women to prove favourable customs — presumption now favours inclusion.
- **Social & Policy Significance:** Promotes economic empowerment of tribal women and signals to lawmakers the need for gender-sensitive reforms under the Fifth Schedule framework.

principle of "justice, equity and good conscience" must prevail. The case then went on appeal to the SC.

SC Verdict in the Case:

- **Exclusion of HSA:** Section 2(2) of HSA excludes STs unless notified by the Central Government. Therefore, neither the coparcenary (*joint heirship*) framework nor the 2005 amendment applied.
  - ✓ Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act of 2005 gave equal coparcenary rights to daughters. It does not apply in certain circumstances, such as for properties divided before 2004 or for members of STs
- **Customary Evidence and Burden of Proof:** No Gond custom was proved for or against women's inheritance. Lower courts wrongly presumed exclusion; The SC clarified that **equality should be the default**- unless the defendants could prove that women were specifically barred by custom, thus **shifting the *burden of proof* on the defendants**.
- **Principle of Justice, Equity & Good Conscience:** was applied by SC under **Section 6 of the Central Provinces Laws Act, 1875**, which directs courts to act according to justice, equity, and good conscience when law/custom is silent. Repeal in 2018 did not affect accrued rights due to the **saving clause**. Key precedents include:
  - **Niemla Textile Finishing Mills Ltd. (1957):** equity fills gaps when law is silent.
  - **M. Siddiq v. Suresh Das (2020- *Ram Janmabhoomi Temple*):** equity supplements statutory lacunae.
  - **Tirith Kumar v. Daduram (2024, Chhattisgarh HC):** upheld female heirs' property rights. Supreme Court upheld the decision of Chhattisgarh HC.

Pan-India SIR of Electoral Rolls

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has launched the second phase of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in 12 States and Union Territories, covering around 51 crore voters.

The first phase of SIR was held in Bihar.

Implementation Plan for Nationwide SIR

- **Phased Roll-out:** It will be conducted in different phases due to logistical and climatic factors.
  - **States and UT's Covered (Phase II)**: Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala, Puducherry, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep.
  - **Excluded:** Assam owing to ongoing citizenship verification under Supreme Court (SC) supervision.
  - **Phase III**: Remaining States/UTs, particularly snow-bound regions and those currently holding local body elections.
- **House-to-House Enumeration:** November 4-December 4, 2025.

About Special Intensive Revision (SIR) - It is a **hybrid** electoral roll revision conducted by the ECI under Section 21(3) of the Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1950, allowing the Commission to revise the rolls "in such manner as it thinks fit."

SIR combines features of both **intensive** revisions- involving door-to-door verification (intensive method) while also using elements of a **summary revision** where existing rolls are published as drafts and citizens file claims for inclusion, deletion, or correction. The Bihar SIR, for example, includes field verification by Booth Level Officers (BLOs) along with a new requirement for documentary proof of citizenship or age at the enumeration stage.

How does SIR differ from other revisions of Electoral Rolls?

Revision Type	Purpose
Intensive Revision: Fresh preparation of electoral rolls through house-to-house enumeration, without reference to old rolls.	For a complete overhaul when rolls are outdated or unreliable.
Summary Revision: Routine annual update; draft rolls published and citizens file claims/objections.	For regular maintenance of records before elections
Special Revision: Ordered in exceptional situations (errors, missed areas, legal/political exigencies); may follow intensive or summary method.	To fix specific deficiencies
SIR: A hybrid method using both intensive verification and summary processes; includes document-based verification.	To ensure transparency and accuracy in rolls when serious doubts or errors exist

- **Draft Rolls Publication:** 9th Dec', 2025.
- **Claims and Objections:** December 9, 2025-January 8, 2026.
- **Verification & Hearings:** December 9, 2025-January 31, 2026.
- **Final Rolls Publication:** 7th Feb', 2026.

Preparations for Nationwide Rollout

- **Mapping Exercise**: States directed to match current electors with entries from the last intensive revision (2003–04) to reduce document submission load.
- **Training**: BLOs are being trained for door-to-door verification.
- **Digital Transparency**: Many States have digitized and uploaded electoral rolls. Verification now aligned with Citizenship Act, 1955 requirements.

Historical Evolution of Intensive Revisions in India

- **Frequency:** Intensive revisions were conducted in **1952-56, 1957, 1961, 1965-66, 1983-84, 1987-89, 1992, 1993, 1995, 2002-04**, reflecting ECI's changing priorities from fixing early administrative flaws to tackling migration and roll quality issues.
- **Early Revisions (1952-66):** Focused on correcting inaccuracies in the **1951-52 rolls**, which had major omissions, especially of women. Due to low awareness and weak administration, ECI adopted a **phased approach**. State reorganization (1956) and delimitation (1960s) prompted further revisions.
- **Mid-Phase (1980s-1990s):** Emphasis shifted to preventing entry of **ineligible or foreign nationals**, particularly in border states. ECI ensured **due process** before deletions and introduced Electors Photo Identity Cards-EPICs **(1993-95)** for voter authentication.
- **Transition (2000s onwards):** With improved administration and rising costs, ECI moved to **Special Summary Revisions (SSR)** as routine practice. However, **intensive methods** were revived in **2002-04** and now again in **2025-26** to ensure voter roll integrity. The latest **SIR** is a modern version of earlier revisions- combining **digital tools, AI-based verification, and public transparency** to maintain electoral purity.
  - ✔ **Lessons from Bihar's Pilot (June–Sept 2025):** First SIR after 20 years. It required 7.89 crore registered voters to re-submit forms. 65 lakh names were deleted at draft stage; 3.66 lakh more were removed in the final list. 21.53 lakh new eligible voters added.

Significance:

- **Clean and Credible Voter Rolls**: Remove ineligible, duplicate, or deceased voters.
- **Strengthen Electoral Integrity**: Ensure only eligible citizens are enrolled.
- **Uniform Verification:** Standardize voter identification and documentation.
- **Transparency and Inclusivity**: Public display of draft rolls and reasons for deletions.
- **Modernization**: Use of digital mapping, data analytics, and AI for cross-verification.

IT Ministry Proposes Mandatory Labelling of AI-Generated Content on Social Media

Growing concern over deepfakes and generative AI-enabled misinformation has prompted Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) to propose amendments to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 (IT Rules, 2021).

✓ The IT Rules, 2021 prescribe due diligence obligations for intermediaries to ensure online safety, security, and accountability. First notified in 2021, they were later amended in 2022 and 2023.

Background and Rationale	Objectives of the Proposed Amendments
• **Potential for Harm:** spreading misinformation, damaging reputations, influencing elections, and enabling financial fraud. • **Obscenity and Impersonation:** for personal gain. • **Erosion of Public Trust:** in legitimate digital information ecosystems. • **Need for Legal Clarity:** for labelling, traceability, and platform accountability.	• To clearly define Synthetically Generated Information (SGI) and its applicability in unlawful acts; • Mandate prominent labelling and metadata embedding requirement (data about data) to distinguish synthetic content; and • Strengthen accountability of Significant Social Media Intermediaries (SSMIs) in verifying and flagging such content through appropriate technical measures.

Key Provisions of the Proposed Amendments

- **Defines "SGI" [Rule 2(1)(wa)]** as content that is artificially or algorithmically created, generated, modified, or altered using a computer resource in a manner that reasonably appears authentic.
  - ➢ **Impact:** It will close the regulatory gap by providing legal clarity on deepfakes, enabling authorities and platforms to identify and act against harmful AI-generated media.
- **Inclusion of SGI Under Unlawful Acts [Rule 2(1A)]:** A new sub-rule (1A) under Rule 2 further clarifies that wherever the IT Rules refer to "information" in connection with unlawful acts under Rule 3(1)(b), Rule 3(1)(d), Rule 4(2), and Rule 4(4), such references shall also include synthetically generated information unless the context otherwise requires.
  - ➢ **Impact:** It will broaden the scope of content that intermediaries must act upon when flagged, ensuring harmful deepfakes cannot evade takedown simply due to artificial creation and allows regulators to treat malicious synthetic media on par with traditional unlawful content under the IT Rules and IT Act.

Global Scenario:

China: It recently introduced mandatory labelling rules effective from Sept 2025, requiring AI-generated media (chatbots, synthetic voice, images/videos) to carry visible tags or watermarks.

European Union (EU): Under the EU AI Act, providers and deployers must clearly disclose when content is AI-generated or when users interact with AI systems (for example, chatbots).

United States: Federal guidelines on content authenticity are under development, while major tech firms such as Meta, Google and OpenAI have pledged voluntary watermarking standards.

Implementation Challenges	Way Forward
• **Technological Limitations in Deepfake Detection:** AI-generated content is rapidly improving, while detection tools remain imperfect with high false positives/negatives. This makes reliable identification difficult and risks wrongful takedowns or missed harmful content. • **Difficulty in Differentiating AI-Assisted vs Fully AI-Generated Content:** Minor AI edits, filters, or enhancements blur boundaries, making it challenging to decide which content requires mandatory labelling and metadata. • **Metadata Tampering and Evasion:** Despite permanent identifiers, malicious actors can use editing tools to strip or alter metadata, undermining traceability and accountability. • **Compliance Burden on Smaller Platforms:** While large companies may absorb the cost of detection systems, start-ups and regional platforms may struggle with technical capacity, financial costs, and expertise, leading to uneven implementation. • **Risk of Over-Censorship:** Fear of losing safe-harbour protection may prompt platforms to aggressively remove borderline content, affecting legitimate expression, satire, parody, and artistic creativity. • **Cross-Jurisdictional Enforcement:** Synthetic content uploaded from abroad may still be accessible in India. Without international cooperation and legal assistance frameworks, enforcement remains limited.	• **Develop standardized watermarking and provenance tools** to ensure tamper-proof identification of synthetic content. • **Strengthen international cooperation for cross-border enforcement** of deep-fake related offences. • **Invest in advanced detection technologies** and capacity building for law enforcement agencies. • **Differentiate between AI-assisted edits and fully AI-generated content** to avoid over-regulation. • **Raise public awareness and digital literacy** so users can identify and report deepfakes. • **Regularly review and update regulations** to keep pace with rapidly evolving generative AI.

- **Protection for Removal of Harmful Synthetic Content [Proviso to Rule 3(1)(b)]:** Provides statutory protection to intermediaries removing or disabling access to SGI based on reasonable efforts or user grievances, ensuring that such actions do not affect the exemption provided under Section 79(2) of the IT Act.
  - ➢ **Impact:** By offering good-faith protection, the provision incentivizes proactive moderation and helps limit viral spread of synthetic misinformation.
    - ✓ **Section 79(2) of IT Act (Safe-Harbour Protection)**: An intermediary (like a social media platform, or hosting service) is protected from liability for third-party content if:
      - Its role is just to provide access to or temporarily store content.
      - It does not control, modify, or choose the content or the recipient.
      - It follows due diligence and government-prescribed guidelines.

- **Due Diligence in Relation to SGI [New Rule 3(3)]:** Requires intermediaries providing tools for SGI to **label it with a with a permanent unique metadata or identifier** that is **clearly visible or audible** (covering 10% of visuals or initial 10% of audio) to enable immediate identification of the content as SGI. The intermediaries are prohibited from **modifying, suppressing, or removing** such labels or identifiers.
  - For instance, AI content generated through platforms like OpenAI's Sora, and Google's Gemini would need to add a label and metadata to synthetic content.
    - **Impact:** It will enable users to instantly identify AI-generated content, reduce deception, support forensic tracing, and enhance digital accountability through dual-layered transparency.
- **Enhanced Obligations for SSMIs [New Rule 4(1A)]:** The SSMIs are required to obtain a **user declaration** on whether uploaded information is SGI; deploy **reasonable and proportionate technical measures** to verify such declarations; and ensure that SGI is **clearly labelled or accompanied by a notice** indicating the same.
  - **Impact:** It will help platforms detect misrepresentation, enforce ethical use, guide moderation, and ensure accurate labeling of synthetic content through verified user declarations.

Extra Mile: Election Commission Directs Parties to Label AI Content

Ahead of the upcoming Bihar Assembly election, the Election Commission of India (ECI) issued an advisory to all political parties on responsible use and disclosure of synthetically generated information and AI-generated content during elections amid growing concerns over **deepfakes and misinformation undermining fair elections and voter trust**.

Rationale Behind the Directions

- Increasing misuse of **hyper-realistic synthetic media**, depicting political leaders making **false or misleading statements**.
- Such content can **distort public perception**, **undermine level playing field**, and **erode electoral integrity**.

Key Directions Issued to Political Parties, Candidates and Campaign Representatives:

- **Mandatory Labelling of AI/Synthetic Content:** Any **AI-generated or synthetically altered** image, video, or audio used in campaigning **must carry a clear label** such as "AI-Generated", "Digitally Enhanced" or "Synthetic" Content" ', covering at least 10% of the visible display area (or initial 10% duration for audio content). For videos, the label must be displayed at the **top band** of the screen.
- **Disclosure of Creator Detail:** Each such content must **disclose the name of the entity or person** responsible for its generation in **metadata or captions**, ensuring **traceability and accountability**.
- **Prohibition on Misleading or Deceptive AI Content:** No content shall be published or shared that unlawfully **misrepresents a person's identity, appearance, or voice without consent**, in a manner **likely to mislead or deceive the electorate**.
- **Prompt Removal of Violative Content:** Any **AI-altered or synthetic content** containing misinformation or manipulation found on official party handles must be **taken down within 3 hours** of being reported or noticed.
- **Record-Keeping and Verification:** Political parties shall maintain internal records of all AI-generated campaign materials, including creator details and timestamps, for verification when sought by the ECI.

Earlier ECI Directions on Deepfakes

- **May 2024:** Guidelines issued on ethical use of social media in campaigns.
- **January 2025:** Advisory mandated labelling of AI-generated content, but without specifying display requirements.
- **October 2025 advisory strengthens** these rules with **specific size, placement, and disclosure standards**.

- **Regulatory Oversight and Accountability [Amends Rule 3(1)(d)]:** Only senior officers of Joint Secretary-rank (or Director or an officer equivalent in rank or authorized Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG)) may issue takedown notices to intermediaries. These notices must cite the legal basis, nature of the unlawful act, and exact URL or content location. All such intimations under Rule 3(1)(d) are subject to **monthly** review by a Secretary-level officer to ensure necessity and proportionality.
  - Earlier Under Rule 3(1)(d), intermediaries were required to remove unlawful information either through a court order or notification from the appropriate government.
  - **Impact**: It will help ensure necessity, proportionality, and transparent enforcement, balancing citizen rights with regulatory powers.

The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Rules, 2025

The Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) released the draft Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Rules, 2025 which are open for public feedback until October 31.

About the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming (PROG) Rules, 2025

The **PROG Rules, 2025** (framed under Section 19 of the PROG Act, 2025) aim to:

- Encourage **legitimate** online gaming formats (e-sports and online social games)
- **Prohibit** harmful online *money* games
- Protect users (especially minors)
- Establish a transparent regulatory system

Key Provisions:

- **Promotion of E-sports and Social Games:** The Rules assign promotion of **e-sports** to the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, while the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting oversees online social games and may issue guidelines for age-appropriate, recreational, educational, or skill-based content. Importantly, registration for online *social games is voluntary*, allowing them to be offered without mandatory registration.
- **Establishment of the Online Gaming Authority of India (OGAI):** The Authority is a corporate body with civil-court like powers to conduct inquiries and summon individuals, and may function digitally. It comprises a Chairperson and five ex officio government members, with authority to classify **online money games**, **register games (**both e-sports and social games), issue directions, and impose penalties. Its decisions are appealable to the Appellate Authority within 30 days.
- **Composition of OGAI:** It will comprise of a Chairperson (ex officio, Additional Secretary or Joint Secretary, MeitY), three ex officio Members (Joint Secretary rank) representing Information & Broadcasting, Youth Affairs & Sports, and Financial Services, and two other ex officio Members (Director rank), with at least one having legal expertise. A Secretary (Director rank) is appointed to assist the Authority. The Chairperson may consult experts to assist OGAI in its functions.
- **Proceedings of OGAI:** Conduct meetings physically or digitally, chaired by the Chairperson (or senior-most Member in her absence), with one-third of functional strength as quorum. Decisions are by majority, with the Chairperson holding a casting vote in case of a tie. Members with personal interest in an item must abstain. In emergencies, the Chairperson may act immediately, reporting the authority within seven days for ratification. Proceedings remain valid despite vacancies, defects in appointments, or procedural irregularities not affecting the merits.
- **Determining an Online Money Game:** An online game is classified as an online money game if it involves monetary deposits, wagering elements, or winnings convertible to money. Once identified, the Authority may order its immediate cessation, prohibits related advertising, initiates enforcement action, and publicly lists the game on its website.
- **Registration Framework:** Online game providers must submit digital applications detailing game description, age group, revenue model, user safety, and grievance mechanisms. **E-sports** require prior recognition under the *National Sports Governance Act, 2025* for registration. Applications will be processed within **90 days** and the Authority may request additional information at any stage.
- **Certificate of Registration:** Upon approval, the Authority will issue a certificate *valid for up to five years*. Games cannot be represented or advertised as a registered online *social game or e-sport* without a valid certificate. Certificates can be surrendered before expiry, subject to accrued liabilities.

- **Material Change Reporting:** Online game service providers must report to OGAI the changes affecting the game's nature, features, or revenue model to prevent unregulated evolution of games into prohibited online money games without regulatory oversight. This also applies to:
  - ✓ e-sports: any material changes in e-sports or change in the status of recognition of such e-sports under the National Sports Governance Act, 2025.
  - ✓ online social game: any material change in the registered online social game.
- **Suspension and Cancellation:** Registration may be suspended or cancelled for material changes, repeated violations, false information, or legal non-compliance.
- **Penalties:** The OGAI can impose penalties Suo moto or on complaints, considering unfair gains, user harm, repeated violations, and gravity of non-compliance. Sanctions include fines, suspension/cancellation, or prohibition of the game, with resolution aimed within 90 days. The penalties collected shall be credited to the Consolidated Fund of India.
- **Grievance Redressal Mechanism:** The Rules establish a three-tier grievance redressal system-
  - Every provider of registered online social games or e-sports must maintain a functional grievance mechanism.
  - Users dissatisfied with resolutions can appeal to the **Grievance Appellate Committee** within 30 days, which aims to resolve appeals within 30 days and may issue corrective measures or refer non-compliance to the OGAI.
  - Further dissatisfaction allows users to approach the **OGAI** within 30 days, which can issue directions, corrective measures, and penalties.

Concerns Raised Regarding the Rules	Way Forward
• **Executive Dominance & Judicial Exclusion:** The OGAI is composed entirely of government officials, with only one member required to have legal expertise. The absence of judicial members raises concerns over natural justice, procedural fairness, and potential administrative overreach in quasi-judicial decisions. • **Appellate Authority Concerns:** Appeals are directed to an executive official, rather than an independent judicial body. This may affect the independence and perceived fairness of dispute resolution and could be challenged under separation of powers principles. • **Timeline Pressures:** The mandated 30-day resolution timeline at each tier may compromise the quality of adjudication in complex cases, especially those involving technical or cross-jurisdictional issues. • **Compliance Burden on Operators:** Smaller gaming companies may face resource-intensive challenges to establish internal grievance mechanisms, train staff, and implement secure digital systems. This could lead to non-compliance or superficial mechanisms, especially for voluntarily registered social gaming platforms. • **Procedural Ambiguities:** While the Rules rely on principles of natural justice rather than strict civil procedure, this may create uncertainty in adjudication and interpretation, increasing the risk of legal challenges. • **Potential for Judicial Review:** Although Article 226 allows High Court intervention, stakeholders are concerned that the current structure may invite frequent challenges due to executive-heavy oversight.	• **Strengthen Judicial Oversight:** Include independent judicial or legal experts in OGAI and the Appellate Authority to ensure impartiality and adherence to natural justice. • **Clarify Procedural Guidelines:** Define clear, detailed procedures for inquiries, penalties, and grievance redressal to reduce ambiguities. • **Flexible Timelines:** Allow reasonable extensions for complex cases to ensure thorough investigation and adjudication. • **Support for Smaller Operators:** Provide guidance, templates, and training for small and medium gaming providers to comply with registration, grievance, and reporting requirements. • **Stakeholder Consultation:** Periodically review the Rules with inputs from industry, consumer groups, and legal experts to balance regulation with innovation and user protection. • **Transparency and Accountability:** Maintain publicly accessible records of decisions, penalties, and enforcement actions. • **Technological Enablement:** Leverage AI and digital tools for monitoring, reporting, and grievance redressal, ensuring efficiency while minimizing operational burdens.

- **National Online Social Games and E-Sports Registry:** OGAI is required to maintain and publish a National Online Social Games and E-Sports Registry containing details of all registered games and their service providers. It must also publish a list of online money games that have been identified through determination, enabling transparency and supporting user awareness.
- **Transitional Provision for User Funds:** A transitional rule allows financial institutions to return user funds relating to online games collected before the enforcement of the Act within a period of 180 days. This repayment

will not be treated as facilitating online money gaming transactions during this limited window, enabling smooth financial closure of pre-existing obligations.

- **Annual Report Requirement:** After each financial year, OGAI must prepare a comprehensive annual report detailing its activities and submit it to the Central Government within 180 days of the financial year's close. The report must be authenticated and adopted at a meeting of the OGAI, ensuring administrative accountability and transparency.

Delhi HC on Private School Fee Regulation

The Delhi High Court (HC) ruled that the Directorate of Education (DoE) cannot interfere with the fee structure of private unaided schools except to prevent profiteering, commercialization, or the charging of capitation fees. The case revisits the balance between institutional autonomy and state regulation, particularly under the Delhi School Education Act (DSEA), 1973, and Rules (DSER), 1973.

Case Background

- **Fee Hike:** Two Delhi schools increased their fees for 2017-18 following the 7th Central Pay Commission (CPC) to meet higher salary costs. Parents alleged that the **fee hikes were unjustified**.
- **DoE's Action**: It issued notices (2018-19) directing the schools to use existing reserves before raising fees and to refund excess collections. It invoked Section 17(3) of the DSEA, 1973, requiring prior approval for fee revisions, and Rule 177 of the DSER, 1973, mandating that school funds be used only for educational purposes. It claimed that both schools had **sufficient surplus funds** and did not need to raise fees.
- **Schools' Argument:** The schools argued they are **unaided institutions** dependent solely on fees and **financially autonomous**. They contended that without evidence of **profiteering, capitation fees, or commercialization**, the DoE had **no authority** to interfere.
- **Single Bench Judgment (2024):** It **quashed the DoE's notices**, ruling that the DoE's powers are **restricted to preventing profiteering or commercialization** of education. Reworking school balance sheets without evidence were **subjective** and lacked a legal basis. The DoE **cannot reject fee hikes** merely because schools have surplus funds.
- **Division Bench Ruling (2025):** It **upheld** the earlier ruling stating that while **Section 17(3)** allows DoE oversight, its authority is **limited to cases of profiteering or capitation fees**. However, DoE may act against **misuse of funds or legal violations**, provided it follows **due process** and the **principles of natural justice**.

Legal Framework for Regulating School Fees

- **Statutory Provisions under DSEA, 1973**
  - **Section 17(3):** Recognized schools must **submit their proposed fee structure** for approval to the **DoE** and they **cannot charge any fee in excess** without such approval.
  - **Section 18(3):** Every recognized unaided school must maintain a **"Recognized Unaided School Fund"** to ensure transparency in financial transactions.
  - **Section 18(4):** Income derived from fees must be **used only for educational purposes** prescribed under the law.
- **Rule 177 under DSER, 1973:** Mandates that the **fees collected** by recognized unaided schools be **used mainly for staff salaries, allowances, and related benefits**.
  - ✓ The DoE alleged that some schools diverted funds (e.g., for building construction), violating this rule.

Judicial Interpretation

- **T.M.A. Pai Foundation v. State of Karnataka (2002):** The Supreme Court (SC) held that the **right to establish and manage educational institutions** falls under **Article 19(1)(g)** (freedom of occupation). Institutions are free to **fix their own fees**, subject to **no profiteering or capitation fees**.
- **Modern School v. Union of India (2004):** Reaffirmed that **government regulation of school fees is limited** to preventing **commercialization of education**. The State **cannot interfere** to assess whether a school's surplus is adequate or excessive unless it amounts to profiteering.

Implications of the Ruling	Way Forward
• **Reinforces School Autonomy:** Private unaided schools retain the **freedom to decide their fee structure** as long as it is not exploitative. Limits **bureaucratic interference**, ensuring operational independence in financial matters. • **Restricts Government Overreach:** The **DoE cannot dictate** how schools manage their funds unless there is **clear evidence of profiteering or capitation fees**. Promotes a more **transparent and rule-based regulatory approach**. • **Balances Rights and Accountability:** Upholds schools' **constitutional right to manage institutions** under Article 19(1)(g) while maintaining checks against **commercialization of education.** • **Sets a Legal Precedent:** Strengthens judicial clarity on the **limited scope of state regulation** in private education. • **For Parents and Students:** Reduces scope for **direct state control over fee hikes**, which may concern parents. Calls for **greater transparency** from schools to justify fee increases and avoid misuse. • **Policy-Level Impact:** The government may need to **develop a uniform fee transparency mechanism** or **independent oversight bodies instead** of direct intervention by the DoE.	• **Transparent Fee Framework:** Establish a standardized fee disclosure system requiring private schools to publish audited financials and rationale for fee hikes. • **Independent Regulatory Mechanism:** Create an autonomous fee regulation committee with representation from educators, parents, and finance experts to ensure fairness without bureaucratic interference. • **Periodic Financial Audits:** Mandate regular third-party audits to detect profiteering or misuse of funds. • **Parent-School Forums:** Institutionalize grievance redressal forums for parents to raise concerns about arbitrary hikes. • **Clear Legislative Guidelines:** Amend or clarify provisions of the DSEA and DSER to define the limits of DoE's regulatory powers. • **Promote Self-Regulation:** Encourage schools to adopt ethical fee policies and voluntary codes of conduct balancing quality education with affordability.

Kerala HC: Qualifications, not Caste, Basis for Appointing Priests

The Kerala High Court (HC) recently that the appointment of temple priests is a secular activity subject to constitutional principles of equality and non-discrimination. Dismissing a petition by the Akhila Kerala Thanthri Samajam, it upheld 2022 rules requiring institutional certification for priesthood in Travancore Devaswom Board temples, thereby delinking priesthood from caste or hereditary lineage.

Case Background

- **The Dispute:** It arose over **new rules by the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB)** regulating priest appointments. Traditionally, priesthood in TDB temples was learned under a senior *Thanthri* or chief priest. A certificate from this guru served as the main qualification, effectively restricting priestly roles to specific Brahmin families and communities through hereditary lineage.
- **Introduction of New Rules (2022):** The TDB introduced new regulations requiring aspiring priests to obtain a certificate from a *Thanthra Vidyalayam*- an institution formally teaching temple rituals and accredited by the Kerala Devaswom Recruitment Board (**KDRB**). The move sought to standardize priestly training and make the process merit-based.
- **Challenge by the Thanthri Samajam:** Representing traditional Brahmin priests, challenged the 2022 rules arguing that the KDRB, a state body, had **no religious authority** to accredit institutions imparting sacred knowledge. The petitioners contended that the reform undermined their spiritual authority and interfered with ***'essential religious practices'*** protected by the Constitution.

- **Kerala Government's Stand**: The **Kerala government** defended the reform as a step toward **social justice and constitutional morality**, asserting that priest appointments are **secular administrative functions** open to all qualified individuals, thereby **ending hereditary and caste-based exclusion** in temple priesthood.

Kerala HC's Ruling:

- It **upheld the rule**, holding that **eligibility based on qualifications and training** rather than caste or lineage.
- It ruled that **restricting priesthood to a particular caste or family lineage** is **not an essential religious practice** under **Articles 25 and 26** of the Constitution.
- The Court observed that customs or traditions that are **oppressive, discriminatory, or against public policy** cannot claim constitutional protection.
- It clarified that the **TDB**, being a statutory body, has the authority to set objective qualifications for appointments.

Constitutional Basis:

- **Article 25:** Freedom of conscience and right to freely profess, practice and propagate religion, subject to public order, morality, health, and other fundamental rights.
- **Article 26:** Freedom of religious denominations to manage their affairs, but this right is not absolute and subject to constitutional morality.
- The Court applied the **"essential religious practice test"**, holding that priestly caste lineage is not integral to Hindu worship.

Significance of the Ruling	Implications of the Ruling
• **Upholds Equality and Secular Governance** in state-administered temples. • **Encourages Merit-Based Access:** Promotes meritocracy and inclusivity in religious institutions by prioritizing qualification over caste or lineage. • **Reflects Reform-Oriented Judicial Approach:** Marks a shift towards a reformist interpretation of temple administration, aligning with Supreme Court (SC) precedents in: o In Seshammal v. State of Tamil Nadu (1972), the SC held that appointing temple priests is a **secular function** open to state regulation. o In Adi Saiva Sivachariyargal Nala Sangam v. State of Tamil Nadu (2015), it clarified that while the state can regulate **secular aspects** of temple administration, it cannot alter **essential religious practices** prescribed by temple Agamas.	• **Democratization of Priesthood:** Opens priestly posts in public temples to all trained and qualified individuals, irrespective of caste or community background. • **Strengthened State Regulation** over temple administration while maintaining a balance with religious autonomy. • **Template for Wider Reform:** May serve as a model for similar reforms in other state-run temple boards across India

Visit of British PM to India

- Recently, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer visited India— his first official trip since taking office in July 2024. During the visit, he held talks with PM Modi and attended the Global Fintech Summit in Mumbai.
- The visit was reciprocal, following Modi's trip to the UK in July when the two nations signed the India–UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Key Outcomes

- **Strengthening Defence Cooperation**
  - **Missile Procurement Deal**
    - India signed a £350 million agreement with the U.K. to procure Lightweight Multirole Missiles (LMMs) for the Indian Army. Missiles to be manufactured in Belfast.
    - The pact lays the foundation for a Complex Weapons Partnership, focusing on defence industrial collaboration and technology transfer.
  - **Naval Collaboration**
    - A new £250 million project launched to co-develop electric-powered engines for naval ships.
    - The Implementing Arrangement supports sustainable and green defence technologies.

- **Military Training Agreement**
  - A new framework where Indian Air Force instructors will train at the Royal Air Force (RAF) in the U.K., deepening military interoperability.

- **Expanding Economic Linkage**
  - **Massive U.K. Trade Delegation**
    - PM Starmer led a **125-member trade delegation**—the largest ever from the U.K.—including CEOs, entrepreneurs, and academics.
    - Visit follows the signing of the **India–U.K. Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)** in July 2025.
  - **Indian Investments in the U.K.**
    - **64 Indian companies** pledged **£1.3 billion (₹15,430 crore)**, creating nearly **7,000 jobs**.
    - Focus areas: **engineering, technology, clean energy, mobility, and creative industries.**
  - **Major Indian Projects**
    - **TVS Motor** – £250M in EVs and Norton Motorcycles.
    - **Cyient** – £100M in semiconductors and clean energy (300 jobs).
    - **Muthoot Finance UK** – £100M expansion to 20 branches.
    - **Hero Motors** – £100M in e-mobility and aerospace.
  - **U.K. Investments in India**
    - **Rolls-Royce** to develop India as a **production hub** for aerospace and defence manufacturing.

- **Critical Minerals and Supply Chain Cooperation**
  - India along with UK to set up an Industry Guild and Supply Chain Observatory with a satellite campus at ISM Dhanbad.
  - Aims to build resilient global value chains, in sync with the G7-led Mineral Security Partnership.

- **Technological and Financial Synergy**
  - **India–U.K. Technology Security Initiative**
    - Promotes cooperation in **AI, advanced communications, and innovation security**.
    - Represents a **"win-win partnership"**—U.K.'s research and finance combined with India's scale and talent.
  - **Strengthening the Fintech Corridor**
    - Launch of **U.K.–India Fintech Corridor** connecting **LSE** *(London Stock Exchange)* **and GIFT City (Gujarat)**.

Significance of this visit

For India	For the U.K.
o Advances **Atmanirbhar Bharat** via defence technology partnerships.	o Strengthens **post-Brexit strategic and trade networks**.
o Boosts **Make in India** in manufacturing and defence.	o Attracts **Indian FDI** and generates **domestic jobs**.
o Expands global-standard **higher education infrastructure**.	o Reinforces U.K.'s **defence export potential**.

India–UK: Reliable Partners in an Uncertain World

- Amid global instability fuelled by US President Donald Trump's disruptive policies, India and the UK have emerged as reliable, predictable partners.
- Experts note that the FTA is only the foundation of a much deeper partnership.
- **India–UK 'Living Bridge' Strengthens Bilateral Partnership**
  - The Indian diaspora, making up 2.6% of the UK's population, plays a vital role in academia, business, politics, and innovation, owning over 65,000 UK-based businesses that drive jobs and economic growth.
  - This dynamic community serves as a "living bridge" connecting the two nations.
  - In May 2025, the two Prime Ministers announced the conclusion of the India-UK FTA (Free Trade Agreement) and the Double Contribution Convention, a pact aimed at simplifying social security contributions for professionals.
  - This momentum was solidified in July 2025 during PM Modi's visit to the UK with the formal signing of the CETA, the long-term strategic blueprint Vision 2035 document, and a new Defence Industrial Roadmap.
- **Economic Cooperation**
  - Bilateral trade in goods and services reaching **USD 56 billion in 2024**. Trade is projected to double by 2030
  - **CETA** allows duty-free access to 99% of Indian exports, supporting MSMEs and job creation.

- Encourages startup collaboration, innovation exchange, and cross-border funding.

- **Educational Collaboration**
  - Nine U.K. universities to open campuses in India, including University of Southampton in Gurugram (first batch admitted).
  - Industry–Academia Linkages - Boosts education diplomacy and facilitates cross-border knowledge exchange.
- **Cultural Diplomacy and Connectivity**
  - PM Starmer visited **Yash Raj Films Studio**; announced **three Bollywood films** to be shot in the U.K. from 2026.
  - British Airways to add a third Delhi–London flight.
  - IndiGo to start Delhi–Manchester route, strengthening people-to-people ties.

[Also refer the topic "India-U.K. Trade Deal" from ***The Recitals – July 2025***].

India Maritime Week 2025

- PM Modi addressed the Maritime Leaders Conclave and chaired the Global Maritime CEO Forum at India Maritime Week 2025 in Mumbai.
- He welcomed participants from over 85 countries, noting the event's evolution from a national forum in 2016 to a global summit.

Key Highlights of PM Modi's Address

- **India's Vision for its Maritime Transformation**
  - India is committed to transform its maritime sector through the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047.
  - This long-term vision rests on **four strategic pillars**:

Port-led development	Shipping and shipbuilding	Seamless logistics	Maritime skill-building

  - The goal is to position India as a leading global maritime power.
- **Major Achievements in India's Maritime Sector (2024–25)**
  - **Vizhinjam Port**, *India's first deep-water international trans-shipment hub*, became operational, hosting the world's largest container vessel.
  - **Kandla Port** launched India's first megawatt-scale **indigenous green hydrogen facility**.
  - **JNPT** doubled its capacity with the start of Phase 2 of the Bharat Mumbai Container Terminal, marking the *largest FDI in India's port infrastructure*.
  - India's major ports handled record cargo volumes, showcasing unprecedented efficiency.
- **Next-Generation Reforms in Maritime Governance**
  - Outdated colonial-era shipping laws replaced with modern legislation empowering State Maritime Boards, promoting digitization, and enhancing safety and sustainability.
  - The **new Merchant Shipping Act** aligns Indian regulations with global conventions, improving trust, ease of business, and investment climate.
  - The **Coastal Shipping Act** simplifies trade, ensures supply chain security, and promotes balanced coastal development.
  - Introduction of **One Nation, One Port Process** to standardize port procedures and reduce documentation.

- **Decade of Transformation under Maritime India Vision**
  - Over **150 new initiatives** launched under the **Maritime India Vision**.
  - Major ports' capacity doubled, turnaround time reduced, and cruise tourism expanded.
  - **Inland waterway cargo movement** rose by **700%**, and **operational waterways** increased from **3 to 32**.
  - The **net annual surplus** of ports grew **ninefold** in ten years.
- **Efficiency and Global Recognition**
  - Indian ports now rank among the **most efficient in the developing world**, outperforming many in the developed world.
  - **Container dwell time** reduced to **under 3 days**, and **vessel turnaround time** cut from **96 to 48 hours**.
  - India improved its position in the **World Bank's Logistics Performance Index**.
  - The number of **Indian seafarers** increased from 1.25 lakh to over 3 lakh in past decade, making India one of the **top three seafaring nations globally**.
- **Focus on Blue Economy and Green Growth**
  - Emphasis on **Blue Economy**, sustainable coastal development, green logistics, and coastal industrial clusters.
  - Government prioritizing shipbuilding as a national growth driver, with a ₹70,000 crore investment to boost shipyard capacity, greenfield/brownfield projects, and maritime employment.
  - Large ships have been granted infrastructure asset status, enabling easier financing and reduced interest costs.
- **Visionary Maritime Heritage and New Port Projects**
  - PM Modi recalled Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's maritime legacy, emphasizing that seas should be seen as gateways to opportunity.
  - Announced construction of a **new mega port at Vadhavan, Maharashtra**, part of India's effort to quadruple port capacity and increase containerized cargo share.

India Maritime Week 2025 – A Global Maritime Showcase

- India Maritime Week (IMW) 2025, held recently in Mumbai, is India's premier global maritime event under the theme "**Uniting Oceans, One Maritime Vision**."
- The event aims to showcase India's roadmap to becoming a global maritime hub and a leader in the Blue Economy. This was the **fourth edition of the summit**.
- It served as a global convergence point for **shipping, ports, shipbuilding, cruise tourism**, and **blue economy finance**, driving collaboration for a **sustainable maritime future**.

India's Growing Engagement with Taliban

- India hosted Taliban Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in New Delhi and presented the outreach as engagement with the people of Afghanistan.
- The visit happened amid violent clashes between Pakistan and the Taliban along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.
- Over the past year, **India has rapidly expanded direct communication with the Taliban** — through Foreign Secretary-level contacts, phone calls between Jaishankar & Muttaqi, and by seeking *UNSC travel waivers to facilitate visits*.
- Though India still does **not officially recognise** the Taliban regime, Muttaqi was given full-protocol treatment.

Key Outcomes

- India to **upgrade its technical mission in Kabul into a full embassy soon**.
- India handed over 20 ambulances and promised health & water projects and humanitarian aid.
- Taliban assured that Afghan soil will not be used against India — given past JeM/LeT presence in eastern Afghanistan.

Conclusion

- India's decision to side with the Taliban in rejecting **Trump's plan to reclaim the Bagram air base underscores how far New Delhi's position has evolved** — from isolation to pragmatic engagement.
- Whether India will formally recognise the Taliban is uncertain — much depends on how the embassy upgrade is structured, and whether India permits Taliban diplomats to take charge of the Afghan Embassy in Delhi.
- India may build tactical cooperation with Kabul for strategic advantage vis-à-vis Pakistan, but **a values-based "friendship" remains unlikely** given Taliban ideology and repression, especially of women.

India's Cautious Engagement with the Taliban: Step-by-Step Diplomacy

- After the Taliban captured Kabul in August 2021, India adopted a strategy of "cautious engagement", choosing **incremental diplomatic contact without granting formal recognition to the regime**.
- The first official interaction occurred in August 2021, when India's Ambassador to Qatar met Stanekzai, head of the Taliban's political office in Doha.
- **India's Call for Inclusivity**
  - ✔ Soon after, India urged the Taliban to form an "inclusive government" that represented all ethnic groups and included women.
  - ✔ In September 2021, India officially acknowledged the Taliban as "those in positions of power and authority across Afghanistan," signalling pragmatic recognition of ground realities without formal endorsement.
- **Humanitarian Outreach and Reopening Channels**
  - ✔ In December 2021, India sent 16 tons of essential medicines to Afghanistan, distinguishing between the Taliban regime and the Afghan people while resuming humanitarian engagement.
  - ✔ By June 2022, India deepened ties with a visit by a delegation led by MEA Joint Secretary, followed by the **deployment of a "technical team" at the Indian Embassy in Kabul**.
- **Responding to Human Rights Concerns**
  - ✔ In December 2022, India publicly expressed concern over the Taliban's ban on women attending universities, reinforcing its stance on women's rights and inclusive governance.
  - ✔ By the end of 2023, tensions resurfaced as the Afghan Embassy in New Delhi ceased operations, citing a "lack of support" from the host government and internal challenges within the Afghan administration.
- **Evolving Regional Diplomacy (2024–2025)**
  - ✔ In January 2024, Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi hosted diplomats from 11 regional countries, including India, advocating a "region-centric narrative" for constructive engagement.
  - ✔ The **Taliban government condemned the Pahalgam terror attack**, aligning with India's counterterrorism concerns — a subtle sign of growing diplomatic coordination.

Why India is doing this?

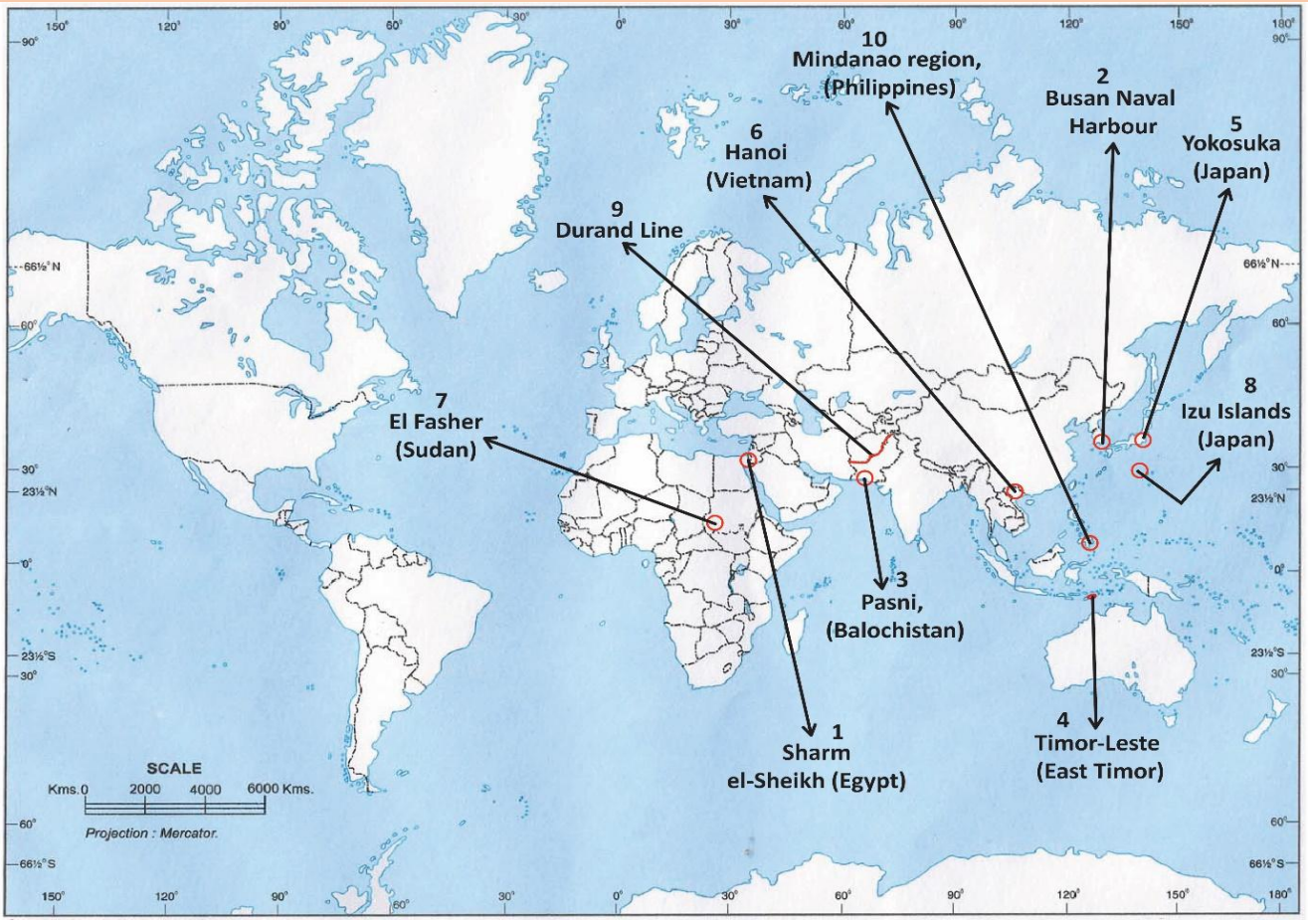
- Pakistan–Taliban tensions (TTP issue) create strategic space for India.
- India wants to secure connectivity routes as Pakistan blocks land transit and US sanctions have hit Chabahar again.
- Major regional players — Russia, China, Iran, Gulf states, Central Asia — have already moved ahead with Taliban engagement.
- India needs to protect its **$3+ billion** investments made in Afghanistan since 2001.
- Taliban control in Afghanistan appears stable four years after takeover.

UN's Stand on Taliban: No Recognition Yet

- The United Nations remains the benchmark for legitimacy, and recognition by it is the Taliban's top foreign policy goal. To gain recognition, the Taliban must ensure:
  - An inclusive government,
  - Dismantling terror networks, and
  - Respecting human rights, especially of women and girls.
- Having failed to meet these conditions, the UN General Assembly Credentials Committee has rejected the Taliban's claim to Afghanistan's UN seat for the fourth consecutive year in November 2024.

MAPS: PLACES IN NEWS

International Places in News

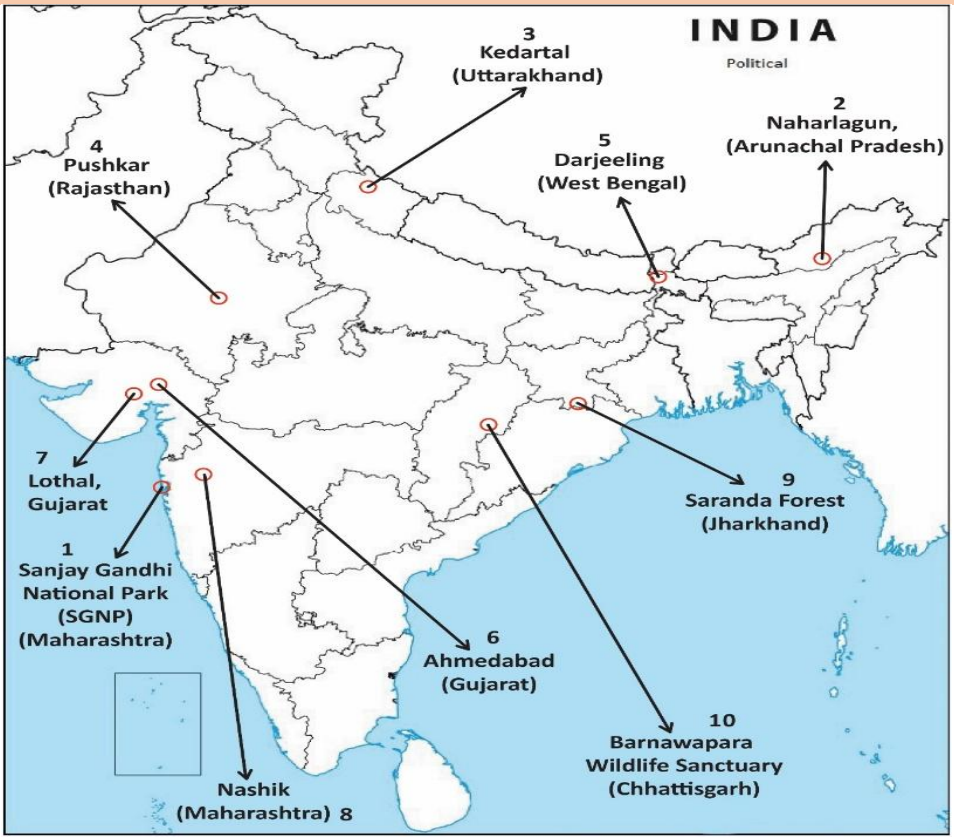


1	**Sharm el-Sheikh (Egypt)**	• **Location & Geography**: Southern tip of Sinai Peninsula; On the Red Sea coast between the Gulf of Suez (west) and Gulf of Aqaba (east) • **International Peace Conference Venue**: has hosted ***Arab-Israeli summits*** (2005) • **UNFCCC COP27 Outcomes**: "*Loss and Damage" fund established.*
2	**Busan Naval Harbour**	India and South Korea conducted the inaugural edition of their bilateral naval exercise at Busan Naval Harbour. • **Location & Geography**: Southeastern coast of Korean Peninsula; facing Korea Strait (between East China Sea & Sea of Japan); Natural deep-water harbor in sheltered bay • **Guards Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs)** in Korea Strait; deters North Korean threats.
3	**Pasni, (Balochistan)**	Pakistan has proposed allowing the United States to build and operate a commercial deep-water port at Pasni, Balochistan, aimed at exporting critical minerals like copper and rare earths. • **Location & Geography**: At Makran Coast, west of Gwadar; natural deep-water bay (12–15 m depth) • Pakistan Navy's **2nd-largest air station** (PNS Makran) • 2024: China-Pakistan joint naval drill **"Sea Guardian-3"** at Pasni anchorage.

4	**Timor-Leste (East Timor)**	East Timor becomes ASEAN's 11th member at the 47th Summit, marking the bloc's first expansion since the 1990s. • **Location & Geography**: A Southeast Asian nation occupying half the island of Timor. • Was a Portuguese colony between 1520–1975; *Indonesian invasion from 1975-1999* • **1999 UN referendum**: 78.5% for independence; 2002 formal sovereignty ***(1st new nation of 21st century***)
5	**Yokosuka (Japan)**	Indian Naval Ship (INS) Sahyadri participated in the JAIMEX-25 (Japan-India Maritime Exercise) at Yokosuka, Japan • **Location & Geography**: Situated on the western shore of Tokyo Bay entrance, Kanagawa Prefecture(city); natural deep-water harbor (8–20 m depth); area prone to ***typhoon-*** under Ogasawara High pressure system • US Navy's **largest overseas base** (CFA Yokosuka)
6	**Hanoi (Vietnam)**	72 States signed (till October 2025) ***the first UN Convention against Cybercrime in Hanoi***, strengthening global cooperation to combat cybercrime. • **Location & Geography**: situated at ***Red River Delta***; Red River (Sông Hồng) & Duong River form fertile alluvial plain. • It is the **National capital** and has Communist Party HQ (Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum)
7	**El Fasher (Sudan)**	The conflict in El Fasher, (North Darfur) has escalated between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces (RAF). • **Location & Geography**: Capital of ***North Darfur State***; south western Sudan • **Ethinicity:** home to ***Multi-ethnic groups*** (including the **Fur, Zaghawa, Masalit**, and various **Arab** tribes.); • **UN ceasefire calls**; US envoy demands humanitarian corridors; fears of *"horrific massacre"*& ethnic cleansing
8	**Izu Islands (Japan)**	Typhoon Halong made landfall on Japan's Izu Islands, causing massive evacuations due to record rainfall, powerful winds up to 250 km/h. • **Location & Geography**: They are a group of volcanic islands in **Japan**, located to the south and east of the Izu Peninsula in Honshu into Pacific ocean • **Subtropical climate** (avg. 18–26°C); island lies in typhoon corridor during storm season; warm ***Kuroshio Current passes through island allowing formation of coral reefs***
9	**Durand Line**	Fresh cross-border clashes between Afghanistan and Pakistan along the Durand Line. • **Location & Geography**: Around 2,670 km porous border between Pakistan & Afghanistan (***Khyber Pakhtunkhwa***) • **1893**: Agreement signed in Kabul by ***Sir Mortimer Durand*** (British India) & Amir ***Abdur Rahman Khan*** (Afghanistan). • **Purpose**: Buffer against Russian Tsarist expansion (Great Game); divided Pashtun tribal lands such as the Afridi, Mohmand, Wazir, and Shinwari regions. • **Afghanistan never recognises** the line and calls it ***"colonial relic";*** while Pakistan recognises it as official border and fenced 90% (2017–24) despite Taliban protests.
10		The 7.4-magnitude earthquake struck off the coast of the southern Philippines ***island of Mindanao*** and prompted a tsunami warning. • **Location & Geography**: Southernmost major island group (2nd largest after Luzon)

	Mindanao region, (Philippines)	• **Biodiversity hotspot**: Mt. Hamiguitan UNESCO (***pygmy forest***); Tubbataha Reefs UNESCO (shark sanctuary).

National Places in News

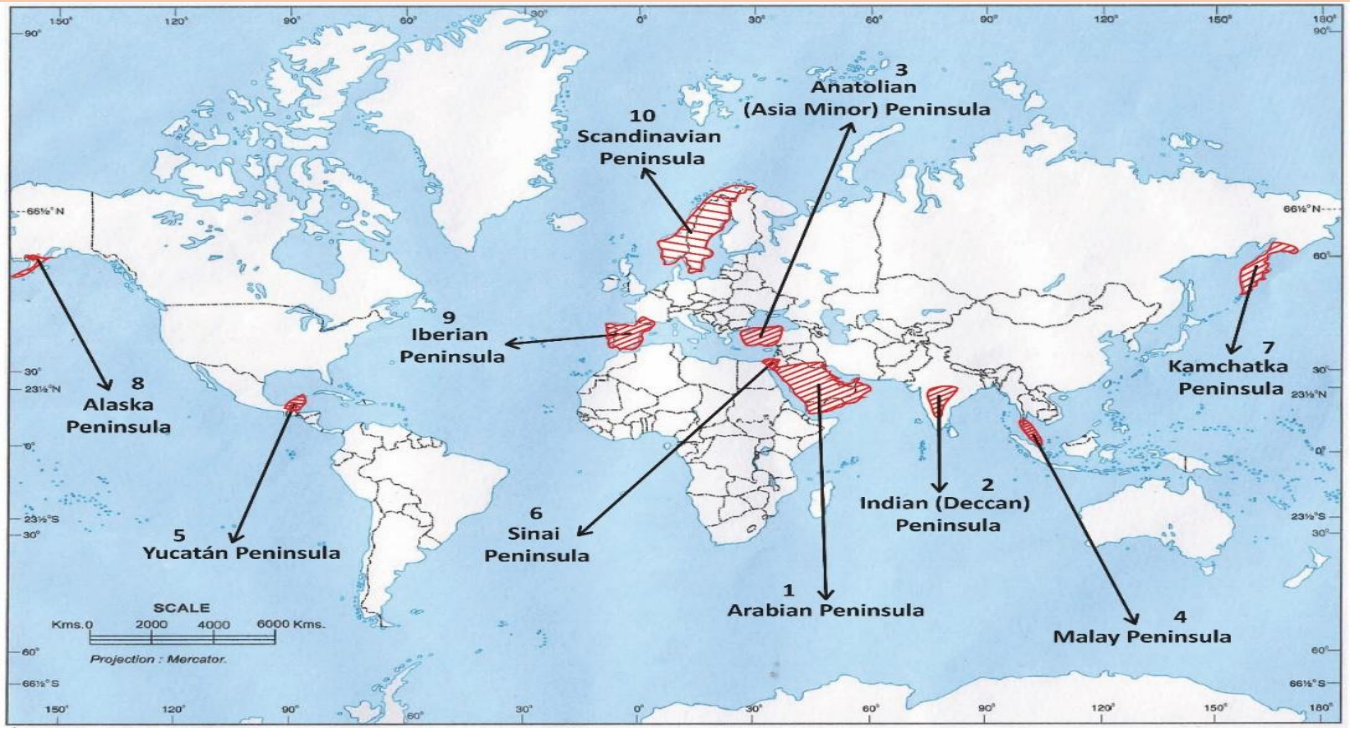


1	**Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) (Maharashtra)**	The Bombay High Court has constituted a high-power committee headed by former Allahabad High Court Chief Justice Dilip Babasaheb Bhosale to protect and preserve the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP). • **Location & Geography**: Mumbai suburbs (Borivali–Thane); 104 km² (largest urban NP globally-Mumbai's lung). • **Religious Places**: Jain Temple (Kanheri), Mahashivratri fairs. • **2025**: SGNP–*Tungareshwar Wildlife Corridor* notified (25 km²); UNESCO Man & Biosphere (MAB) nomination.
2	**Naharlagun, (Arunachal Pradesh)**	Project Arunank of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) celebrated its 18th Raising Day at Naharlagun. • **Location & Geography**: Naharlagun and Itanagar are commonly known as the twin capitals of Arunachal Pradesh. • In Pappu Valley on Himalayan foothills (1,200 m avg.).
3	**Kedartal (Uttarakhand)**	Kedartal will soon undergo a detailed barometric and terrestrial survey under the *National Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF)* Risk Mitigation Programme (NGRMP). • **Location & Geography**: situated about 15 km from Gangotri Dham in Uttarkashi at an altitude of 4,750 metres (15,584 feet) • **Jadung Bhotia tribe** (60 families); ***transhumance to Nelang*** in summer • **Indo-China LAC** 40 km north (Nelang-Jadung axis); ITBP post at Chirbasa (trek route)
		Pushkar Camel (Cattle) Fair or Pushkar Mela, held in Rajasthan's desert town of Pushkar

4	**Pushkar (Rajasthan)**	• **Location & Geography**: Pushkar Lake; Aravalli hills (Nag Pahar, 600 m); Semi-arid (350 mm rain); sand dunes + scrub vegetation; seismic Zone II. • **Pushkar Valley** (5 km²) → only Brahma temple in India
5	**Darjeeling (West Bengal)**	Floods and landslides unleashed by unrelenting rain in India's eastern hill region of Darjeeling and neighbouring Nepal killed more than 70 people. • **Location & Geography**: Queen of Hills (***Singalila Ridge***); Darjeeling–Sikkim Himalaya • **Siliguri Corridor** ("Chicken's Neck") 25 km south – *India–Bangladesh–Nepal–Bhutan* link. • **Singalila National Park:** red panda, clouded leopard. • China border 80 km north (**Nathu La**)
6	**Ahmedabad (Gujarat)**	Ahmedabad has been recommended as the host city for the 2030 Centenary Commonwealth Games. • **Location & Geography**: Sabarmati River bank • **It is Gujarat's commercial capital** while Gandhinagar is the administrative capital. • **India's 1st UNESCO Heritage City**; hosted G20 Sherpa & Culture tracks (2023).
7	**Lothal, Gujarat**	India proposed that Maritime Heritage Festival be held in Lothal, Gujarat. This was announced during the 22nd ASEAN-India Summit in October 2025 • **Location & Geography**: *Khari Creek* (Gulf of Cambay tributary); 6 km from Sabarmati mouth; • **Dockyard basin** – ***world's earliest tidal dock*** (lock-gate system) • **Historical Evolution**: ***Harappan Phase***: 2400–1900 BCE (Mature); SR Rao excavated 1955–63; evidence of tidal dockyard + warehouse + bead factory; Persian Gulf seals (evidence of trade). • **2014**: *UNESCO World Heritage* (Dholavira, Lothal part of "Harappan Cities"). • **National Maritime Heritage Complex** (NMHC) at Lothal (Phase-I 2025)
8	**Nashik (Maharashtra)**	The first Tejas-Mk1A fighter aircraft produced *at defence PSU HAL* Nashik complex completed its maiden flight. • **Location & Geography**: Godavari River origin (Trimbak); Western Ghats–Deccan edge; *black cotton soil*. • It was the **Satavahana capital** (2nd CE); Pandavleni Caves found here (24 rock-cut, 1st–3rd CE). • **Kumbh Mela** (every 12 yrs); 2015 Mela (1 Cr pilgrims). • **2024**: India's ***1st Wine Tourism Policy***; Grape Board HQ
9	**Saranda Forest (Jharkhand)**	The Supreme Court has granted relief to the Jharkhand government in the matter of declaring Saranda as a wildlife sanctuary. • **Location & Geography**: Asia's largest contiguous Sal forest; located on ***Chotanagpur Plateau*** (600–1,000 m); Thalkoban Peak (690 m). • **Sal (Shorea robusta) 70% canopy** covers the forest region; monsoon 1,600 mm; iron-ore rich (Kiriburu, Meghahatuburu mines). • ***Cultural & Social: Ho tribe*** (90% population)
10		Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary has successfully revived the blackbuck population, which had been locally extinct since the 1970s.

	Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary (Chhattisgarh)	• **Location & Geography**: northern part of the Mahasamund district of Chhattisgarh. The River Balamdehi marks the western edge, while the Jonk River lines the northeastern boundary of the sanctuary. • **Central India Tiger Corridor** (<u>*Achanakmar–Barnawapara–Udanti*</u>); tiger dispersal. • **Cultural & Social**: ***<u>Baiga tribe</u>*** (70% fringe population)

Important Peninsulas of the World



1	**Arabian Peninsula**	• ***Location:*** Southwest Asia; Strategically *bounded by the Red Sea, Arabian Sea, and Persian Gulf.* • ***Physical features:*** Vast desert ***(Rub' al Khali),*** rugged plateaus***.*** • ***Significance:*** World's largest peninsula; Geopolitically critical due to vast oil & natural gas reserves (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar); Cradle of Islam (Mecca, Medina)**.**
2	**Indian (Deccan) Peninsula**	• **Location:** Southern India; bounded by Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean. • **Physical features:** Geologically formed of ancient ***<u>Gondwana rocks</u>*** and the Deccan Traps (volcanic plateau); Deccan Plateau rivers (Godavari, Krishna). • **Significance:** Cradle of peninsular rivers, Rich in minerals and home to the highly biodiverse Western and Eastern Ghats; Home to ancient civilizations (Indus Valley, Chola, Vijayanagara).
3	**Anatolian (Asia Minor) Peninsula**	• **Location:** Western Asia (Turkey); bounded by Aegean, Mediterranean & Black Seas. • **Physical features:** characterised by central Plateau & mountain ranges; North Anatolian Fault (major seismic zone). • **Significance:** Serves as a bridge between Europe & Asia; Controls the Turkish Straits (***<u>Bosphorus and Dardanelles</u>***) connecting the Black Sea to the Mediterranean; is prone to earthquakes; home to ancient civilizations (Hittites, Greeks, Romans, etc.).
4	**Malay Peninsula**	• **Location:** Situated in Southeast Asia; includes part of Thailand & Peninsular Malaysia. • **Physical features:** Dominated by Tropical rainforest, areas have ***<u>karst topography</u>***.

		• **Significance:** Biodiversity hotspot; global trade chokepoint ***(Strait of Malacca***).
5	**Yucatán Peninsula**	• **Location:** Lies in Southeastern Mexico; between Gulf of Mexico & Caribbean Sea also includes parts of **Belize** and **Guatemala**. • **Physical features:** Composed mainly of Karst limestone plain featuring numerous ***cenotes (natural sinkholes***). • **Significance:** Mayan civilization site; tourism & biodiversity hotspot.
6	**Sinai Peninsula**	• **Location:** Part of Egypt lying between Mediterranean & Red Sea. • **Physical features:** Characterised by Arid Mountains (Mount Sinai) and desert plateaus. • **Significance:** acting as a land bridge between Africa & Asia; lies near ***Suez Canal***; Biblical significance (Mount Sinai).
7	**Kamchatka Peninsula**	• **Location:** Situated in Russian Far East; extends into Pacific Ocean between the **Sea of Okhotsk** and the **Bering Sea**. • **Physical features:** Known for its high numbers of active volcanoes (***part of the Pacific Ring of Fire***), permafrost landscape with dramatic mountains and geysers. • **Significance:** Rich in geothermal energy; sparsely populated, home to pristine ecology, inhabited by Indigenous people like Koryak and Itelmen
8	**Alaska Peninsula**	• **Location:** Lies in Northwestern North America; extends into Pacific Ocean, connecting to Aleutians islands. • **Physical features:** Volcanic chain with many active volcanoes, featuring ***tundra & subarctic ecosystem***. • **Significance:** Rich in Fisheries, oil reserves, acts as strategic Arctic gateway, shows both Russian and American historical influence.
9	**Iberian Peninsula**	• **Location:** Situated in Southwestern Europe; includes Spain, Portugal, Andorra, part of France; comprises of key ports (Lisbon, Barcelona). • **Physical features:** Dominated by Meseta Plateau, Pyrenees mountains; with Diverse landscapes; largely a ***Mediterranean climate***. • **Significance:** Strategically located near the Strait of Gibraltar, controlling naval access between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea.
10	**Scandinavian Peninsula**	• **Location:** Northern Europe; includes Norway & Sweden and a small part of **northern Finland**. • **Physical features:** Characterised by extensive fjords (glacially carved inlets) on the western coast***, taiga forests***, Scandinavian Mountains. • **Significance:** Rich in Hydropower; high HDI region; Arctic influence; strategic importance in Arctic geopolitics and NATO.

SOCIAL ISSUES

Scheme to Attract 'Star Faculty'

The Union government is formulating a new scheme to **attract Indian-origin "star faculty" and researchers working abroad** to return and strengthen India's research and innovation ecosystem amid shifting global academic dynamics.

India's Research and Academic Landscape

- According to government and academic reports, India's **R&D spending remains around 0.7% of GDP**, lower than major economies like the U.S. (2.8%) and China (2.4%).
- This gap, combined with bureaucratic hurdles and limited research autonomy, has led to an **outflow of highly skilled Indian scientists and researchers**, a phenomenon commonly referred to as "brain drain."
- To counter this, the government has been implementing initiatives such as:
  - **Visiting Advanced Joint Research (VAJRA) Faculty Scheme**,
  - **Ramanujan Fellowship**, and
  - **Ramalingaswami Re-entry Fellowship**, aimed at connecting Indian-origin scholars abroad with domestic institutions.
- However, participation in these schemes has been modest, prompting the need for a more ambitious, full-scale initiative.

Key Features of the Proposed Scheme

- **Targeting Leading Indian-Origin Researchers:**
  - The initiative seeks to attract **established Indian-origin scientists and academics** with significant achievements in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).
  - The plan prioritises **12-14 critical scientific domains**, considered strategically important for national capacity-building.
  - Offering these scholars **positions in premier institutions** such as the IITs, top national laboratories, and autonomous research centres
- **Attractive Set-Up and Research Grants:**
  - Returning scholars may receive a **substantial one-time "set-up grant"** to establish laboratories and research teams in India.
  - Institutions like the IITs have expressed support for this approach, emphasising flexibility and research autonomy.
- **Simplified Bureaucratic Processes:**
  - The scheme aims to create a **"red-carpet ecosystem"**, addressing logistical and administrative challenges faced by returnees, such as housing, institutional support, and project funding.
- **Institutional Collaboration:**
  - The government plans to facilitate **inter-institutional partnerships** between Indian and global universities, fostering sustained collaborations instead of short-term exchanges.
- **Balanced Oversight and IP Ownership:**
  - The programme will emphasise **light-touch oversight**, allowing researchers operational freedom while clearly defining intellectual property (IP) ownership structures.

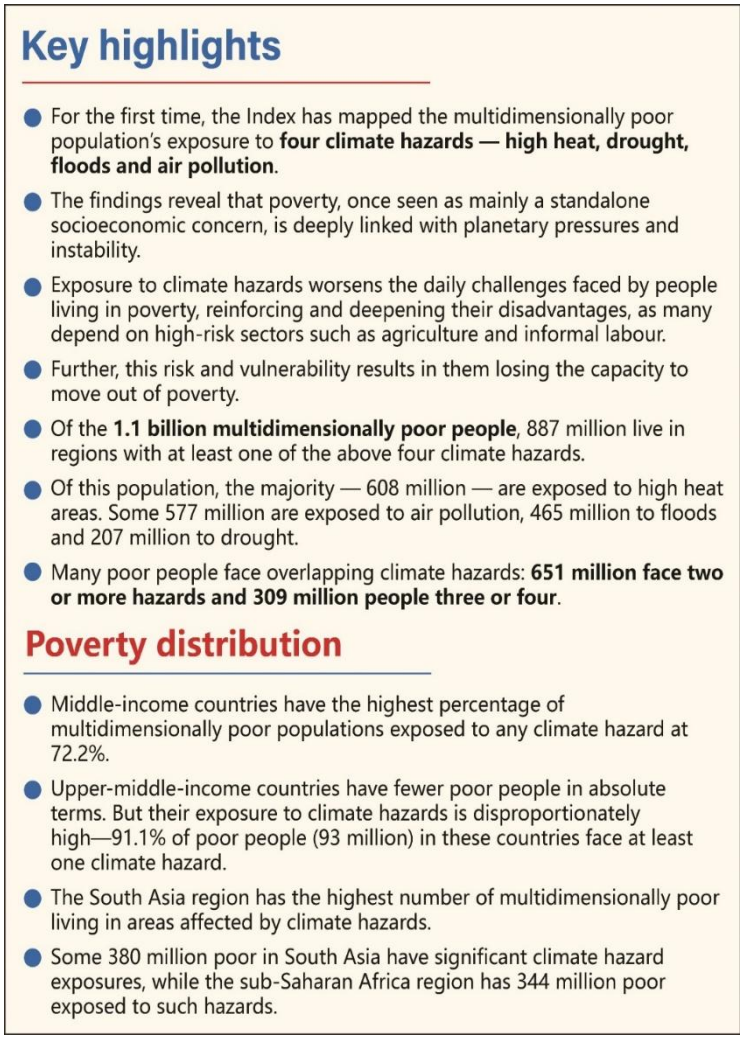
Addressing India's Structural Challenges

- **Non-competitive pay scales:** A full professor in India typically earns around **USD 38,000 annually**, compared with **USD 130,000-200,000 in the U.S.** and **USD 100,000 in China**.
- **Limited research infrastructure:** While India boasts several centres of excellence, many universities lack advanced laboratory facilities and institutional autonomy.

- **Bureaucratic red tape:** Approval processes for hiring, funding, and collaborations are often **slow and multi-layered**, discouraging international participation.

Multidimensional Poverty Index 2025

- The 2025 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) report titled **Overlapping Hardships: Poverty and Climate Hazards** has been released by the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI)**.
- First developed in **2010**, MPI measures poverty across **three equally weighted dimensions: health, education and standard of living**, comprising **10 indicators**.
- The MPI value ranges from 0 to 1, and higher values means higher multidimensional poverty.
- If a person is deprived in at least one third of the indicators, they are identified as '**MPI poor**'.
- It also measures the **extent (or intensity)** of their poverty through the percentage of deprivations they are experiencing.



Key highlights

- For the first time, the Index has mapped the multidimensionally poor population's exposure to **four climate hazards — high heat, drought, floods and air pollution**.
- The findings reveal that poverty, once seen as mainly a standalone socioeconomic concern, is deeply linked with planetary pressures and instability.
- Exposure to climate hazards worsens the daily challenges faced by people living in poverty, reinforcing and deepening their disadvantages, as many depend on high-risk sectors such as agriculture and informal labour.
- Further, this risk and vulnerability results in them losing the capacity to move out of poverty.
- Of the **1.1 billion multidimensionally poor people**, 887 million live in regions with at least one of the above four climate hazards.
- Of this population, the majority — 608 million — are exposed to high heat areas. Some 577 million are exposed to air pollution, 465 million to floods and 207 million to drought.
- Many poor people face overlapping climate hazards: **651 million face two or more hazards and 309 million people three or four**.

Poverty distribution

- Middle-income countries have the highest percentage of multidimensionally poor populations exposed to any climate hazard at 72.2%.
- Upper-middle-income countries have fewer poor people in absolute terms. But their exposure to climate hazards is disproportionately high—91.1% of poor people (93 million) in these countries face at least one climate hazard.
- The South Asia region has the highest number of multidimensionally poor living in areas affected by climate hazards.
- Some 380 million poor in South Asia have significant climate hazard exposures, while the sub-Saharan Africa region has 344 million poor exposed to such hazards.

Projected future inequity

- The burdens identified are not limited to the present but are expected to intensify in the future.
- Analysis of data reveals that countries with higher current levels of multidimensional poverty are predicted to experience the greatest increases in temperatures by the end of this century.
- The report highlights the urgent need for global action to address the unequal burden of climate-related hazards on people living in multidimensional poverty.
- It requires moving from recognition to action, emphasizing the need for climate-resilient poverty reduction strategies, strengthened local capacities for adaptation, and scaled international redistribution and cooperative finance mechanisms.

FSSAI Ban on Fake 'ORS' Drinks

Following a Hyderabad-based paediatrician's campaign, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has barred food companies from using the term **'Oral Rehydration Salts' (ORS)** on products that do not meet WHO formulation standards.

The recent order also revokes all previous permissions allowing brands to use 'ORS' with disclaimers. This move targets **sugar-rich beverages falsely marketed as ORS**, ensuring that only scientifically compliant rehydration products can carry the label.

Oral Rehydration Salts

- It is a scientifically formulated mixture of electrolytes and glucose designed to prevent and treat dehydration, especially from diarrhoea, vomiting, or heat-related illness.
- It helps restore the body's lost fluids and salts effectively.
- **Composition (WHO-Recommended Formula):**
  - According to the **WHO**, one litre of ORS solution should contain:
    - **Sodium chloride:** 2.6 g
    - **Potassium chloride:** 1.5 g
    - **Sodium citrate:** 2.9 g
    - **Dextrose (anhydrous glucose):** 13.5 g
    - **Total osmolarity:** 245 mOsm/L
  - This precise ratio enables **optimal absorption of water and electrolytes** through the intestines.
- **Mechanism**
  - ORS works by utilizing glucose-mediated sodium absorption in the intestinal wall, which helps draw water back into the bloodstream, quickly reversing dehydration.

FSSAI's Clarification on Misleading Labelling

- Recently, FSSAI affirmed that **using 'ORS' in any product name** — including fruit-based or ready-to-drink beverages — **violates the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006**.
- It said such labelling **"misleads consumers"** through false and deceptive claims and breaches multiple provisions under food labelling regulations.

India's Response to Crowding Disasters

The recent Karur rally in Tamil Nadu by actor and Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) founder Vijay, where 41 people died in a crowd crush, highlights the urgent need for stronger crowd management systems.

Reasons for Crowding Disasters in India

- **Overcrowding**: Attendance exceeding venue capacity, often due to poor estimation or unrestricted entry.
- **Poor Planning**: Lack of detailed site layout, inadequate exits, and absence of crowd flow design.
- **Weak Regulation**: Absence or non-enforcement of statutory crowd control laws and safety norms.
- **Inadequate Infrastructure**: Narrow passageways, bottlenecks, and insufficient evacuation routes.
- **Lack of Real-Time Monitoring**: Limited use of CCTV, drones, or sensors to track crowd density.
- **Poor Coordination**: Gaps between event organizers, police, disaster response teams, and medical services.
- **Human Behaviour**: Panic reactions, pushing, or sudden surges due to rumours or fear triggers.
- **Emergency Unpreparedness:** Absence of trained crowd managers, medical aid stations, and clear communication systems.
- **Reactive Governance**: Safety measures often introduced after tragedies, not as preventive steps.

Conclusion: Crowd disasters are preventable with foresight and discipline. Integrating scientific crowd management, legal accountability, and technology-based monitoring under the NDMA framework can make mass gatherings in India safe, orderly, and disaster-resilient.

India's Measures to Manage Crowds

National-Level Measures	State-Level Measures
• **Comprehensive Guidelines:** The Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) issued Comprehensive Guidelines on Crowd Control and Mass Gathering Management in June 2025, promoting scientific and coordinated practices. • **NDMA Frameworks:** The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) continues its 2020 guide and frameworks recommending **risk assessment, site layout planning, controlled entry/exit routes, real-time monitoring,** and **communication protocols.** • **Training Programs:** The National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) conducts regular **capacity-building and training modules** for managing large gatherings. • **Railway Safety Measures:** Following a crowd crush in February, **Indian Railways revised manuals** for about 60 high-footfall stations- adding **holding areas, dispersal zones, and crowd-monitoring systems.**	• **Karnataka:** Introduced the Crowd Control (Managing Crowd at Events and Venues of Mass Gathering) Bill, 2025, covering all large public events. It **fixes organizer responsibility**, empowers **district magistrates** to cancel or regulate events, and prescribes **penalties for violations**. ○ Police also issued a **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)** for coordination, medical readiness, and fire safety. • **Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttarakhand, and Maharashtra:** have issued guidelines, training modules, and special laws post major incidents. • **Local Enforcement Actions:** Across States, police now **direct event organizers** to submit crowd management plans, control crowd size, set up **medical aid, barricades,** and **diversion routes.**

What is Scientific Crowd Control?

- **Density Management**: Maintain crowd density below 5 persons per sq. m; use drones and cameras for real-time monitoring to prevent dangerous pressure build-up.
- **Avoid Hazardous Flow Patterns**: Prevent bottlenecks, slopes, and counter-flows that can cause instability and crushes.
- **Safe Individual Behaviour**: Move diagonally toward open areas, avoid resisting the flow, and protect the chest and breathing space with forearms.
- **Emergency Response**: If fallen, roll sideways, shield the head and neck, and rise quickly; avoid rigid barriers and don't stop to pick up items or film.
- **Organizer Practices:** Ensure one-way movement, multiple exits, clear signage, public announcements, real-time crowd monitoring, and on-site medical support for safe management.

UPSC Turns 100

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) Centenary Year celebrations will begin on 1st October 2025 and continue until 1st October 2026.

About UPSC

It is a Constitutional Body established under **Articles 315** of the Constitution of India. It discharges its duties and functions under **Article 320**, conducting various examinations in a **just, fair, and impartial manner** for the recruitment and recommendation of candidates to **Group 'A' and Group 'B' services** of the Government. It embodies the principles of **meritocracy, integrity, and impartiality**.

Recent Technological and Process Reforms

- **Online Application Portal:** 100% online applications since 2012 for transparency and accessibility.
- **Digital DAF (*Detailed Application Form*) Submission:** Introduced for all examinations from 2011.
- **Face-Recognition System:** Implemented to eliminate impersonation.
- **Deployment of Jammers:** To prevent misuse of electronic devices during exams.
- **PRATIBHA Setu Initiative:** Connects interview-qualified candidates (not finally selected) with alternative employment opportunities.
- **AI and Digital Evaluation:** Ongoing integration of Artificial Intelligence, digital checking systems, and data-driven analytics for improved efficiency.
- **Future-Ready Measures:** Exploring adaptive testing, e-evaluation, and blockchain for result security.

Related Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 315:** Establishment of Union and State PSC (Public Service Commission).
- **Article 316-317:** Appointment, tenure, and removal of members.
  - ✓ A member of a PSC cannot be reappointed after completing their term.
- **Article 320:** Functions of PSCs- conduct of exams, recruitment, promotions, disciplinary matters.
- **Article 321-323:** Extension of functions, expenses (from the Consolidated Fund of India/ State), and submitting annual reports to President/Governor.

Historical Background

- **Macaulay Report (1854)**: Introduced a merit-based civil service to replace the patronage system of the East India Company.
- **First Competitive Examination (1855)**: Conducted in London; Satyendra Nath Tagore became the first Indian to qualify in 1864.
- **Government of India Act (1919)**: Provided for the creation of a Public Service Commission under Section 96(C).
- **Lee Commission (1924)**: Recommended immediate establishment of such a body to protect services from political influence.
- **First Public Service Commission (1926)**: Established on October 1, 1926, chaired by Sir Ross Barker.
- **Federal Public Service Commission (1935)**: Created under the Government of India Act, giving Indians a larger administrative role.
- **UPSC (1950)**: With the adoption of the Constitution on January 26, 1950, the Federal PSC became the UPSC with constitutional status.

Organization and Structure: It consists of a **Chairman and other members**, appointed by the **President of India** for a term of **six years** or until **65 years of age**.
Headquarters: **Dholpur House, New Delhi.**

Related Committees and their Recommendations

- **Kothari Committee (1976):** Introduced the three-stage system- Prelims, Mains, and Interview.
- **Satish Chandra Committee (1989):** Added the **Essay Paper**.
- **Hota Committee (2004) & Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC- 2005):** Introduced **CSAT** and **Ethics Paper** for modern administrative aptitude respectively.
- **Baswan Committee (2016):** Reviewed **age limits**, **syllabus balance**, and **transparency** in evaluation.

Significance of UPSC

- **Pillar of Meritocracy:** Ensures fair, competitive selection, independent of political influence.
- **Instrument of National Integration:** Officers from varied regions and communities serve nationwide.

Challenges Faced by UPSC

- **Ethical dilemmas for civil servants:** Officers face recurring ethical dilemmas, including balancing personal and professional interests, handling political pressure, and navigating corruption within the system.
- **Prolonged Examination Cycle:** which extends over 15 months, delaying cadre replenishment.

• **Social Mobility and Equity:** Provides equal opportunity to candidates across socio-economic backgrounds. • **Professional and Ethical Bureaucracy:** Upholds administrative neutrality, competence, and integrity- the "Steel Frame" envisioned by Sardar Patel. • **Nation-Building Catalyst:** Its recruits drive governance, policy execution, crisis management, and development across all sectors.	• **Perceived Bias in CSAT and Language Issues:** Concerns over fairness for rural and non-English-medium aspirants. • **Demand for Greater Transparency:** Calls for early release of answer keys and evaluated copies. • **Outdated Syllabus:** Need to align with emerging areas like Artificial Intelligence (AI), digital governance, and climate policy. • **Technological and Security Risks:** Cybersecurity concerns in online exams and data systems. • **Equity vs Merit Debate:** Balancing affirmative action with the need for excellence.

Way Forward

- **Curricular Modernization:** Shift from rote learning to case-based, analytical, and domain-oriented assessment.
- **Digital Transformation:** Full adoption of AI-driven evaluation, adaptive testing, and blockchain-secured results.
- **Faster Exam Cycle:** Compress stages and timelines without compromising accuracy.
- **Enhanced Transparency:** Regular disclosure of keys, *moderation criteria*, and evaluation frameworks.
- **Competency-Based Recruitment:** Match administrative roles with domain expertise and leadership skills.
- **Capacity Building and Lateral Entry:** Combine UPSC's merit system with lateral hiring for specialized posts.
- **Autonomy and Accountability:** Ensure continued independence while maintaining robust oversight through Parliament.

Model Youth Gram Sabha Initiative

The Centre launched the 1st phase of **Model Youth Gram Sabha (MYGS),** an initiative based on the Model United Nations (MUN- an educational simulation of the United Nations) to introduce the concept of *Gram Sabhas* into classrooms for the **first time in India**, promoting civic awareness and grassroots democracy among schoolchildren.

About Model Youth Gram Sabha (MYGS)

- **Initiative by:** Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) in collaboration with National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- **Budget Allocation (FY 2025–26):** ₹8.5 crore. The MoPR will also provide a support of Rs 20,000 to each school for holding the mock Gram Sabha.
- **Objectives:**
  - To **educate and engage rural and tribal students** about democratic processes, rights, and responsibilities.
  - To **"catch them young"** and make **grassroots democracy a lived experience**.
  - To build a generation that views **local governance as a meaningful avenue for public service**.
  - To **revive interest and participation** in Gram Sabhas and strengthen participatory governance.
- **Key Features:**
  - **Simulation-based learning**: Students conduct **mock Gram Sabha sessions-** discuss local issues, debate resolutions, and draft development plans and village budgets.
  - Students act as **Sarpanch, Ward Members, Villagers, Village Secretary, ANM, Anganwadi Worker, and Junior Engineer.**
  - The process is **student-led**, encouraging discussion and consensus-building rather than lectures.
  - **Training Cascade Model: National Level Master Trainers (NLMTs)** will train **teachers**, who guide student sessions.

- **Competitions & Rewards: Regional and National-level competitions** will be conducted for JNVs and EMRSs with 1st Prize- ₹1 crore; 2nd Prize - ₹75 lakh; and 3rd Prize- ₹50 lakh. Certificates will be given to all participating schools.

- **Implementation Plan:** Phase I will cover ~620 **Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas** (JNVs) and ~200 **Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs)**, total: 1,100–1,200 schools, including government schools in Maharashtra and Karnataka (volunteer states). Phase II will cover more schools nationwide.
- **Significance**
  - **First structured national attempt** to involve schoolchildren directly in village-level governance.
  - Enhances **youth participation**, **leadership**, and **ethical governance** awareness.
  - Bridges **theory and practice** of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).
  - Strengthens **social inclusion and civic literacy** among rural and tribal youth.

Monument Conservation to Open Up to Private Players- ASI No Longer Sole Authority

For the first time, the government plans to allow private players- including corporates and Public Sector Undertaking (PSUs) to undertake **conservation** of protected monuments, a task so far handled exclusively by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

- ✓ The government is proceeding gradually to ensure quality and prevent misuse. Initially, the private sector will play a supplementary role under ASI supervision.
- ✓ ASI, under the Ministry of Culture, is the premier body for **archaeological research and protection of India's cultural heritage**, responsible for maintaining ancient monuments and sites of national importance and regulating archaeological activities under the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958** and the **Antiquities and Art Treasure Act, 1972**. It manages around **3,700 protected monuments.**

Objectives of the Initiative

- **Expand Capacity:** Increase the number of implementing agencies to handle the large volume of conservation work.
- **Fast-Track Projects:** Reduce delays associated with ASI's limited manpower and procedural timelines.
- **Promote Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in Heritage:** Encourage corporate and community participation in preserving India's heritage.
- **Encourage CSR in Culture:** Enable companies to contribute through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) budgets, with 100% tax exemptions.
- **Ensure Accountability:** Introduce structured oversight by ASI and transparent funding mechanisms through the **National Culture Fund (NCF).**

About National Culture Fund (NCF)

- **Established:** In 1996, as a **Trust under the Charitable Endowments Act, 1890**.
- **Initial Corpus:** ₹20 crore. The NCF retains its base corpus and uses the interest earned on this corpus fund for monument conservation. It has also received **₹140 crore** from corporates and PSUs, funding around **100 protected monument projects**.
- **Purpose:** Mobilize additional resources for **heritage conservation through PPP**, fund museums, document fading cultural expressions, and train cultural administrators.
- **Structure:**
  - **Governing Council:** Chaired by Minister of Culture (up to 25 members) for policy decisions.
  - **Executive Committee:** Headed by Secretary (Culture) (up to 11 members) for policy implementation.
- **Key Features:**
  - Eligible for **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funding** under Companies Act, 2013.
  - Donations eligible for **100% tax exemption** under Section 80G(II) of the Income Tax Act, 1961.
  - Audited by **Comptroller Auditor General (CAG)**.
- **Role:** Acts as a bridge between government and private sector, enabling donors to select projects, locations, and implementing agencies while ensuring ASI oversight.

Significance and Expected Impact

- **Diversification**: Ends ASI's monopoly; brings multiple skilled agencies into conservation.
- **Efficiency**: Speeds up project completion with strict timelines.
- **Capacity Building:** Builds a pool of skilled conservation professionals and heritage architects.

- **Sustainability**: Creates a self-sustaining conservation model through continuous CSR engagement.

Note: **Relation to "Adopt a Heritage" Scheme- Earlier, the "Adopt a Heritage" scheme allowed corporates and PSUs to act as "Monument Mitras", but their role was limited to building visitor amenities (cafes, toilets, ticket counters, etc.). The new initiative goes further allowing direct execution of core conservation work, not just visitor facilities

Implementation Framework for Monument Conservation

PPP Model: Conservation work will follow a PPP approach, allowing private entities to participate directly. External agencies can be hired to carry out restoration work at heritage sites, including forts, stepwells (baolis), and temples.

Empanelment of Experts: The Ministry of Culture will issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) to empanel around a dozen conservation architects of national repute. Donors can select an architect from this panel to prepare the Detailed Project Report (DPR) and guide the project.

Project Identification: The ASI will prepare a list of 250 monuments requiring urgent conservation. Donors can choose from this list or propose other heritage sites for their contribution.

Funding and Approvals: Funds will be contributed by donors through the NCF, ensuring transparency, accountability, and eligibility for 100% tax exemption. DPRs prepared by the selected architect will be approved by ASI before execution.

Execution: The architect and donor jointly hire an implementing agency with proven experience in restoring structures over 100 years old. ASI will **supervise** all stages of the project to ensure compliance with technical and conservation standards.

Checks and Balances: All projects will remain under ASI's technical oversight. DPRs must comply with the National Policy for Conservation 2014, maintaining quality, accountability, and adherence to national heritage guidelines.

Recognition: Donors contributing to the conservation work will receive acknowledgment at the monument site, recognizing their role in preserving India's cultural heritage.

Doctrine Of Clean State

The Delhi High Court (HC) reaffirmed that a successful resolution applicant under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC) cannot be held liable for the criminal offences or liabilities of the corporate debtor's past management, reinforcing the "clean slate" doctrine.

What is the Clean Slate Doctrine under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)?

The Clean Slate Doctrine ensures that once a company completes the **insolvency resolution process** under the IBC and is taken over by a new buyer, the company gets a *fresh start*- free from all past debts, penalties, and liabilities.

Legal Basis: It flows from **Section 31 of the IBC**, which makes the approved resolution plan binding on all stakeholders, including government authorities.

Objective:

- To attract genuine investors by offering certainty and finality.
- To prevent the new management from being burdened by old disputes or hidden liabilities.
- To ensure smooth and timely revival of insolvent companies.

Key Judicial Rulings:

- **Essar Steel India Ltd. v. Satish Kumar Gupta (2019):** The Supreme Court (SC) held that once a resolution plan is approved by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), all previous claims and liabilities stand extinguished.
- **Ghanashyam Mishra & Sons v. Edelweiss ARC (2021):** The SC reaffirmed that even government due's not included in the plan are written off.
- **Surya Exim Case (Gujarat HC 2024):** Reiterated that post-approval, no fresh tax or other claims can be raised for periods before resolution.

Limitations: The doctrine applies **only to the corporate debtor**, not its **former directors or management**, who may still face personal or criminal liability for past actions.

Bar Councils Ban Lawyers from Social Media Promotions

Following the footsteps of the Bar Councils of India, Delhi, and Punjab & Haryana to curb lawyer advertising in the age of social media, the **Karnataka State Bar Council (KSBC)** recently issued show-cause notices to eight lawyers for promoting their services on social media. The council criticized lawyers for making "reels in cars, under trees, and on footpaths" to attract clients, calling it unethical.

- ✓ The recent enforcement drive began after **a promotional video by DSK Legal featuring actor Rahul Bose** drew criticism. In response, the **Bar Council of India (BCI-** the apex regulatory body for lawyers**)** issued a **March 2025 directive** condemning "legal influencers" and lawyers using social media or celebrity endorsements to promote services, warning such acts spread misinformation and erode ethics. Following this, **state bar councils** in **Delhi**, **Punjab and Haryana**, and later **Karnataka**, issued strict notices- Karnataka even setting a deadline for lawyers to remove such content.

Related Legal Provisions: In India, Lawyers are prohibited from advertising or soliciting work under the Advocates Act, 1961, which empowers the BCI to frame rules on professional conduct and ethics under Section 49(1)(c) of the Act.

- ✓ **Rule 36** of the BCI Rules bars advocates from directly or indirectly promoting their services through ads, social media, interviews, or publicizing their involvement in cases.

Why Should Lawyers Be Allowed to Promote Their Work Online?	Rationale for the Ban on Lawyer Advertising
• **Enhances Public Awareness:** Online platforms allow lawyers to educate citizens about their legal rights and simplify complex laws, promoting legal literacy. Helps bridge the information gap between legal professionals and the public. • **Improves Access to Justice**: Many people, especially in rural or remote areas, struggle to find reliable legal help. Online visibility helps citizens identify competent lawyers, improving access to justice. • **Supports Young and Independent Lawyers:** social media offers a level playing field for new lawyers who lack established networks. They can showcase their expertise, achievements, and experience to attract clients ethically. • **Encourages Transparency and Accountability:** Public promotion makes lawyers' work open to scrutiny, encouraging ethical behaviour and professionalism. • **Aligns with Global Legal Practices:** In most countries, regulated legal marketing is allowed with guidelines ensuring accuracy and ethics. India can adopt similar balanced regulations. • **Adapts to the Digital Era**: Allowing limited, ethical promotion keeps the legal profession relevant and responsive to societal change.	• **Legal Profession as a Noble Service** not a commercial business. The Supreme Court (SC), in Bar Council of Maharashtra v. M.V. Dabholkar (1975), stated that "law is no trade, briefs no merchandise," emphasizing that commercial competition should not degrade the profession. • **Protection of Public Trust and Ethics:** In Indian Council of Legal Aid & Advice v. BCI (1995), the Supreme Court reaffirmed that law has a public utility character and must uphold public trust and dignity, not commercial gain. Advertising is seen as leading to commercialization and loss of ethical integrity. • **Limited Relaxation (2008 Amendment):** Rule 36 was relaxed to allow lawyers to display basic information- name, contact details, qualifications, enrolment number, and areas of practice on their websites. However, active promotion or solicitation remains prohibited. • **Extension to Online Platforms (2024 Ruling):** The Madras High Court (HC) in 2024 extended the ban to online legal directories like Quikr, Sulekha, and JustDial. The Court ruled that "branding culture" demeans the profession and directed the BCI to issue strict guidelines against such advertising. • **Enforcement Challenges:** Following the ruling, the BCI ordered state bar councils to act against violators and issued cease-and-desist notices to online platforms. Despite these measures, many online legal directories continue to operate, showing weak enforcement.

National Skills Qualifications Committee (NSQC)

The 44th meeting of the National Skills Qualifications Committee (NSQC) was held under the aegis of the National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET).

About NSQC

The NSQC is a key committee functioning under the **NCVET**. It ensures that all skill qualifications in India are aligned with the **National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF)-** a nationally approved system that organizes skills and education levels based on competency and learning outcomes.

Role and Functions

- **Evaluates and approves** skill qualifications proposed by various Awarding Bodies (ABs) and sectors.
- **Ensures NSQF alignment** of qualifications to maintain national quality standards.
- **Facilitates learner mobility** (vertical and horizontal) between vocational, academic, and professional streams.
- **Links training with industry needs**, ensuring relevance and employability.

Composition: Includes representatives from central ministries and state skill missions; regulatory bodies (UGC, AICTE, NSDC, DGT); Industry associations and subject experts.

44th Meeting Highlights

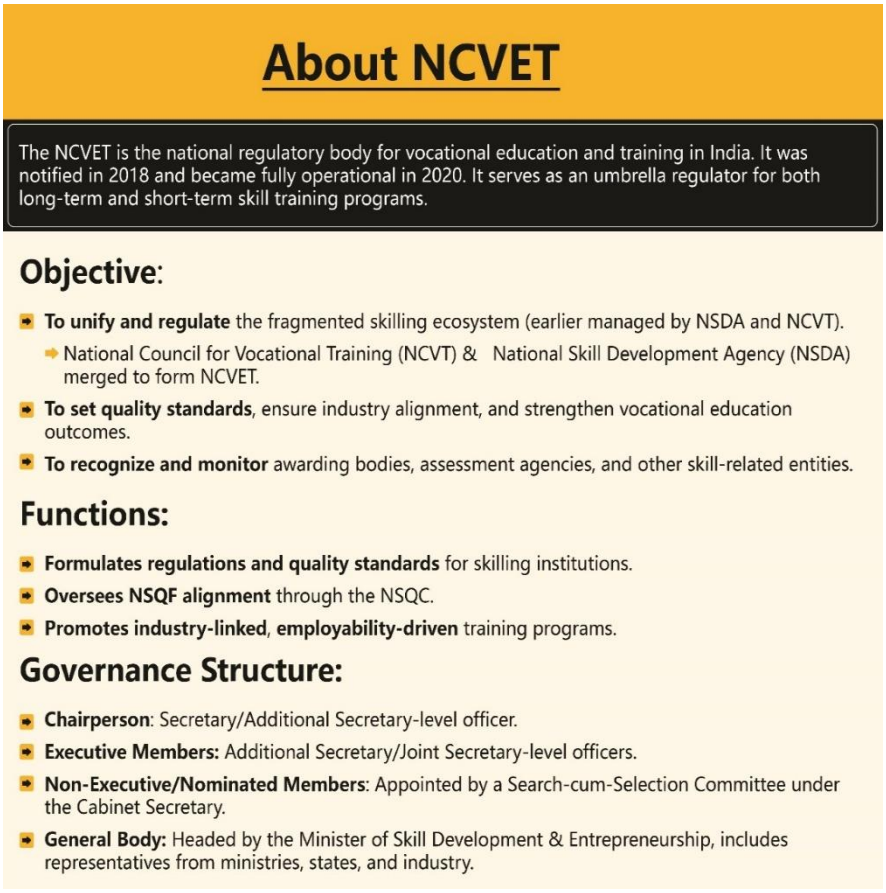
- Chaired by Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) & Chairperson, NCVET.
- Reviewed and approved **210 skill qualifications** across sectors like healthcare, IT, agriculture, and logistics.

- Aimed to strengthen the national skilling ecosystem and make India's workforce **future ready**.

Notaries (Amendment) Rules, 2025

The Department of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Law and Justice has notified the Notaries (Amendment) Rules, 2025 under Section 15 of the Notaries Act, 1952, amending the Notaries Rules, 1956. The amendment revises and increases the ceiling on the maximum number of Notaries that can be appointed by the State Governments of Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Nagaland.

Reason for the Amendment: Growth in population; Creation of new districts and tehsils; Corresponding rise in the demand for notarial services in these States.



What is a Notary?

A notary is a public official authorized to verify, authenticate, and certify the execution of documents, witness signatures, and administer oaths.

Primary Purpose of Notary: To prevent fraud and maintain the integrity of legal and official transactions.

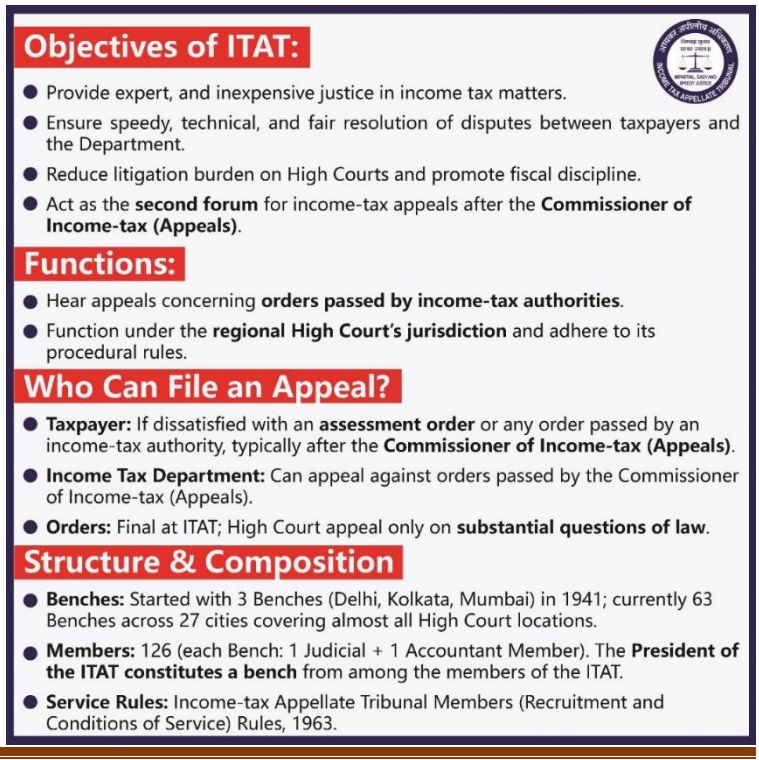
Duties of Notary: Attesting documents, preparing and certifying affidavits, and facilitating the execution of both domestic & international legal and commercial documents.

Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT)

The Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) marked its 84th anniversary by holding a national symposium.

About ITAT (under the **Ministry of Law and Justice)**

- **Established**: 25 January 1941 under Section 5A of the Income Tax Act, 1922.
- **Current Legal Basis**: Section 252, Income Tax Act, 1961.
- **Nature**: Quasi-judicial appellate authority for direct tax disputes; **final fact-finding body**.
- **Nickname**: "Mother Tribunal" - India's oldest and most respected tribunal.
- **Motto**: "Nishpaksh, Sulabh, Satvar Nyay"- Impartial, Easy, and Speedy Justice.
- **Core Values**: Independence, Accessibility, Expertise, Efficiency.



- **Significance and Contribution:**
  - Model for other tribunals such as *Customs, Excise, Service Tax Appellate Tribunal (CESTAT),* Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT), Railway Claims Tribunal, Foreign Exchange Appellate Board, etc.
  - Ensures fiscal discipline, reduces litigation burden on High Courts, and enhances taxpayer confidence.
  - Undergoing digital transformation for e-filing, virtual hearings, and faster disposal.
  - Symbol of synergy between judiciary, executive, and tax professionals in ensuring fair tax governance.

DDWS and BISAG-N Join Hands to Strengthen Digital Monitoring of Rural Water and Sanitation

The Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation (DDWS) signed an Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geo-informatics (BISAG-N), an autonomous scientific society under the MeitY to develop a **GIS-integrated decision-support platform** for Jal Jeevan Mission **(JJM)** and Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen- **SBM(G)**); thereby enhancing their **data-driven planning, monitoring, and evaluation**.

Key Features of the Proposed Platform:

- **GIS-based tools** for real-time visualization, analytics, and informed decision-making.
- **Mapping and creation of Rural Piped Water Supply Schemes (RPWSS)** with unique IDs for household-level tracking.
- **End-to-end support** from BISAG-N: database design, data migration, software development, and system integration.
- Incorporation of **advanced geospatial techniques** such as ground surveying, photogrammetry, and thematic mapping.
- **Integration with PM GatiShakti** for convergence with other rural infrastructure projects.
  - ✓ Launched in 2021, PM GatiShakti is a **digital platform** integrating **16 Ministries** (including Railways and Roadways) for coordinated planning and implementation of infrastructure connectivity projects.

Significance: It will promote **transparency, accountability, and efficiency** in mission implementation and strengthen **Digital India's goal** of using technology for inclusive and sustainable rural development.

TRAI Recommendations on Digital Radio Broadcast Policy for Private Broadcasters

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) released its recommendations on formulating a *Digital Radio Broadcast Policy for private Radio broadcasters.*

Key Recommendations

- **Coverage and Launch:** In the **first phase**, TRAI's digital radio rollout will cover **13 major cities-** four **A+ cities** (Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai) and nine **A cities** (Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Ahmedabad, Surat, Pune, Jaipur, Lucknow, Kanpur, and Nagpur). To initiate services, **two new spot frequencies** will be **auctioned in each city**.
- **Mode of Operation:** Digital radio broadcasting to be introduced in the **simulcast (***simultaneous broadcast***) mode**, allowing transmission of **one analogue, three digital, and one data channel** on assigned spot frequency. **New broadcasters** must begin in simulcast mode, while **existing FM operators** may migrate voluntarily within **six months**. The **sunset date for analogue FM** will be set later based on digital adoption.
- **Technology & Frequency:** A single digital radio technology standard should be adopted for introduction of digital radio broadcasting in VHF Band II, selected by the Government through *consultation or auction design*.
- **Frequency planning** in single technology scenario for the 13 cities will be prepared and published by the government in public domain.
  - Existing FM broadcasters opting for **simulcast migration** must pay the **difference between the auction-determined price** for digital radio in their city and the **proportionate Non-refundable One Time Entry Fee (NOTEF)** for their remaining licence period.

- **Licensing Framework:** A new **"Radio Broadcasting Infrastructure Provider"** authorization for leasing digital infrastructure, though it is not mandatory. The **authorization period** for digital radio broadcasting will be **15 years**, with **eligibility criteria** aligned to TRAI's 2025 framework under the **Telecommunications Act, 2023**. An entity may hold up to **40% of total frequencies** in a city, ensuring at least **three operators**. Licences not operational within **24 months** will be **withdrawn**, with a **five-year bar** on reallocation in the same city.
- **Financial Provisions: A**n **authorization fee of 4% of Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR)** *for cities of category 'A+', A', B', 'C', and 'D'*, reduced to **2% for the first three years** in hilly, border, and northeastern regions. **Streaming revenue** will be included in Gross Revenue calculations. Broadcasters may pay the **bid or migration amount in instalments over 15 years.**
- **Infrastructure & Implementation: Prasar Bharati** to share its **land, towers, and transmission infrastructure** with private broadcasters at **concessional rent**, covering operational costs. The **mandatory co-location rule** will be removed, allowing **voluntary infrastructure sharing**.

Objective of TRAI's Recommendations:

- To facilitate the transition from analogue FM to **digital radio**, ensuring spectrum efficiency, improved audio quality, and content diversity.
- To create an enabling regulatory and infrastructural framework for rollout of digital radio services in a phased manner.

Significance	Concerns Raised Regarding TRAI's Digital Radio Broadcast Policy
• **Spectrum Efficiency**: It will enable multiple digital and data channels on a single frequency. • **Quality & Innovation**: It will help offer superior audio, interactive data services, and new content formats. • **Industry Growth**: It will open up new revenue streams and promote competition among private broadcasters. • **Consumer Benefit**: Greater choice, better quality, and potential value-added services. • **Infrastructure Optimization**: Shared use of Prasar Bharati's network will help lower costs and speed up rollout. • **Digital Transition:** It will help lay the foundation for a phased migration from analogue to digital radio aligned with India's Digital Bharat vision.	• **High Migration Costs:** Broadcasters face heavy expenses for new transmission equipment, towers, and training. No clear cost-sharing or subsidy framework has been proposed. • **Lack of Financial Support:** The policy offers no fiscal incentives such as **tax relief** or **reduced licence fees** to ease the transition. The **auction-based model** and **high reserve prices** may discourage participation. • **Poor Consumer Readiness: Digital radio receivers** are largely unavailable in India. Without integration in **mobiles and car systems**, broadcasts may reach very few listeners. • **Revenue Pressures:** FM broadcasters already face **declining ad revenues** due to competition from **music streaming platforms like Spotify**. Migration could worsen financial strain without new revenue opportunities. • **Need for Transition Period:** Industry experts suggest a **free migration window of 5-7 years** to assess consumer response and adoption levels. • **Unequal Impact on Broadcasters:** High costs and limited support may favour **large networks**, marginalizing **small and regional players**. • **Ecosystem and Awareness Gaps:** Lack of **public awareness** and **device ecosystem** readiness could delay adoption. Collaboration with **telecom and mobile manufacturers** is needed to ensure receiver availability.

TRAI

- A **High-Level Steering Committee** comprising representatives from Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB)**,** MeitY**, broadcasters, device makers, and technology providers** will oversee implementation and promote digital radio receiver availability in **mobile phones and car infotainment systems**.
- **Programme and Regulation:** Government to notify the separate Programme Code and Advertisement Code for terrestrial radio. Genre choice for channels left to market forces.

Farmer Suicides

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2023 report, **10,786 farmers and agricultural workers** died by suicide in **2023**, accounting for **6.3%** of the **1,71,418 total suicides** recorded in India that year. This means, on average, **one person from the farm sector dies by suicide every hour**.

About NCRB: *NCRB (est. 1986) functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). It collects, compiles, and analyses nationwide crime data from all States/UTs and central agencies via the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS). Its annual "Crime in India" report provides statistical insights into crime patterns, including suicides, across the country.*

Breakdown of Suicide Data

- **Farmers/Cultivators:** 4,690 (4,553 men, 137 women); Agricultural Labourers: 6,096 (5,433 men, 663 women)

- **State-wise Distribution:** Maharashtra highest with 38.5% followed by Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.
- **Zero Suicides Reported**: West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Chandigarh, Delhi, and Lakshadweep.
- **Trends and Comparison:** Suicides in the farm sector declined slightly from 11,290 in 2022 to 10,786 in 2023. However, the pattern and geography of distress-especially in cotton and soybean belts like Vidarbha and Marathwada (Maharashtra) remained unchanged.

Reasons for Farmer Suicides in India	Government Initiatives to Stop Farmer Suicides
• **Economic Distress:** High input costs (seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation) reduce profit margins. ○ Low crop prices and poor Minimum Support Price (MSP) coverage fail to ensure income security. ○ Debt trap due to dependence on private moneylenders with high interest rates. • **Crop Failures**: Erratic monsoon, droughts, floods, and climate change cause repeated crop losses. Lack of adequate irrigation and crop insurance coverage worsens vulnerability. • **Market and Policy Issues:** Price volatility in cash crops (cotton, sugarcane, soybean). Trade liberalization and import duty waivers (e.g., on cotton) expose farmers to global price shocks. Weak procurement systems and poor market access limit returns. • **Institutional and Social Factors:** Fragmented land holdings make farming non-viable. ○ Limited access to formal credit, extension services, and technology. ○ Social pressure and humiliation over unpaid debts or crop losses. • **Inadequate Safety Nets:** Crop insurance (Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana) is often delayed or poorly implemented. ○ Relief packages are adhoc and lack long-term sustainability. ○ Poor awareness of government schemes and mental health support.	• **PM-KISAN (2019):** ₹6,000 annual income support to over 11 crore farmers to ensure basic financial stability. • **PM Fasal Bima Yojana (2016):** Crop insurance covering losses due to natural calamities; ₹1.6 lakh crore paid in claims. • **Institutional Credit & Kisan Credit Cards:** Credit target raised to ₹20 lakh crore; easier and cheaper loans with interest subsidy. • **Higher MSP:** Assured **50% profit over cost of production** for all major crops to make farming remunerative. • **Per Drop More Crop Scheme:** Promotes micro-irrigation to save water, reduce costs, and raise income. • **Formation of FPOs & Mechanization:** Support for **10,000 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPO)**, farm machinery, and **Drone Didi Scheme** for women SHGs. • **Organic & Natural Farming Promotion:** Encourages low-cost, chemical-free farming through **Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)** and **National Mission on Natural Farming**.

Supreme Court Order on Maharashtra Local Polls

The Supreme Court (SC) directed the Maharashtra State Election Commission (SEC) to hold all local body elections by **January 31, 2026**, criticizing it for failing to follow its **May order** to notify polls by **September 6**.

Why Were the Elections Delayed

The delay in Maharashtra's local body elections stems from **pending Other Backward Classes (OBC) reservation issues**, **judicial delays**, **administrative inconsistency**, and **lack of political will**. As a result, most local bodies- including Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), **29 municipal corporations**, and **32 of 34 Zilla Parishads** are currently run by administrators.

What is the OBC Reservation Issue in Maharashtra?

The OBC reservation issue stems from Maharashtra's failure to meet the SC's **three-fold test (2021)** for granting OBC quotas in local bodies. The **Banthia Commission (2022)** report, meant to justify these quotas, is still under challenge in the Court.

In Vikas Kishanrao Gawali vs State of Maharashtra (2021), SC laid down a three-fold test for OBC reservation in local bodies which included-

- Constituting a dedicated commission to conduct a rigorous, empirical study on political backwardness.
- Determining reservation proportion for each local body based on the commission's findings.
- Ensuring total reservation for SCs/STs/OBCs does not exceed 50%.

Implications of Delayed Local Body Elections

- **Democratic Erosion**: Absence of elected representatives weakens grassroots of democracy and accountability.
- **Governance Paralysis**: Bureaucrats, meant to execute rather than decide policy, are burdened with political duties.
- **Reduced Public Voice**: Citizens lack local forums to raise issues, forcing dependence on distant Members of Parliament (MPs)/ MLAs.
- **Stalled Development**: Local policy decisions and projects face delays, harming economic and social progress.
- **Weakened Institutions**: Prolonged rule by administrators undermines constitutional provisions of self-governance under the 73rd and 74th Amendments.

- **Impact of the Issue**: Elections in **106 municipalities** were held without OBC reservation, while the Court later directed polls to proceed with the earlier quota system. Ongoing litigation, administrative excuses, and state inaction have further delayed the process.

MY Bharat-National Service Scheme (NSS) Awards

The President of India presented the MY Bharat-National Service Scheme (NSS) Awards for the year 2022-23. The awards are given annually by the **Department of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports** to encourage and recognize outstanding NSS volunteers, Programme Officers, and Units.

About NSS

- It is a **Central Sector Scheme** under the **Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports**, launched in 1969. It provides opportunities for students of **Class 11–12**, **colleges**, and **universities** to participate in community service and nation-building activities.
- **Objective:** To develop the **personality and character** of student youth through **voluntary community service**.
- **Motto**: "Not Me, But You" (स्वयं से पहले आप)- inspired by the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi.
- **Areas of NSS Work:** NSS volunteers engage in activities of social relevance, such as literacy and education, health, family welfare and nutrition, environmental conservation, women empowerment etc.
- Its logo is based on the giant Rath Wheel of the world famous Konark Sun Temple (The Black Pagoda) in Orissa.

Viksit Bharat Buildathon 2025

In a landmark initiative to boost innovation in education, over **three lakh schools** nationwide participated in the **Viksit Bharat Buildathon 2025**, India's largest synchronized school innovation challenge.

What is Viksit Bharat Buildathon 2025?

It is a **nationwide school-level innovation challenge** and India's **largest hackathon for students of Classes 6–12**, organized by the **Department of School Education & Literacy (DoSEL),** Ministry of Education, in collaboration with **Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog**.

Objectives

- To promote innovation, creativity, and problem-solving skills among students in line with the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047.
- To encourage hands-on experiential learning in line with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- To enable students to identify and solve local/community problems through technology and design thinking
- To foster self-reliance (Atmanirbharta) and entrepreneurship among youth.
- To build a strong innovation ecosystem by connecting schools with mentors, incubators, and industry experts.

Key Features

- **Themes:** Atmanirbhar Bharat, Swadeshi, Vocal for Local, and Samriddh Bharat.
- **Team Structure:** 3-5 students per team; no limit on the number of teams per school.
- **Live Nationwide Event: Nationwide Synchronised Buildathon** with all schools participating simultaneously via live streaming.
- **Mentorship Support:** Guidance from **incubation centres, higher education institutions, corporates, and Mentor of Change networks**.
- **Inclusive Focus:** Special emphasis on **Aspirational blocks, Tribal regions, Frontier Villages, and Remote Areas**.
- **Portal-Based Process:** Registration and project submission through vbb.mic.gov.in.
- **Awards:** ₹1 crore total prize pool- **10 national**, **100 state**, and **1000 district-level** winners.
- **Recognition:** Winners to receive **mentorship, corporate support, and long-term innovation opportunities**.

Movie Ticket Price Cap

The Supreme Court paused the Karnataka High Court's order asking multiplexes to keep a detailed and auditable record of every movie ticket sold. The high court's division bench had passed the direction on September 30 while hearing a plea against an order of its single judge that had granted an **interim stay** on the **Karnataka Cinemas (Regulation) (Amendment) Rules, 2025,** which sought to cap cinema ticket prices at Rs 200.

Case Background: Karnataka Movie Ticket Price Cap

- **Government Order:** In September 2025, the Karnataka government amended the *Karnataka Cinemas (Regulation) Rules, 2014* to cap ticket prices at ₹200 across all theatres.
- **Petitioners:** Film producers and the Multiplex Association of India (MAI) challenged the order in the Karnataka High Court.
- **Main Arguments by Petitioners:**
  - The price cap violated the **fundamental right to carry on business (Article 19(1)(g))**.
  - The **uniform cap** was arbitrary since multiplexes incur higher operational costs than single screens.
  - The government **lacked legislative authority** to fix prices under the existing cinema rules.
  - The exemption for "premium facilities with 75 seats or less" was **vague and discriminatory**.
  - The rule unfairly targeted cinemas while **excluding OTT and satellite TV platforms**.
- **State's Defence:** The government claimed the move served **public interest**, ensuring affordable access to cinema.

Ticket Price Regulation in Other States

- **Andhra Pradesh & Telangana:** Ticket caps range from ₹177-₹350. Courts limited premium pricing for big films to **10 days** and **five shows daily and** ruled that **online booking charges** aren't part of ticket price. Telangana HC criticised late-night screenings and questioned legal basis for fare hikes.
- **Tamil Nadu:** Ticket cap at **₹150**; In 2022, the Madras HC struck down a rule fixing very low **parking fees**, directing a revision to reflect real costs.
- **Kerala:** No cap yet; **PIL filed** after prices hit ₹1,200-₹1,400. The government formed a **committee** to review.
- **Maharashtra:** Dispute centred on **online booking convenience fees**. Bombay HC (July 2025) struck down government orders banning such fees, calling them an **unreasonable restriction on business** (Article 19(1)(g)).

Supreme Court's (SC) View on Uniform Movie Ticket Pricing:

- In 2023, SC bench disapproved of a Jammu & Kashmir HC order mandating uniform ticket price. The Court held it is unfair to equate multiplexes with advanced facilities and basic single-screen cinemas.
- It clarified the principle of "equality among equals"- allowing different prices based on theatre class and facilities. Cinemas can vary rates for different seat categories (like balcony vs stalls) or formats (multiplex vs single screen).

Implications of Movie Ticket Price Cap	Way Forward on Movie Ticket Price Regulation
• **Consumer Benefit:** Makes cinema more affordable and accessible to the public. • **Industry Impact:** Reduces revenue margins for multiplexes, affecting profitability and future investment. • **Quality & Innovation:** May discourage theatres from upgrading technology or offering premium services. • **Market Distortion:** Uniform caps ignore cost differences between cities, multiplexes, and single screens. • **Legal Challenges:** Raises questions on **freedom of business (Article 19(1)(g))** and **state's legislative competence**. • **Revenue Loss:** Can lower entertainment tax or GST collection for the state. • **Administrative Burden:** Increases regulatory oversight and disputes over compliance. • **Policy Precedent:** May encourage similar interventions in other sectors, sparking debate over state control vs. market autonomy.	• **Tiered Pricing Model:** Allow different price caps for multiplexes, single screens, and rural theatres to reflect cost variations. • **Periodic Review Mechanism:** Set up a committee to revise ticket prices based on inflation and operating costs. • **Transparent Pricing:** Mandate disclosure of all charges (base price, taxes, convenience fee) to protect consumers. • **Targeted Subsidies:** Instead of blanket caps, provide incentives or concessions for affordable screenings (e.g., morning shows or regional films). • **Stakeholder Consultation:** Involve producers, theatre owners, and consumer groups before framing regulations. • **Promote Self-Regulation:** Encourage industry associations to develop fair pricing guidelines under government oversight. • **Digital Monitoring:** Use online ticketing data to track compliance and prevent overcharging without stifling competition.

Execution Petitions

The Supreme Court (SC) termed the pendency of **over 8.82 lakh execution petitions** across the country as *"highly disappointing"* and *"alarming"*.

What is an Execution Petition?

- An **execution petition** is a request made by the **winner of a civil case** (called the *decree-holder*) to make sure that the **court's order is actually carried out**.
- Once the court gives its decision for example, asking someone to pay money, hand over property, or perform a certain action- the winning party can approach the court again to **enforce that decision**.
- This process is done under **Order 21 of the Civil Procedure Code (CPC), 1908**. It is the **final and most important step** in a civil case because it allows the winning party to **get the real benefit** of the court's judgment- often described as *"reaping the fruits of the decree."*

Current Situation (as of October 2025)

- **Total pending execution petitions:** 8,82,578
- **Disposed in last six months:** 3,38,685 (after SC's March 2025 order)
- **Highest pendency:** Bombay High Court (HC) jurisdiction (3.4 lakh petitions)- it covers the states of Maharashtra and Goa, along with the union territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Madras HC (86,000 petitions) and Kerala HC (83,000 petitions).

SC's Interventions to Address the Issue:

- **2021 (Justice SA Bobde Bench):** Laid down **14 mandatory directions** for trial courts and fixed a **six-month deadline** for disposal of execution proceedings.
- **March 2025 (Justice Pardiwala & Justice Mithal Bench):** Acting on a 1980 Tamil Nadu land dispute, it directed all HCs to clear **pending execution petitions within six months** and warned that **judges would be held accountable** for delays.
- **October 2025 (Follow-up Order):** SC noted **8.82 lakh pendency** & directed HCs to **intensify monitoring** and **report progress**. It scheduled the next progress review for **April 10, 2026**.

Reasons for Languishing Execution Petitions	Implications of Pending Execution Petitions
• **Procedural Hurdles:** The **CPC** requires notice to the losing party even during execution, allowing multiple objections and hearings that cause long delays. Each step- notice, objections, sale, or possession can take months or years. As per the **National Judicial Data Grid**, a civil case takes about **4.9 years**, and execution adds **around 4 more**, with **47% of pending execution cases were filed before 2020**, showing severe enforcement delays. • **Systemic Inefficiencies:** Lack of adequate judicial officers and staff at the district level. Poor tracking and absence of digital infrastructure for execution stages. **Lack of granular data** on types of execution petitions (e.g., property sales vs. monetary decrees) hinders targeted reform. • **Adjournments and Legal Counsel Delays:** According to NJDG data- ○ 38.9% cases get delayed due to unavailability of lawyers. ○ 17% cases get delayed due to **court-ordered stays**. ○ 12% cases are pending due to **awaiting documents**. • **Regional Disparities:** States like **Maharashtra** and **Tamil Nadu** report higher pendency, reflecting differing judicial workloads, commercial dispute volume, and infrastructure quality.	• **Erosion of Public Trust:** Delays in enforcing court orders weaken people's faith in the justice delivery system. • **Justice Denied Despite Winning** • **Weakening of Rule of Law:** Failure to implement decrees undermines the authority of courts and encourages non-compliance with judicial orders. • **Economic and Social Impact:** Delayed execution affects property transfers, business transactions, and recovery of dues, discouraging investment and economic activity. • **Judicial Backlog and Resource Drain:** Prolonged execution cases increase court workload, consume resources, and divert attention from fresh disputes. • **Reduced Deterrence:** When violators know enforcement is slow, it emboldens them to disobey court rulings, reducing the deterrent power of law.

Way Forward

- **Time-bound Execution:** Enforce strict six-month deadlines for disposal of execution petitions with accountability for delays.
- **Simplify Procedures:** Streamline **Order 21 of CPC** to reduce repeated notices, objections, and adjournments.
- **Use of Technology:** Introduce **e-tracking systems** for execution cases and real-time progress monitoring by HCs.
- **Dedicated Execution Courts:** Set up **specialized benches or officers** to handle execution matters exclusively.

- **Administrative Oversight:** HCs should conduct **monthly reviews** of pendency and disposal rates in district courts.
- **Capacity Building:** Train judicial officers and staff in effective enforcement mechanisms and case management.
- **Data-driven Reforms:** Maintain **detailed statistics** on types of execution cases to identify problem areas and tailor solutions.
- **Encourage Compliance Mechanisms:** Use **mediation, settlements, or penalties** to ensure voluntary compliance with decrees.

Madras High Court Upholds Thiruparankundram Hill Name, Bans Animal Sacrifice

The Madras High Court's (HC), resolved a long-standing dispute over Thiruparankundram Hill, addressing its name, religious practices at Sikkandar Badusha Dargah, and Muslim prayer rights in the Nellithoppu area.

Madras HC's Final Ruling

- **On the Hill's Name:** It reaffirmed that **official records (Gazettes of 1908 & 1923)** and the **ASI** recognize the site as *"Thiruparankundram Hill"*. Calling it *"Sikkandar Malai"* or any other name is **historically incorrect and mischievous.** It directed that only the name *Thiruparankundram Hill* be used in official and public references.
- **On Animal Sacrifice: It prohibited animal sacrifice** at the Dargah as **no documentary or historical proof** was found proving that animal sacrifice is an essential religious practice there and rejected oral claims as insufficient evidence. It cited the **ASI Rules (Rule 8)** which prohibit bringing animals or cooking food at protected sites and held that **religious freedom under Article 25 is subject to public order, morality, and statutory restrictions**, particularly those under the AMASR Act, 1958. It also allowed the Dargah to **approach a civil court** to establish that animal sacrifice was a long-standing custom predating 1920.
- **On Muslim Prayers at Nellithoppu:** The court accepted that **33 cents of land at Nellithoppu** legally belongs to the Dargah and permitted **Muslim prayers only during Ramzan and Bakrid**, under **strict conditions that**:
  - There should be no obstruction to temple devotees using the steps leading to Temple.
  - No non-vegetarian food or animal sacrifice should be allowed.
  - Gatherings should be confined to Dargah's area.

Background of the Case

- **Location & Context: Thiruparankundram Hill (Madurai, Tamil Nadu)** houses the Arulmigu Subramaniya Swamy Temple and Sikkandar Badusha Dargah. The hill spans **172.2 acres** and is a **protected monument** under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958, managed by the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)**. The hill is known by various names:
  - ✔ Thiruparankundram Hill (official name)
  - ✔ Skanda Malai (Hindu usage)
  - ✔ Sikkandar Malai (Muslim usage)
  - ✔ Samanar Kundru (Jain usage)
- **Genesis of the Dispute (2025):** The **Dargah trustees** announced a "Samabandhi Feast" involving **animal sacrifice** and referred to the hill as "Sikkandar Malai". **Hindu groups and** Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department (HR&CE) objected to this, citing violation of temple sanctity and the AMASR Act. The **District Collector's report** found **no historical proof** that animal sacrifice was an essential Dargah ritual. The issue escalated to the **Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court**.
- **Litigation History:**
  - ✔ **1920:** Temple filed suit claiming ownership of the entire hill.
  - ✔ **1923:** Court ruled Temple owns the hill except **33 cents at Nellithoppu** belonging to the Dargah.
  - ✔ **1931:** The Privy Council upheld this judgment.
  - ✔ **Later rulings (1958, 2011, etc.):** Restricted new constructions and activities beyond Dargah's area.
  - ✔ **Judicial precedent:** Temple owns the hill; Dargah's rights limited to Nellithoppu land.
- **The Split Verdict (June 2025):** A two-judge Bench dealt with following key issues and gave a split opinion resulting to reference before **Justice R. Vijayakumar** as the third judge.
  - ✔ Legality of animal sacrifice under Article 25.
  - ✔ Use of the name "Sikkandar Malai."
  - ✔ Muslim prayer rights at Nellithoppu.

Implications of the Judgment:

- **Legal and Administrative:** It reinforces **ASI's authority** over protected monuments, upholds **restrictions on religious activities** that interfere with heritage preservation and sets a precedent on how **religious freedom coexists with statutory regulation.**

- **Social and Communal:** It aims to **prevent communal disharmony** between Hindu and Muslim communities in Madurai and provides a clear legal boundary to avoid future conflicts over religious claims on shared heritage sites.
- **Cultural and Heritage Impact:** It preserves the **historical identity** of Thiruparankundram Hill and protects archaeological integrity by banning practices that could damage the site.
- **Broader Constitutional Significance:** It exemplifies **constitutional balance** between faith and law ensuring that heritage preservation and public order take precedence over unproven religious customs.

BCCI Moves to Supreme Court to Classify Match-fixing as Cheating

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has approached the Supreme Court (SC) to intervene in a **criminal appeal** that could determine whether match-fixing can be prosecuted as cheating under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

What is BCCI's Stand in SC?

- **Implied Promise of Fair Play:** Players have an implied duty to play honestly.
- **Breach of Trust:** Match-fixing deceives fans, sponsors, and investors who expect genuine contests.
- **Meets Ingredients of Cheating:** Such deceit constitutes **dishonest inducement** under Section 420 IPC.
- **Integrity of the Game:** Match-fixing harms cricket's credibility and public trust.
- **Need for Criminal Action:** Disciplinary codes are insufficient; **legal deterrence is essential**.
- **Support for Karnataka Government:** Seeks to **overturn the Karnataka HC ruling** and **criminalize** match-fixing under cheating laws.

Case Background

- **The Case:** State of Karnataka & Anr v. Sri Abrar Kazi & Ors, arises from allegations of **match-fixing and spot-fixing** in the Karnataka Premier League (KPL) during **2018- 19**. The **Bengaluru Police** filed charges against several individuals- including **players, a team owner, a cricket administrator, and a bookie** under **Section 420-** Cheating (Indian Penal Code (IPC)) and **Section 120B-** Criminal Conspiracy (IPC).
- **Karnataka High Court (HC) Verdict:** It focused on the **legal ingredients of "cheating" under Section 420 IPC**, which requires proof of **dishonest inducement to deliver property or a valuable security**.
  - ✔ The **police claimed** that spectators were cheated since they bought tickets expecting a fair match. The **Court rejected this**, holding that spectators **voluntarily buy tickets,** and no direct **inducement or deception** is involved.
  - ✔ It observed that **match-fixing is a serious moral and disciplinary violation**, but it **does not amount to a criminal offence** under the IPC and concluded that such conduct should be **handled by the BCCI through its internal disciplinary mechanisms**, not through criminal prosecution.
- **Appeal in SC**: Karnataka HC ruling prompted the State of Karnataka to file a Special Leave Petition (SLP- petition to the SC for an appeal) in the SC, challenging the HC's decision. It is in this pending appeal that the BCCI has now filed an application to intervene and present its arguments.

Current Legal Position on Match-Fixing in India

- **No Specific Law:** India lacks a dedicated statute criminalizing match-fixing or sports fraud.
- **BNS Reliance:** Enforcement relies on Sections 318 & 61 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) which are **legally inadequate**.
- **Law Commission Recommendation:** The **276th Report (2018)** urged Parliament to make **match-fixing and sports fraud separate criminal offences** with **strict penalties**, but no law has yet been enacted.

Why Should Match-Fixing Be Classified as Cheating?

- **Protects Integrity of Sport:** Ensures fairness and accountability in competition.
- **Prevents Public Deception:** Fans and sponsors are misled into spending on fixed contests.
- **Fills Legal Vacuum:** Creates a clear legal route for prosecution and deterrence.
- **Protects Economic Interests:** Safeguards India's multi-billion-rupee sports ecosystem.
- **Ensures Moral Accountability:** Reinforces honesty, transparency, and ethical conduct in sport.

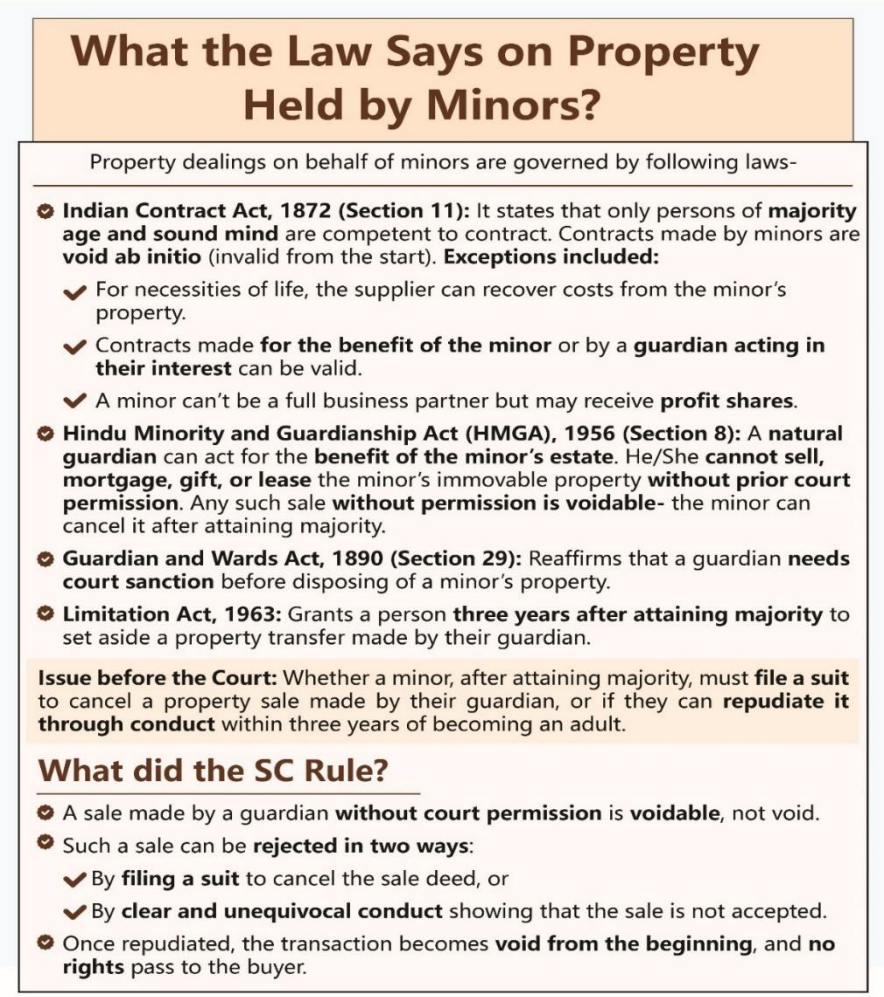
Supreme Court allows Minors to Reject Property Sale Made by Guardians

The Supreme Court (SC) held that a minor (a person under 18 years of age)- **after attaining majority (turns 18)** can **repudiate (i.e., reject or cancel)** a sale or transfer of his/her immovable property *made by a guardian*

without prior court-permission, either by filing a suit **or** by conduct, such as reselling the property within the limitation period prescribed by law.

Implications of the SC Ruling on Minors' Property Sales

- **Strengthens Protection of Minors' Property Rights:** Reinforces the principle that **minors' interests are paramount** in property transactions and prevents misuse of guardianship powers by ensuring that **unauthorized sales can be easily repudiated**.
- **Simplifies the Process of Challenging Invalid Sales:** It removes the burden of filing a **formal and often lengthy lawsuit** to cancel an unauthorized sale and allows **repudiation by conduct** making justice **more accessible and practical**.
- **Clarifies Legal Position on "Voidable" Transactions:** It distinguishes between **void** (invalid from the beginning) and **voidable** (*initially valid, but can be annulled)* and provides judicial clarity that *once repudiated*, a voidable transaction becomes **void ab initio** (invalid from the start).
- **Upholds the Limitation Act Framework:** It confirms that repudiation (by suit or conduct) must happen **within three years of attaining majority**, thus maintaining legal certainty and finality in transactions.



National Unity Day 2025 (Rashtriya Ekta Diwas 2025)

Rashtriya Ekta Diwas, celebrated annually on **31st October since 2014**, commemorates the birth anniversary of **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**, the *Iron Man of India and* India's first Deputy PM and Home Minister. It symbolizes the nation's **unity, integrity, and solidarity**. The **2025 celebration** holds special significance as it marks **Sardar Patel's 150th birth anniversary.**

✓ **Run for Unity**, a nationwide marathon, is organized annually to celebrate his vision of a united India.

Public Trust Doctrine

The Supreme Court (SC) ruled that the Public Trust Doctrine (PTD) covers man-made waterbodies serving ecological purposes. It stressed joint responsibility of citizens and authorities to protect them, upholding the Bombay High Court's order allowing limited, eco-friendly development around Futala Lake, Nagpur.

Landmark Judicial Precedents:

- **M.C. Mehta v. Kamal Nath (1997):** SC established that the State is a trustee of natural resources.

- **Vellore Citizens Welfare Forum v. Union of India (1996):** Linked environmental protection to the **right to life** under Article 21.

Significance	Challenges
• Reinforces the **right to a healthy environment**. • Promotes **sustainable development** and **accountability** in governance. • Strengthens legal protection for **both natural and artificial ecosystems**.	• **Centre-State conflicts** over control of resources. • **Inconsistent application in trans-boundary environmental issues** like air or river pollution.

What is Public Trust Doctrine (PTD)?

It is a key principle in environmental law which holds that **natural resources such as air, water, forests, and wildlife are held in trust by the State for public use and cannot be privately owned or exploited**. The government acts as a **trustee**, ensuring these resources are preserved for present and future generations.

Historical Background: Originating in the **Justinian Code of Roman law**, PTD affirmed public rights over common resources like seas and shores. It evolved through **English common law** and gained prominence in **U.S. environmental jurisprudence**, later adopted and expanded by Indian courts to safeguard ecological interests.

Key Elements of PTD:

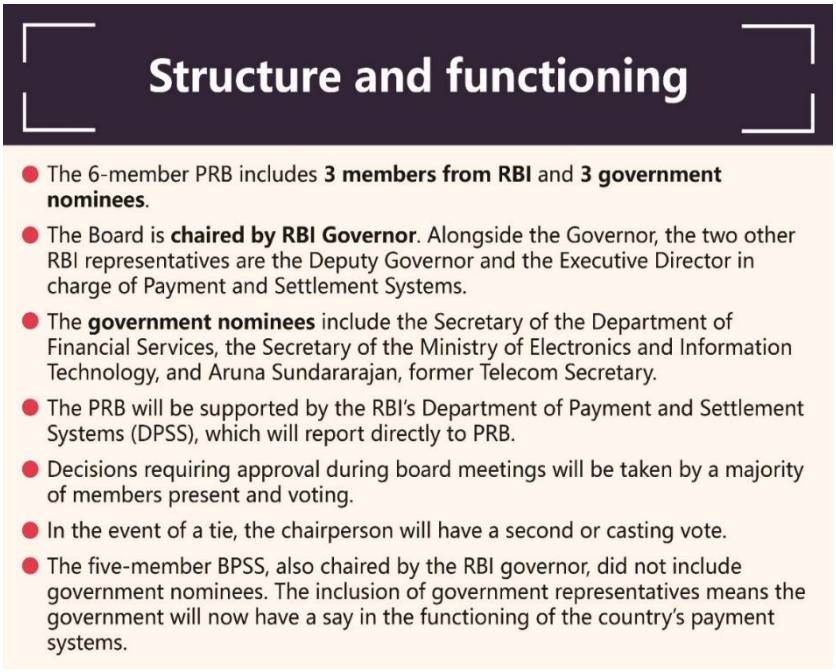
- **Fiduciary Duty of Government:** The State must protect and manage natural resources for collective welfare.
- **Balancing Development and Ecology:** Promotes sustainable development- economic progress without harming the environment.
- **Expanded Scope:** Initially for water and coastal areas, now extended to air, forests, and biodiversity.

Constitutional Basis

- **Article 48-A:** Directs the State to protect and improve the environment.
- **Article 51-A(g):** Imposes a duty on citizens to safeguard natural resources.
- **Article 21:** Right to life includes the right to a clean and healthy environment.

Payments Regulatory Board (PRB)

- The RBI has constituted a **six-member** Payments Regulatory Board (PRB).
- The PRB is responsible for regulation, supervision, and oversight of all payment systems—electronic and non-electronic, domestic and cross-border.
- The PRB **replaces the Board for Regulation and Supervision of Payment and Settlement Systems (BPSS)**, a committee of the RBI's Central Board.
- The new board derives its authority from the **Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007**.



PM-SETU Scheme

- The Prime Minister has launched the PM-SETU (Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability Transformation through Upgraded ITIs) scheme
- PM-SETU a **centrally sponsored scheme** with an investment of **Rs 60,000 crore**.
- It will follow a **hub and spoke model** for the upgradation of ITIs across the country, with **200 hub ITIs linked to 800 spoke ITIs**.
- Hubs will have innovation centres, training-of-trainers facilities, production units and placement services, while spokes will focus on expanding access.
- Each hub will be connected to four spokes on average, creating clusters equipped with advanced infrastructure, modern trades, digital learning systems and incubation facilities.
- It will set up Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) with credible Anchor Industry Partners to manage clusters and ensure **outcome-based training**.
- It will introduce new, demand-driven courses and revamp existing ones in collaboration with industry.
- It will create pathways for long-term diplomas, short-term courses, and executive programs
- It also aims to **strengthen five National Skill Training Institutes** in Bhubaneswar (Odisha), Chennai (Tamil Nadu), Hyderabad (Telangana), Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh), Ludhiana (Punjab) as **Centres of Excellence** with global partnerships.
- Under the first phase of implementation, 15 hub-and-spoke ITI clusters have been identified across the country, spanning diverse regions and industrial ecosystems.
- It will redefine India's ITI ecosystem, making it **government-owned but industry-managed**, with **global co-financing support from the World Bank and Asian Development Bank**.

Wheat MSP increased

- The government has announced a 6.59% increase in the minimum support price (MSP) for wheat from Rs 2,425 to Rs 2,585 per quintal for 2026-27 marketing year.
- The government has set a record wheat **production target of 119 million tonne** for the **2025-26 crop year (July-June)**, as against the actual output estimated at a record 117.5 million tonne for 2024-25 crop year.
- Wheat is the main **rabi (winter) crop**, with sowing beginning from late October, while harvesting from March onwards. Wheat marketing year 2026-27 will start from April.

{For more about MSP refer The Recitals-May 2025}

PM KUSUM

- The Union government is set to scale up its PM-KUSUM (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthan Mahabhiyan) programme to several African countries and island nations through the International Solar Alliance (ISA).
- Africa imports food worth $400 billion even though it has huge arable land — due to absence of irrigation. The total percentage of arable land that is irrigated in Africa is just 4%.
- The move is aimed at bringing irrigation access, energy security and clean power to millions in off-grid communities, reinforcing India's role as a leader in distributed renewable energy.

VLGC Shivalik

- The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways inducted **India's third Very Large Gas Carrier (VLGC) – Shivalik** – under the Indian flag at Visakhapatnam Port.
- The 82,000 CBM (Cubic Meter) VLGC Shivalik, **named after the Himalayan range**, joins **Sahyadri and Anandamayi** as Shipping Corporation of India's (SCI's) third VLGC.
- **Built in South Korea**, the 225-meter-long carrier represents cutting-edge maritime engineering with segregated tanks, advanced temperature control, and compliance with global safety and efficiency standards.
- The vessel strengthens India's energy connectivity with the Arabian Gulf and ensures secure, efficient, and reliable Liquified Petroleum Gas (LPG) transportation to the nation.

- It will expand Indian-flag tonnage, reduce dependence on foreign carriers for critical energy cargo and improve cost efficiency.

NPCI Launches Subsidiary

- The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has set up a new subsidiary, NPCI Tech Solutions Limited (NTSL),
- NTSL has been launched to drive experimentation and breakthrough innovations in the fintech sector.
- NTSL is intended to be a cradle or incubator for future tech innovation inside NPCI, turning them into real-world solutions for India's digital economy.
- NTSL joins a list of three other subsidiaries under the NPCI umbrella:
  - **NPCI Bharat BillPay Limited (NBBL):** Manages the Bharat Bill Payment System.
  - **NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL):** Focuses on expanding UPI and RuPay globally.
  - **NPCI BHIM Services Limited (NBSL)**: Manages the BHIM UPI platform.

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)

- **Set up in 2008**, NPCI is an umbrella organisation for operating retail payments and settlement systems in India.
- It is an **initiative of RBI and Indian Banks' Association (IBA)** under the provisions of the **Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007**.
- It has been incorporated as a **Not for Profit Company** to provide infrastructure to the entire banking system in India for physical as well as electronic payment and settlement systems.

LEAPS 2025

- The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has launched the Logistics Excellence, Advancement, and Performance Shield (LEAPS) 2025, an initiative to benchmark and reward excellence in India's logistics sector.
- LEAPS is a flagship initiative of the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- It aims to build upon the transformative vision of **PM GatiShakti and the National Logistics Policy (NLP) 2022**, aiming to **promote efficiency, competitiveness, and sustainability in India's logistics sector.**
- It covers a wide spectrum of logistics players — including air, road, sea, and rail freight operators; warehousing; multimodal transporters; MSMEs; startups; and academia.
- It also lays emphasis on ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) practices, and green logistics.
- By recognizing and rewarding innovation, it will help create a future-ready logistics ecosystem that strengthens Make in India, empowers Atmanirbhar Bharat, and contributes to the realization of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

State Mining Readiness Index

- The Ministry of Mines has released the State Mining Readiness Index (SMRI) and State rankings, which is a significant step to encourage mining sector reforms in States.
- The index evaluates States on several **parameters**, including *auction performance, early mine operationalization, focus on exploration, and sustainable mining practices related to* ***non-coal minerals*** *(such as lithium, rare earth elements, bauxite, and iron ore)*.
- These indicators aim to capture the **overall readiness and efficiency of States** in facilitating mining activity and **implementing reforms.**
- The index will serve as a tool for **benchmarking State performance & encouraging healthy competition**.

Rankings

- Under the SMRI framework, States have been divided into **three categories** based on their mineral endowment.
    - **Category A** (mineral-rich States): Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Gujarat secured the top three ranks.
    - **Category B** (Moderately endowed): Goa, Uttar Pradesh, and Assam emerged as the top performers.
    - **Category C** (Low-endowment): Punjab, Uttarakhand, and Tripura claimed the leading positions.

Green Hydrogen Hubs

- The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has formally recognised three major ports as Green Hydrogen Hubs under the **National Green Hydrogen Mission (NGHM).**
- These ports are **Deendayal Port Authority in Gujarat, V.O. Chidambaranar Port Authority in Tamil Nadu and Paradip Port Authority in Odisha**.
- The NGHM adopted a **cluster-based model** to address logistical and technical challenges associated with *long-distance hydrogen transport*. Under revised guidelines for Hydrogen Valley Innovation Clusters (HVIC) and Green Hydrogen Hubs issued in June 2025, designated hubs can be recognised even without direct financial assistance, yet projects within the hubs become eligible for incentives under other central and state schemes.
- The hub model is used to concentrate infrastructure in strategic locations (especially ports) to gain economies of scale, streamline logistics, and integrate with the maritime export-potential
- The recognition of these ports is expected to accelerate industrial participation, attract green investments, and promote innovation in clean fuel technologies.
- It is expected to accelerate India's transition to clean energy and support its ambition of achieving net-zero emissions by 2070.
- The **NGHM** aims to position India as a global hub for the production, utilisation, and export of green hydrogen and its derivatives.

Mission for Atmanirbharta in Pulses

- The Union Cabinet has approved the **Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses** aimed at boosting domestic production and achieving self-sufficiency (Aatmanirbharta) in pulses. The mission will be implemented from **2025-26 to 2030-31**, with a financial outlay of **Rs 11,440 crore**.
- The Mission will adopt a comprehensive strategy covering research, seed systems, area expansion, procurement, and price stability.

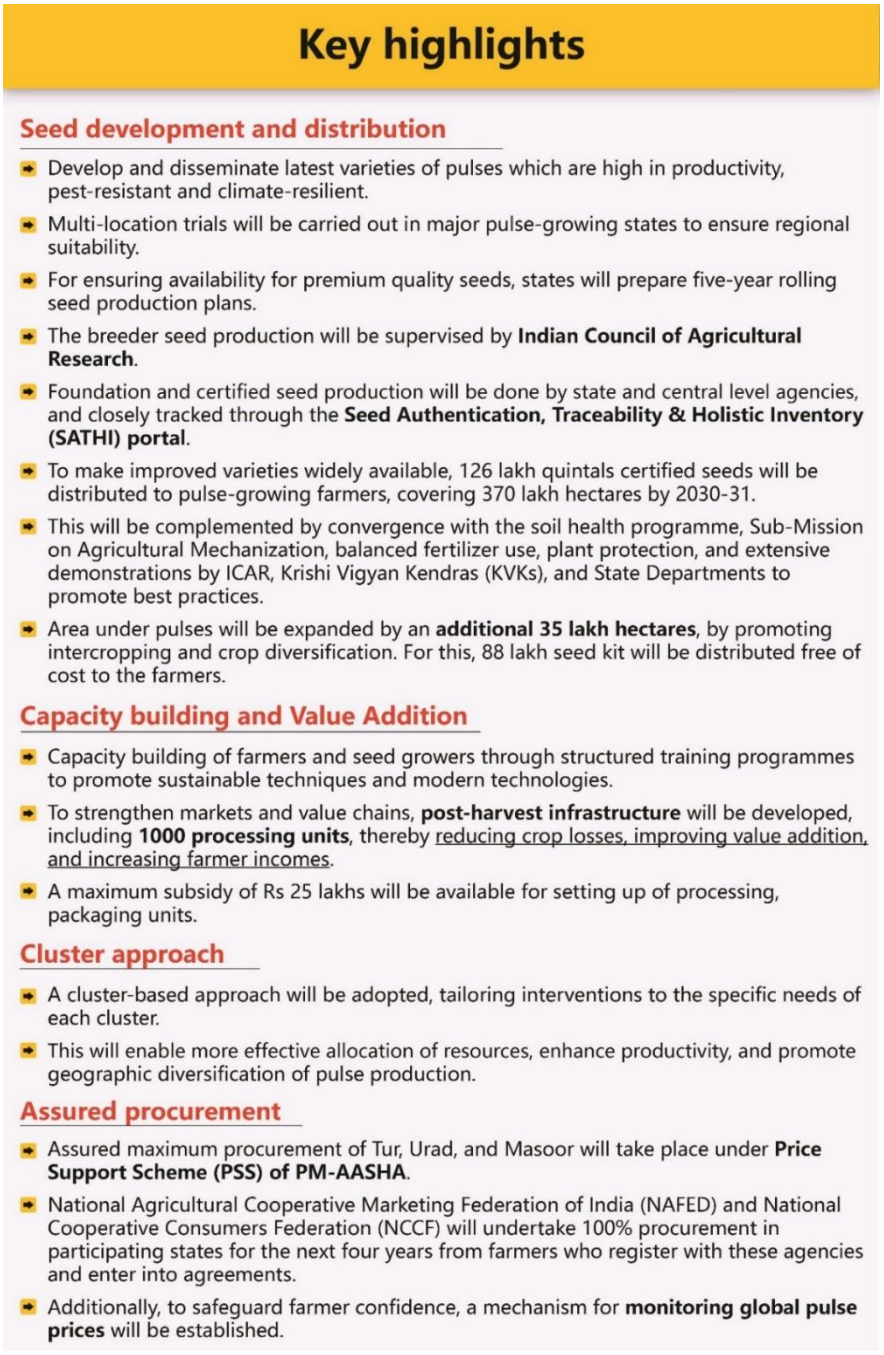
Need for the Mission

- Pulses hold special importance in India's cropping systems and diets. **India is the world's largest producer and consumer of pulses**.
- With rising incomes and standard of living, pulses consumption has increased. However, domestic production has not kept pace with demand, leading to a 15–20% increase in pulse imports.
- The mission has been launched to reduce this import dependency, meet rising demand, maximize production, and enhance farmers income.

Significance

- By 2030-31, the Mission is expected to **expand the area under pulses to 310 lakh hectares, increase production to 350 lakh tonnes, and raise yield to 1130 kg/ha**. Alongside productivity gains, the Mission will generate significant employment.
- It will help to achieve the goal of Atmanirbharta (self-reliance) in pulses, reduce import dependency and conserve valuable foreign exchange while boosting farmers' incomes.

- It will also lead to significant **environmental benefits** in the form of climate resilient practices, improved soil health and making productive use of crop fallow areas.



World Food Day 2025

- World Food Day 2025 was observed on 16th October, 2025, which also marked the 80th anniversary of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).
- The day is observed to raise awareness about food security, nutrition, and sustainable agricultural practices. It was formally observed for the first time in 1981.
- It serves as a reminder of the ongoing challenges in ensuring that every person has access to safe, sufficient, and nutritious food.
- Despite global advances in food production, ~673 million people still face hunger and malnutrition in 2024, highlighting the need for effective policies, resilient food systems, and collaborative action.
- **Theme for 2025**:" **Hand in Hand for Better Foods and a Better Future"**, emphasizes global cooperation across governments, organizations, communities, and sectors to transform agrifood systems.

Indian Scenario

- Over the last decade, India has recorded a rise of about **90 million metric tonnes** in foodgrain production while fruit and vegetable output has increased by more than **64 million metric tonnes**.
- India now ranks **first globally in milk and millets production** and is the **second-largest fish, fruit and vegetable producer in the world.**

Foreign Currency Settlement System at GIFT City

- The Foreign Currency Settlement System (FCSS) was launched at the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) in Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City).
- This positions GIFT City among the select group of global financial centres (such as Hong Kong, Tokyo, Manila) that have local infrastructure to settle foreign currency transactions.

Need for FCSS

- Until now, entities in GIFT City have depended on foreign banks abroad for settling transactions in global currencies like the US dollar, euro, or yen.
- The initiating bank uses multiple Nostro account relationships (accounts held with foreign banks) and intermediaries to route funds.
- This meant higher costs, longer processing times (36-48 hours), and dependence on overseas systems.
- To address this, the RBI and International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) have introduced the FCSS.

Foreign Currency Settlement System (FCSS)

- FCSS is a mechanism allowing Indian banks operating in GIFT City to **clear and settle international trades within India itself**.
- It will help to reduce settlement time dramatically, enhance liquidity management, lower settlement risk, and improve operational efficiency.
- Under the FCSS, a local settlement bank (selected via bidding) will serve as the settlement hub.
- Member IFSC Banking Units (IBUs) will open accounts with this settlement bank. Inter-bank foreign currency transactions will be settled directly via these accounts, bypassing the multi-leg Nostro chain.
- Initially, the system will support US dollar transactions, with scope to add other foreign currencies over time.
- The system will operate under the regulatory framework of the **Payment and Settlement Systems (PSS) Act, 2007**, and is authorised by IFSCA.
- Additionally, **CCIL IFSC Ltd, a subsidiary of Clearing Corporation of India**, is the designated operator (Payment System Operator (PSO)).
- The software is being developed by **Indian Financial Technology & Allied Services (IFTAS), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the RBI**.

GIFT City

- Conceived in 2007, GIFT City is designed to host institutions dealing in global finance, insurance, fintech, and capital markets.
- Before GIFT City, many Indian companies raised funds or managed offshore investments through hubs such as Singapore or Mauritius, largely because of friendlier tax and regulatory frameworks there.
- India was losing potential revenue and global financial influence as a result.
- GIFT City is part of India's long-term goal to position itself as a global financial hub, competing with international centres such as Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) or Singapore's Marina Bay.
- The idea was to create an ecosystem where companies could transact in foreign currencies, follow global regulations, and attract international players.
- To do this, GIFT City was given special rules. It operates almost like a separate jurisdiction under Indian sovereignty, allowing financial transactions in foreign currencies, with zero capital gains tax for certain periods, tax holidays, and a liberal regulatory environment.
- By attracting multinational banks, investment funds, and technology firms, GIFT City can generate high-value jobs, draw global capital, and reduce financial outflows to offshore centres.
- The IFSCA, which was set up in 2020, regulates all activities inside the GIFT City.
- It operates similar to how Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi), RBI, Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), and Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) operate for their respective sectors.

Sevilla Forum on Debt

- The **Sevilla Forum on Debt** launched during the 16th United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD16) in Geneva.
- The Forum is one of the outcomes of the **4th International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4)** held earlier this year and is launched as an initiative under the **Sevilla Platform for Action**.
- FfD4 has set a roadmap for strengthening development financing and addressing the unsustainable debt burdens of many developing economies.
- The **Sevilla Forum**, a **Spanish-led initiative**, supported by **UNCTAD** and **UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs** (**UN DESA)**, will create an open, inclusive platform for dialogue and action on global debt challenges.
- It will facilitate dialogue between developed and developing countries, international institutions, borrowers, lenders, academia, civil society, and experts to share knowledge and develop innovative debt solutions.
- In doing so, it will gather new ideas to advance debt architecture reform, which is long overdue.
- It will track implementation of debt initiatives and **help transform political commitments into institutional mechanisms** for **fairer, equitable and more predictable debt governance**.

Global Debt

- Global debt has reached unprecedented levels. In 2024, **public debt hit $102 trillion**, with developing countries accounting for $31 trillion and paying **$921 billion in interest payments** alone.
- According to UNCTAD, 3.4 billion people now live in countries spending more on debt servicing than on health or education.

Google's Investment In AI Data Centre

- Google has announced an investment of **$15 billion (Rs 87,520 crore) over five years** (2026-2030) to set up an AI data centre in Vishakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. It is Google's largest ever investment made outside the United States.
- Google has partnered with the **Adani Group and Bharti Airtel** to build the infrastructure for the project.
- The data centre will be a part of the company's global network of AI centres spread across 12 countries.
- It will include India's **first gigawatt-scale data centre** and Google's first AI hub in India.
- It includes the construction of a new international subsea gateway, including multiple international subsea cables to land in Visakhapatnam.
- The hub will be supported by significant investment in clean energy generation, transmission lines, and energy-storage systems to ensure reliability and sustainability.

Impact

- It is expected to generate at least $15 billion over five years (2026-2030) because of new economic activity from increased cloud and AI adoption.
- The project is expected to generate **5,000–6,000 direct jobs** and **20,000–30,000 total jobs** in Andhra Pradesh.
- It will position Visakhapatnam as a global connectivity hub while boosting sectors such as healthcare, education, agriculture, and industry.
- It helps in reducing dependence on off-shore infrastructure, increasing cloud/AI service availability domestically, and positioning India in the global AI race.

AI data Centres vs Traditional Data Centres

- Traditional data centres typically consist of Central Processing Unit (CPU)-powered servers that support tasks such as website hosting, cloud storage, and business applications.
- An AI data centre, on the other hand, is needed to process vast amount of data, and is equipped with more cutting edge hardware to handle tasks like image and video production, generative AI, and deep learning etc.
- Since these data centres handle high-performance Graphics Processing Units

Project Waterworth

- Meta Platforms has chosen **Mumbai and Visakhapatnam** as the landing sites for the India leg of its multibillion-dollar undersea cable project, Waterworth.
- Meta has hired Sify Technologies as its landing partner in India under an estimated $5 million contract. Google has also partnered with Sify for the India landing of its $400 million Blue-Raman subsea cable.
- Waterworth will cross **50,000 km in length** to connect five continents and will bring enhanced connectivity to the **U.S., India, Brazil, South Africa**, and other locations, while becoming the **longest subsea cable project in the world**.
- Its distinctive W-shaped route bypasses the volatile Red Sea corridor, a recent hotspot for cable damages amid Houthi hostilities.
- Projects like Waterworth are the **backbone of global digital infrastructure** accounting for over **95% of international traffic across the world's oceans** to support digital experiences.
- The project is using **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** to enhance subsea cable infrastructure to improve global connectivity. It will utilise advanced machine learning models, to predict and mitigate potential disruptions, enhancing the resilience of subsea networks.
- It will **strengthen the scale and reliability of the world's digital highways** by opening three new oceanic corridors with high-speed connectivity needed to accelerate AI innovation across the world.

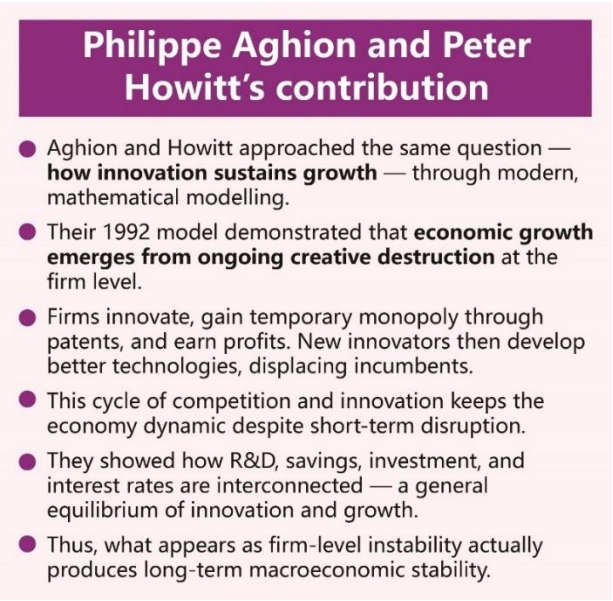
(GPUs), they require robust power infrastructure and cooling solutions, making them significantly more energy-intensive than traditional data centres.

Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences

The **Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences for 2025**, popularly called the **Nobel prize for economics**, was awarded to **Joel Mokyr, Philippe Aghion and Peter Howitt** for explaining innovation-driven economic growth.

Joel Mokyr's Contribution

- Joel Mokyr's research seeks to explain **why global economic growth has accelerated and sustained over the past 200 years**, breaking centuries of stagnation.
- **The Concept of "Useful Knowledge"**
  - Mokyr proposed that sustained growth depends on a continuous flow of **"useful knowledge"**, which he divided into two interconnected parts:
    - **Propositional Knowledge:** Understanding *why* things work — derived from scientific theories and natural observations.
    - **Prescriptive Knowledge:** Knowing *how* things work — practical, reproducible instructions or "recipes" that enable implementation, such as technical drawings or process manuals.
  - He argued that before the **Industrial Revolution**, innovators possessed ample **propositional knowledge** but lacked strong **prescriptive knowledge**, limiting their ability to apply scientific ideas to real-world production.
- For instance, advances in steam engines and steel production were based on scientific understanding of physics and chemistry.
- However, according to Mokyr, this convergence of how and why of technological change was not enough to push the world on the path of sustained progress. **Societal openness to change** — a hallmark of the **Enlightenment** — enabled sustained progress.
- Unless a society is willing to accept this process of "**creative destruction**", a term first used by economist Joseph Schumpeter in 1942, change will not happen.



Implications

- The award reinforces the view that growth is not just a matter of inputs like capital or labour.
- It signals that facilitating innovation, maintaining institutional openness, encouraging R&D, and ensuring that old industries/technologies can be replaced are critical for future growth.

Fare se Fursat Initiative

- The Ministry of Civil Aviation launched the 'Fare se Fursat' initiative, by India's government-owned regional carrier, Alliance Air.
- It introduces a **static or fixed fare model** on **select regional routes (tier 2 and tier 3 cities)**, which aims to provide passengers with transparent and predictable ticket prices.
- This is a major change from the dynamic pricing model.
- It aligns with the broader vision of the UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) regional connectivity scheme, which seeks to make air travel more accessible and affordable.

- The scheme will run as a pilot project till December 2025, on select routes to evaluate its operational feasibility and passenger response.
- If successful, the scheme could be expanded across more routes and possibly other carriers, changing how domestic airfare models operate in India.

Digital Platforms for Coal Sector

- The Ministry of Coal has launched two transformative digital platforms the CLAMP and Koyla Shakti Portals.
- The portals have been launched to enhance ease of doing business and facilitate a sustainable and responsible coal mining environment.

Koyla Shakti Dashboard

- Integrating the entire coal value chain from mine to market on a unified interface, it enables seamless collaboration among coal companies, railways, ports, and end users. As a comprehensive decision-support system, Koyla Shakti will facilitate data-driven governance, optimize logistics, and *strengthen supply chain management*.
- Aligning with the principles of Aatmanirbhar Bharat, it enhances transparency, efficiency, and real-time coordination.

Coal Land Acquisition, Management, and Payment (CLAMP) Portal

- The CLAMP portal is a unified digital platform developed to streamline and digitize processes related to *land acquisition, compensation, and rehabilitation & resettlement (R&R)* in the coal sector.
- Serving as a centralized repository of land records, it facilitates real-time data integration and monitoring across coal Public Sector Units (PSUs).
- By digitizing the entire workflow from uploading land details to compensation payments the portal enhances transparency, accountability, and inter-agency coordination, while minimizing procedural delays and eliminating data redundancy.

National Household Income Survey

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) will conduct the first-ever **pan-India** National Household Income Survey in Feb 2026.

Need for the Survey

- India has historically lacked reliable nationwide data on household income distribution. Previous attempts to collect income data (1950s and 1960s) were discontinued due to methodological and reporting challenges.
- The structural changes in the Indian economy over the past 75 years make such a survey important for policy-making and welfare design.
- With growth, digitalisation and informal incomes rising, the survey will help policy makers understand who earns what, how incomes are distributed.
- It allows for *inter-personal comparison of incomes* and the analysis of sources and patterns of income generation.

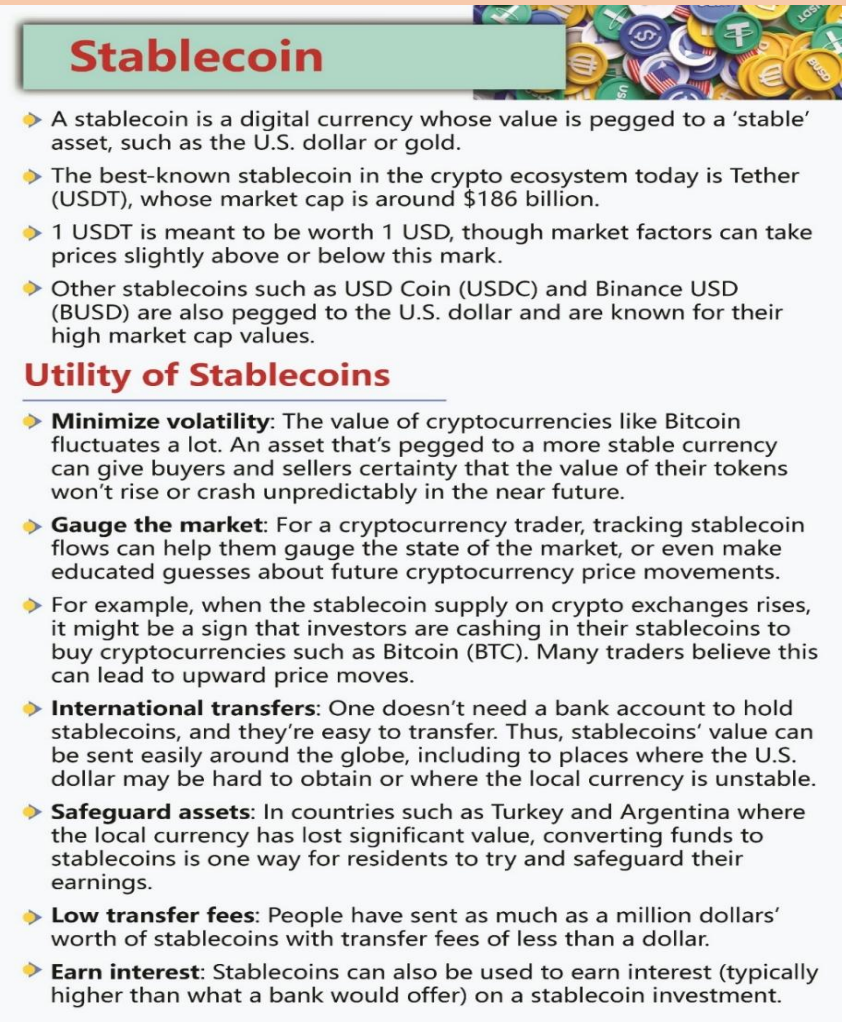
Key Points

- It aims to capture household incomes across rural and urban India, including *wages/salaries, business/farm income, remittances, informal sector income, and the* ***impact of technology adoption on earnings.***
- A Technical Expert Group (TEG), chaired by economist **Surjit S. Bhalla** has been constituted to guide survey design.
- It will provide evidence for policy on welfare programmes, income-based targeting, tax design, inequality measurement, and economic planning.

- For researchers and economists, this fills a major gap in India's statistics, as consumption and expenditure data exist, but reliable income data has been scarce and inconsistent.

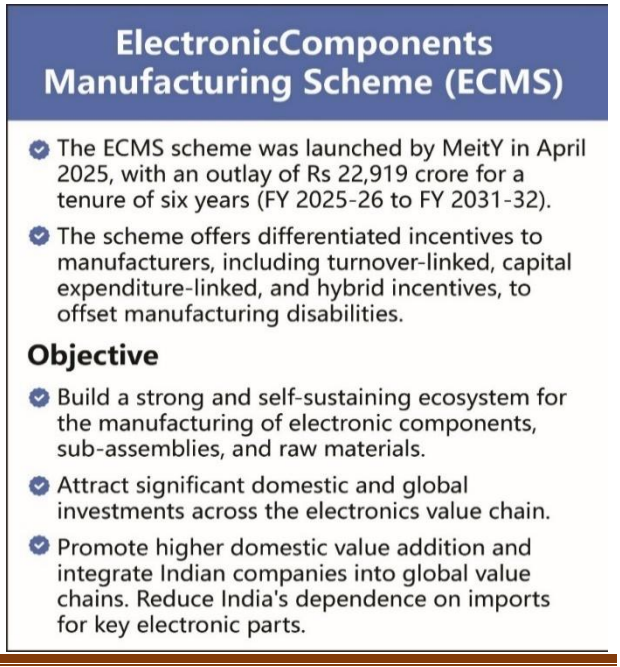
Growing Influence of Stablecoins

- In a hint towards a possible shift in India's cryptocurrency policy, the Finance Minister said that countries would have to "prepare to engage" with stablecoins and adapt to new monetary architectures or risk exclusion.
- Earlier, both Ministry of Finance and the RBI have expressed their reservations about private cryptocurrencies, or virtual digital assets (VDAs).
- India has not legalised these products in terms of regulation, but it does tax transactions that involve them.
- The RBI has lobbied hard to ban VDAs completely, while simultaneously launching pilot projects of its own Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC).
- CBDCs are basically cryptocurrencies issued by central banks and that have the same legal backing as official currency.



Seven Projects Approved under ECMS

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has approved the first tranche of seven applications under the **Electronic Components Manufacturing Scheme (ECMS).**
- Five plants will be established in Tamil Nadu and one each in Andhra Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh.
- The projects involve investments worth Rs 5,532 crore and a total production target of Rs 44,406 crore.
- The approved projects focus on the manufacturing of *printed circuit boards (PCBs), copper-clad laminates, camera modules, and polypropylene films*, reinforcing India's growing self-reliance in core electronic components.



Benefits

- With these plants, the import bill will go down by Rs 18,000–20,000 crore annually, and the plants will achieve 38–40% domestic value addition.
- The projects will create over 5,000 direct high-skill jobs in manufacturing and R&D
- Trusted supply chains will be built for defence, telecom, Electric Vehicles (EVs) and renewable energy.

NITI Aayog Paper On Enhancing Tax Certainty For Foreign Investors

- NITI Aayog has released the first working paper under the **NITI Tax Policy Working Paper Series–I**, titled **Enhancing Tax Certainty in Permanent Establishment and Profit Attribution for Foreign Investors in India**.
- The paper addresses long-standing concerns of foreign investors on tax predictability and dispute resolution to strengthen India's investment climate.

Highlights of the Report

- FDI and foreign portfolio investment (FPI) are recognized as vital catalysts for India's economic growth. A stable tax regime is crucial for instilling confidence in foreign investors.
- However, foreign investors frequently encounter significant tax uncertainty and compliance burdens, particularly arising from issues related to Permanent Establishment (PE) and the attribution of profits. These ambiguities have a significant impact on the inflow of FDI and FPI.
- Foreign investors prioritize tax certainty and predictability, as ambiguity introduces a significant risk premium that can lead to substantial and unforeseen tax liabilities on Indian income, which can discourage investment.
- Similarly, unpredictable changes in tax rules or prolonged disputes can make India a less attractive destination for capital.
- Despite these tax irritants, India has witnessed a remarkable increase in FDI inflows over the last two decades, demonstrating its inherent attractiveness as an investment destination.
- This growth indicates that India's fundamental economic strengths, such as its large market, demographic dividend, and ongoing economic reforms, are powerful drivers of investment. However, persistent tax uncertainty limits the full potential of FDI.
- Addressing these tax issues can significantly enhance foreign investment, attracting higher quality and more sustainable FDI rooted in genuine economic activity. This would potentially expand India's tax base in the long term, facilitating mutual benefit

Expansion of National Agriculture Market

- The Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, has further strengthened the National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) by expanding its coverage with the inclusion of 09 additional commodities.
- This takes the total number of tradable agricultural commodities on the platform to 247.
- It aims to enhance opportunities for farmers and traders by enabling them to access a transparent and competitive digital trading platform that connects markets across India.
- The Directorate of Marketing and Inspection (DMI), entrusted with formulating tradable parameters for commodities to be traded on e-NAM, has developed parameters for these 9 new commodities.

- The tradable parameters ensures that farmers receive prices that reflect the true quality of their produce, reducing dependence on middlemen and strengthening their bargaining power

Bharat Taxi

- The National e-Governance Division (NeGD), Digital India Corporation, MeitY has signed an MoU with Sahakar Taxi Cooperative Limited to launch the Bharat Taxi initiative.
- Bharat Taxi is a **cooperative-driven national ride-hailing initiative**. It aims to transform the mobility ecosystem with a **transparent, and citizen-first ride-hailing platform**.
- It is being jointly promoted by leading cooperative and financial institutions including NCDC, IFFCO, AMUL, KRIBHCO, NAFED, NABARD, NDDB and NCEL.
- The platform embodies the cooperative movement's spirit while aligning with the vision of Digital India programme for delivering inclusive, citizen-centric, and technology-enabled public services.
- Under this collaboration, NeGD will provide the:
    - **Platform Integration & Technical Architecture:** Integration of the Bharat Taxi platform with national digital platforms such as DigiLocker, UMANG, and API Setu to enable seamless identity verification and service delivery.
    - **Security, Compliance & Infrastructure:** Ensuring adherence to government's data protection norms and cybersecurity standards and advising on robust technical infrastructure.
    - **Programme Advisory:** Providing governance and programme management support utilising NeGD's institutional experience in designing and implementing large-scale national platforms.
    - **UI/UX & Accessibility:** Offering advisory inputs on user interface design, multilingual capabilities, and inclusive access features for all citizens.

Roadmap for Job Creation in the AI Economy

- NITI Aayog released a report titled Roadmap for Job Creation in the AI Economy.
- The roadmap examines how Artificial Intelligence is reshaping the tech services industry through the lens of **work, worker, and workforce**.
- It was developed by NITI Aayog's **Frontier Tech Hub**, in collaboration with **NASSCOM and BCG**, with guidance from an Expert Council of industry leaders.

Key Findings

- India's tech services sector faces the threat of significant job displacements by 2031.
- AI disruption is already reshaping jobs in India's $245B technology and customer experience (CX) sectors.
- Routine roles such as Quality Assurance engineers are increasingly under the risk of redundancy.
- However, there is also an opportunity to create **up to 4 million new jobs** in the next 5 years. The difference between job loss and job creation depends on the choices the country will make today.
- With the right skilling, re-skilling, and innovation pathways, India could emerge as a global hub for AI-first roles—from Ethical AI Specialists and AI Trainers to Sentiment Analysts and AI DevOps Engineers.

3 broad Strategic Pillars

- Embedding AI across the education system to make AI literacy a foundational skill in schools, universities, and vocational programs;
- Building a national re-skilling engine to upskill and re-skill millions of technology and CX professionals for higher-value, AI-augmented roles; and
- Positioning India as a global AI talent magnet by retaining domestic talent, attracting international experts, and establishing the country as a premier AI skilling destination.

NITI Frontier Tech Hub

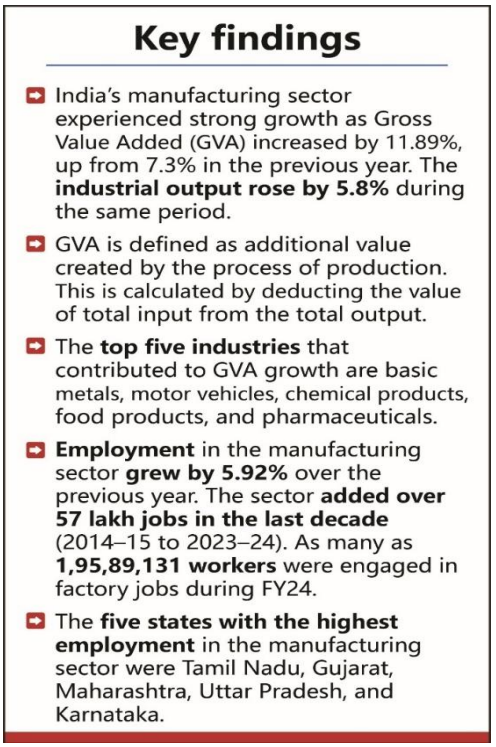
- The **NITI Frontier Tech Hub** is an action tank for *Viksit Bharat*. In collaboration with over 100 experts from government, industry, and academia, it is shaping a 10-year roadmap across 20+ key sectors to utilise frontier technologies for transformative growth and societal development.
- It anticipates mega technology shifts and chart India's readiness to unlock their potential for inclusive growth, supply chain resilience, and national security.

Annual Survey of Industries

- Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has released the results of Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) for FY 2023-24.
- ASI is conducted to provide a meaningful insight into the dynamics of change in the composition, growth, and structure of various manufacturing industries in terms of output, value added, employment, capital formation, and other parameters.
- It provides valuable input to the National Accounts Statistics at national and state level. The results are prepared at state and major industry level.

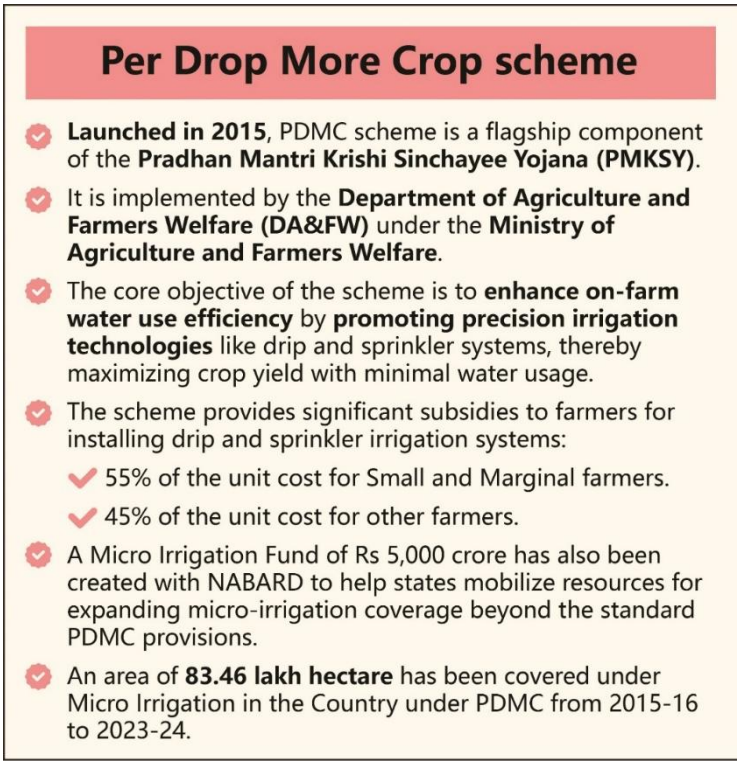
Coverage

- The Annual Survey of Industries broadly covers the following:
    - Factories registered under the **Factories Act,1948**;
    - Bidi and cigar manufacturing establishments registered under the **Bidi & Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act,1966**;
    - Electricity undertakings engaged in generation, transmission and distribution of electricity, **not registered with the Central Electricity Authority (CEA)**.
    - **Units with 100 or more employees** registered in the **Business Register of Establishments (BRE)** prepared and maintained by the State Governments.



Changes in Per Drop More Crop Scheme

- The Centre has introduced new flexibility under the Per Drop More Crop (PDMC) scheme to promote efficient water use and boost farmer income.
- Now, States and UTs can plan *micro-level* water management activities, such as diggi construction and water harvesting systems based on local needs.
- These systems can be developed for individual farmers as well as community use, ensuring sustainable water availability for micro-irrigation.
- Earlier, funds for such activities were limited to 20% of the total allocation for each state/UT and 40% for northeastern states, Himalayan states, and UTs of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.
- Now, states/UTs have been given greater flexibility to exceed these limits as per their specific requirements.
- These initiatives aim to help farmers adopt micro-irrigation, improve water-use efficiency, and ultimately increase productivity and income.



Harnessing Deep-Sea and Offshore Fisheries report

NITI Aayog released a report titled **India's Blue Economy: Strategy for Harnessing Deep-Sea and Offshore Fisheries**.

Key Highlights

- India is the **second-largest fish-producing country** in the world, accounting for **8% of global production**.
- India's fisheries sector supports nearly 30 million livelihoods and contributes significantly to exports, with fishery products earning Rs 60,523 crore in FY 2023–24.

- India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of over 2 million sq. km, deep waters beyond the continental shelf, and 11,098 km coastline provide immense potential to expand its marine fisheries into the deep seas.
- Despite a thriving fisheries sector, the deep-sea fishery resources beyond the continental shelf remain largely unexploited.
- The EEZ has an estimated potential yield of 7.16 million tonnes, including both conventional and non-conventional resources.
- One of the key challenges is the lack of specific regulations for fishing in EEZs (12 -200 nautical miles).
- This means, Indian fishing vessels are operating in the EEZ and the area beyond national jurisdiction (beyond 200 nautical miles) without proper legal authorisation or protection from India.

Impact: Responsible utilization of deep-sea and offshore fisheries can enhance seafood exports, generate employment opportunities, and reduce pressure on coastal fisheries, while ensuring ecological sustainability.

FIDC Appointed SRO for NBFC

- The RBI granted self-regulatory organisation (SRO) status to the Finance Industry Development Council (FIDC) for the Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) sector.
- The RBI had earlier released a framework for recognising SROs for various segments of the financial sector, such as NBFCs, fintechs, and payment service providers.
- Under it, SROs are expected to assist the RBI in ensuring compliance, maintaining data integrity, and facilitating responsible innovation.
- The microfinance companies have two SROs — Sa-Dhan and Microfinance Network (MFIN). Meanwhile, the Fintech Association for Consumer Empowerment (FACE) is the SRO for fintechs.

Impact on the NBFC Sector

- Enhances **industry discipline** through peer monitoring.
- Builds **market confidence** by improving transparency.

- Supports **financial inclusion** by encouraging fair lending practices.
- Enables **collaborative regulations** between the RBI and the NBFC industry.

Finance Industry Development Council (FIDC)

- FIDC is a representative body of **Asset and Loan Financing** of the NBFCs registered with the RBI.
- It works closely with the RBI and other financial regulators to represent the interests of the NBFC sector and promote responsible lending practices.
- FIDC has been active in policy advocacy, financial literacy, and capacity building for NBFCs.

Self-Regulatory Organisation (SRO)

- An SRO is a **non-governmental organisation** that sets and enforces rules and standards relating to the conduct of entities in the industry (members).
- It operates with the aim of protecting the customer and promoting ethics, equality, and professionalism.
- SROs typically collaborate with all stakeholders in framing rules and regulations.
- Their self-regulatory processes are administered through impartial mechanisms such that members operate in a disciplined environment and accept penal actions by the SRO.
- An SRO is expected to address concerns beyond the narrow self-interests of the industry, such as to protect workers, customers or other participants in the ecosystem.
- Regulations, standards, and dispute resolution and enforcement by an SRO get legitimacy not just by mutual agreement of its members, but also by the efficiency with which self-regulation is perceived to be administered.
- Such **regulations supplement, but do not replace**, applicable laws or regulations.
- The recognised SRO will serve as a two-way communication channel between its members and the RBI.
- It will work towards establishing minimum benchmarks, and standards and help instil professional and healthy market behaviour among its members.
- SROs will impart training to the staff of its members and others and will conduct awareness programmes.
- It will establish a uniform grievance redressal and dispute management framework across its members.
- By proactively addressing issues like market integrity, conduct, data privacy, cybersecurity, and risk management, SROs can help build trust among consumers, investors, and regulators.

SAIME Model

- A model of ***Sustainable Aquaculture in Mangrove Ecosystems (SAIME)*** developed by the Nature Environment and Wildlife Society (NEWS) in West Bengal's Sundarbans has been conferred Global Technical Recognition by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).
- The SAIME initiative in the Sundarbans is an **ecosystem-based, climate-adaptive and conservation-linked livelihood approach**, ensuring 5%–30% **mangrove coverage in aquaculture ponds**.
- This community participatory approach strikes a **balance between mangrove conservation and aquaculture-based livelihoods** in the context of climate change-induced sea-level rise.
- After a few years of implementation across 29.84 hectares of farm area by 42 fish farmers, the annual average net profit of farmers increased by over 100%, due to a significant reduction in production costs.
- Sustainable aquaculture assumes significance at a time when rampant shrimp farming is transforming land use in the Sundarbans.

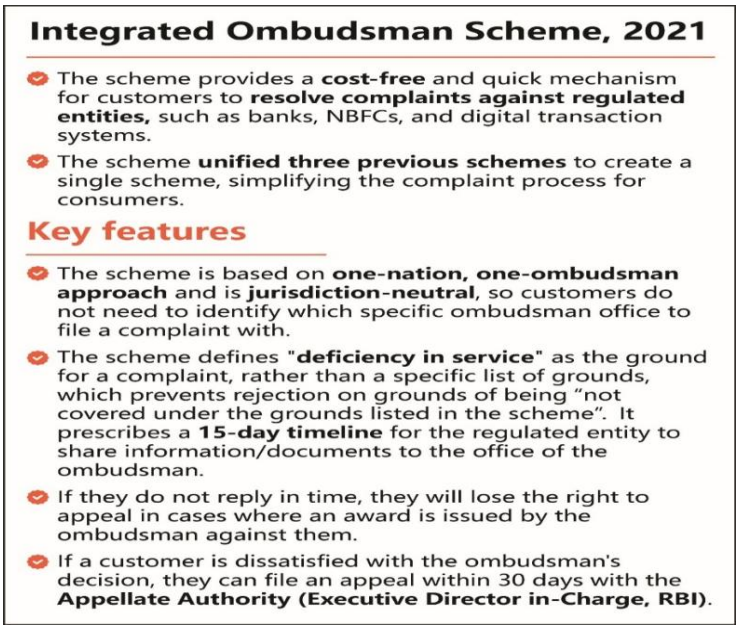
Expansion of Integrated Ombudsman Scheme

RBI has announced that State co-operative banks and Central co-operative banks will now be under the ambit of the Reserve Bank Integrated Ombudsman Scheme, 2021.

Coverage of the Scheme

- Now, the scheme will cover all commercial banks, regional rural banks, state co-operative banks, central co-operative banks, scheduled primary (urban) co-operative banks, and non-scheduled primary (urban) co-operative banks with a deposit size of Rs 50 crore.

- All non-banking financial companies -- excluding housing finance companies, which are authorized to accept deposits or have a customer interface, with an asset size of Rs 100 crore and above -- are covered under the scheme.
- Credit information companies are also covered under the scheme.



Amendments to RBI's Banking Regulations

RBI has announced major amendments to banking regulations. The changes aim to make the banking system more responsive, transparent, and flexible.

Floating-rate Loan Reforms

- Banks can now reduce the spread on floating-rate loans before the three-year lock-in period ends, allowing quicker transmission of policy rate cuts to customers.
- Borrowers may be offered an *option* to switch to fixed-rate loans at the time of interest rate reset, though this is no longer mandatory. This is intended to *quickly pass on the benefits of policy rate cuts to customers*, thereby reducing EMIs or interest payments.

Gold and Silver Loan Rule Changes

- The RBI amended its Lending Against Gold and Silver Collateral Directions issued in 2025.
- Banks & cooperative banks (Tier-3 & Tier-4) can now offer working capital loans to entities that use gold or silver for **industrial or production purposes**, not just jewellery manufacturing.
- This facility excludes individuals holding gold or silver for investment or speculation.
- Under the old rules, lending against primary gold or silver, and its financial instruments such as ETFs or mutual fund units, was prohibited.

Changes to Basel III and large Credit Exposures

- RBI has increased the eligible limit for **Perpetual Debt Instruments** (PDI) issued abroad, giving banks more flexibility to raise Tier-1 capital from international markets.
  - ✓ PDIs are long-term debt securities **issued by banks** that have no maturity date and pay interest indefinitely instead of repaying the principal
  - ✓ Perpetual debt issued in **foreign currency** or **in Indian rupees overseas** will be eligible for inclusion in banks' additional tier-1 capital of up to 1.5%of risk weighted assets
  - ✓ Additional tier-1 capital is the core capital of lenders.
  - ✓ Earlier, the RBI had set the *limit for such perpetual debt in bank capital* at 1.5% of risk assets but said that *less than half of this can be raised in foreign currency or in rupees overseas.*

Reforms in the Financial Markets And Rupee Internationalization

RBI has unveiled a series of measures to deepen the financial markets, allow banks a greater role in **corporate consolidation**, and take steps towards internationalising the rupee.

Boost to Capital Markets

- To give a boost to primary markets, lending limit for Initial Public Offering (IPO) financing has been raised from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 25 lakhs (per individual)
- The limit on loan against shares has also been raised to Rs 1 crore from Rs 20 lakh now.

- The last revision on loan against shares was made in 1998.

Expansion of Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVAs)

- The surplus balances in SRVAs can now be invested in **corporate bonds and commercial papers**.
- SRVAs, introduced in 2022, permitted invoicing and settlement of trade in rupees. Until now, idle balances could only be invested in government securities.
- Opening this window to corporate debt instruments not only gives foreign participants more options but also boosts liquidity in India's corporate bond market.

Banks allowed to finance corporate takeovers

- For decades, Indian banks were prohibited from lending directly for takeovers, on fears that promoters might misuse borrowed funds to wrest control of companies instead of deploying them for productive growth.
- As a result, takeover financing had been dominated by NBFCs, bond issuances or markets. Large firms often had to depend on the market or complex share swaps.
- This made the process difficult and limited the pace at which Indian corporates could consolidate or expand through mergers and acquisitions.
- By allowing banks to finance corporate takeovers, RBI is unlocking an entirely new financing channel for corporate India.
- With their deeper balance sheets and lower cost of funds compared to NBFCs or private funds, banks can provide large, structured loans to firms pursuing strategic acquisitions.

Internationalization of Rupee

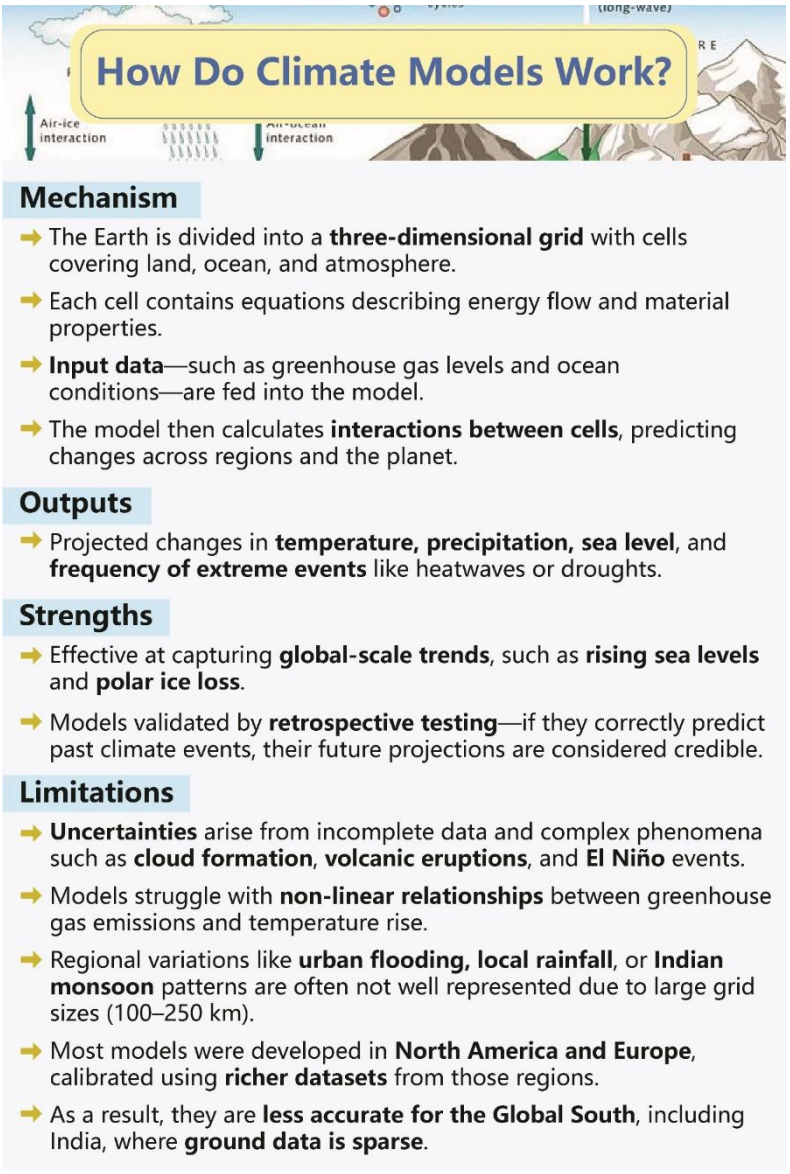
- **Rupee denominated loans:** Indian banks and their overseas branches can now lend in rupees to residents of neighbouring countries like **Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka** for trade related transactions.
- The move will help to reduce dependence on US dollar for settlements in regional trade.
- **Broader currency benchmarking:** RBI will include the currencies of India's major trading partners in its reference rate framework via **Financial Benchmarks India Limited** (FBIL) to establish transparent reference rates.
- This eliminates the need for multiple currency conversions and make trade more efficient. It will make pricing more predictable and strengthen the use of rupee in invoicing and settlement of international trade.
- Currently, FBIL publishes rates for US dollar, Euro, British Pound and Japanese Yen against INR.

The Debate on Climate Models

- During his speech at the UN General Assembly, U.S. President Donald Trump called climate change the greatest "con job" ever.
- He criticized the United Nations' climate predictions, calling them misleading and economically damaging.
- The remarks revived debate on the reliability and functioning of climate models, which form the scientific basis for climate projections.

About Climate Models

- **Climate models** are computer simulations that use **mathematical equations** to represent the Earth's climate system — atmosphere, oceans, land, and ice.
- They are built on the **principles of physics, chemistry, and biology**, and help scientists study past, present, and future climate changes.
- **Functions**
  - Forecast changes in temperature, humidity, rainfall, sea level, and ice cover under various scenarios.
  - Determine whether extreme weather events are due to natural variation or human-induced climate change.



US Sanctions on Russian Oil Firms and Their Impact on India

- The US imposed sanctions on Russian oil giants Rosneft and Lukoil, key suppliers of crude oil to India.
- Though India opposes unilateral sanctions, it often complies reluctantly with US measures — as seen earlier with Iran and Venezuela — due to fear of secondary sanctions.

About Secondary Sanctions

- Primary sanctions restrict dealings between US citizens/entities and sanctioned parties.
- Secondary sanctions target non-US entities (like Indian refiners) that continue to trade with sanctioned companies, effectively extending US jurisdiction beyond its borders.
- They are seen as "anti-circumvention measures", preventing third countries from bypassing sanctions and amplifying their effect.
- Such sanctions are controversial under international law due to their extraterritorial nature.

Why Secondary Sanctions Matter?

- The **US dollar's dominance** as the global reserve and trade currency gives Washington enormous leverage.
- Any firm that relies on **access to the US financial system, markets, or investors** risks being cut off if it violates sanctions.
- Consequently, **banks, insurers, and refiners** worldwide — including in India — tend to act with **"abundant caution."**

Impact of Secondary Sanctions on India's Refining Sector

- India imports **35% of its crude from Russia**, and over **two-thirds** of this comes from **Rosneft and Lukoil**.
- Sanctions could therefore **severely hit Indian imports** of discounted Russian crude. Companies like **Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL)** — responsible for nearly half of India's Russian oil imports — have **deep exposure to US markets** through:
  - Subsidiaries and investments in the US,
  - Dollar-denominated bonds,
  - Partnerships with firms like **Google, Meta, and Intel**.
- Public-sector refiners also rely heavily on the **US banking system** for dollar payments to suppliers, shippers, and insurers.

India's Official Stand

- India maintains that it will buy oil from wherever it gets the best deal, as long as the product itself is not sanctioned.
- However, the new US measures — even though they don't directly sanction Russian oil — will disrupt India's supplies, since Rosneft and Lukoil dominate Russia's output and exports.

Conclusion

- The US secondary sanctions threat has placed India in a difficult position — torn between energy security and financial system exposure.
- While India reiterates its strategic autonomy, its refiners and banks are expected to exercise extreme caution, likely leading to a sharp short-term decline in Russian oil imports.

Xi-Trump Meeting

- At the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in South Korea, US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping met for the first time since Trump's return to office.
- After the meeting, Trump announced that China agreed to maintain **global exports of rare earth minerals under a one-year deal**. He said this would remove supply worries for industries dependent on these materials.
- Additionally, the US will reduce tariffs on China—cutting the penalty on fentanyl-related trade from 20% to 10%, bringing the overall tariff rate down from 57% to 47%.
- Trump referred to the meeting as **"G-2",** equating the **US–China relationship to elite global groupings like the G-7 and G-20**.
- This was seen as a symbolic recognition of China's global power, something no previous US president had done publicly — a clear diplomatic win for Beijing.

Implications for India

- **Strategic Implications**
  - The US focus under Trump remains on managing China, signaling a new phase in US–China relations ***marked by both competition and cooperation***.
  - It is uncertain whether Trump prefers to confront China through alliances like the Quad (India, Japan, Australia, US) or unilaterally.

- **Trade Disadvantage for India**
  - With Trump reducing tariffs on China to 47%, India now faces the highest tariff rate of 50%, placing it at a trade disadvantage.
  - This makes a US–India trade agreement more urgent, as currently China enjoys better trade terms than India, despite being a strategic rival of the US.
- **India's Strategic Path Forward**
  - India must reassess its approach to both the US and China amid this shifting balance.
  - The strategy should be to:
    - Engage the US where interests align,
    - Explore economic cooperation with China selectively, and
    - Strengthen ties with Asia and Europe to enhance strategic autonomy.
  - The key challenge for Delhi is to navigate the evolving US–China dynamic with agility and independence.

Iran Joins UN Convention Against Terror Financing

- Iran ratified a law to join the **UN International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (CFT).**
  - The International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (1999) is a UN treaty.
  - It requires member countries to criminalize terrorism financing, freeze and seize related funds, and cooperate through intelligence sharing and prosecution to combat the funding of terrorist activities.
- The move aims to restore access to global banking, ease trade restrictions, and revive the sanctions-hit economy.
  - Non-membership in FATF (Financial Action Task Force) and CFT (Counter-Terrorist Financing) has complicated trade even with allies like Russia and China.
- Despite approval, uncertainty remains over whether FATF will delist Iran or if this will translate into tangible economic relief.
- **Background and Motivation**
  - President Masoud Pezeshkian, elected in 2024 on promises of economic reform and better ties with the West, is pushing to align Iran with FATF standards.
  - **Iran was blacklisted by FATF in 2020** — alongside North Korea and Myanmar
  - The blacklisting, combined with US-led sanctions, has isolated Iran's financial system and blocked international banking access.

Pakistan–Afghanistan Tensions

- Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan deteriorated in recent weeks due to border clashes, despite a temporary agreement in Doha.
- Islamabad blames the Afghan Taliban for harbouring the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which continues to launch attacks inside Pakistan.
- **Rising Violence and TTP Demands**
  - 2024 recorded the highest violence in a decade — over 1,600 deaths, including security personnel, mostly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (**KP**) and Balochistan.
  - The TTP demands: Reversal of the 2018 Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)–KP merger; Withdrawal of security forces, and Implementation of Sharia law in tribal areas.
  - The 2018 merger extended constitutional and judicial rights to the tribal areas — something the TTP seeks to undo.

- **Structural and Historical Roots**
  - **Colonial legacy**: The British created the FATA as a buffer between India and Afghanistan under the **Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR).**
  - Pakistan retained this structure post-1947, denying democratic governance and allowing military control from Islamabad and Rawalpindi.
  - The region became a strategic tool for Pakistan's Afghan policy, not a space for development — enabling extremism and militancy to grow.
- **The TTP–Afghan Taliban Connection**
  - The TTP emerged after the US invasion of Afghanistan (2001), when the Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda sought refuge in Pakistan's tribal areas.
  - The TTP supported the Afghan Taliban's war against the US, creating a longstanding ideological and operational alliance.
  - After the US withdrawal (2021), violence in Pakistan increased sharply as the Afghan Taliban refused to act against the TTP, prioritising its fight against Daesh (ISIS) instead.
- **The Deeper Problem**
  - The tribal belt is undergoing a social and demographic transformation that the state has failed to recognise.
  - Military-centric strategies of the past no longer work; political engagement and inclusive governance are essential.
  - Actions like attacking Afghan territory, expelling refugees, or closing borders will only alienate Afghans further, worsening instability.

Gaza Peace Summit in Egypt

- An international peace summit was convened in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, to finalise an agreement to end the Gaza war.
- The meeting was co-chaired by US President Trump and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, with participation from over 20 global leaders.
  - India had sent Kirti Vardhan Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs, as the Prime Minister's special envoy.
- The summit aimed to **restore peace and stability in West Asia** and **launch the second phase** of Trump's regional peace plan.
- The summit follows a **ceasefire** between **Israel and Hamas**, after three days of negotiations mediated by **Egypt, Qatar, Turkey, and the US**.
- **Absence of Key Parties**
  - Israel, Hamas, and the Palestinian Authority did not attend the summit.
  - The talks focused on international coordination and support for the ongoing peace process.
- **Challenges Ahead**
  - Key unresolved issues remain for later phases:
    - The future governance of Gaza,
    - Complete Israeli withdrawal, and
    - Hamas disarmament.
  - These will require further negotiations following the success of Phase One.
- **Global Significance**
  - The Sharm el-Sheikh summit is viewed as a critical diplomatic moment to consolidate global support for peace efforts, even as the main combatants remain absent.

- It marks an attempt to transition the region from war to reconstruction and stability, under a US-led framework.

[Also refer the topic "**Donald Trump's 20-Point Gaza Peace Plan**" from The Recital – September 2025.]

Resumption of India-China Flights

After more than five years, India and mainland China are set to restart direct flights by the end of October 2025.

India-China Direct Flights: From Suspension to Resumption

- Direct air connectivity between India and China was **suspended at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic**, which halted international travel worldwide.
- However, while other countries gradually restored air routes, flights between India and China remained grounded due to deteriorating bilateral ties following the **2020 Line of Actual Control (LAC) standoff**.
- India's reluctance to resume direct services stemmed from ongoing border tensions and diplomatic friction, even as China consistently pressed for their reinstatement.
- Momentum to restart the direct flight gained toward the end of 2024, when EAM S. Jaishankar and Wang Yi met in Rio de Janeiro on the sidelines of the G20 Summit.
- Their discussions followed a key breakthrough — a border patrolling arrangement, signalling de-escalation along the LAC.
- Soon after, PM Modi and President Xi Jinping met at the BRICS Summit in Russia, effectively paving the way for direct flight resumption — a symbolic and practical step toward normalising India-China ties.

"No Kings" Protests Sweep Across the United States

- Recently, massive "No Kings" demonstrations took place across major US cities — including New York, Washington DC, Chicago, Miami, Los Angeles, San Francisco — protesting what organisers called **President Donald Trump's slide into authoritarianism**.
- The protests, branded pro-democracy and anti-Trump, followed weeks of federal government shutdown and were the third mass mobilisation since Trump's return to power in January.
- Protesters carried placards reading "Democracy Not Monarchy", "Nothing is More Patriotic Than Protesting", and "The Constitution Is Not Optional."
- The rallies denounced Trump's expanding executive powers, military interventions in US cities, and crackdown on free speech.

Russia Tests Nuclear-Powered Underwater Drone 'Poseidon'

- Russian President Putin announced the successful test of the **Poseidon**, a nuclear-capable, underwater drone, marking Moscow's second nuclear weapons test within days.
- The test defied Trump's warnings, coming shortly after Russia tested the ***Burevestnik cruise missile***, which Putin said has an unlimited range.

- **About Poseidon**
  - Poseidon is an unmanned underwater torpedo capable of carrying a nuclear warhead of up to two megatons. It can:
    - Operate over 1 km deep underwater,
    - Travel at speeds up to 70 knots, and
    - Remain undetectable to existing defence systems.
  - Russia claimed no country could match its speed, range, or diving depth, and that it is impossible to intercept.

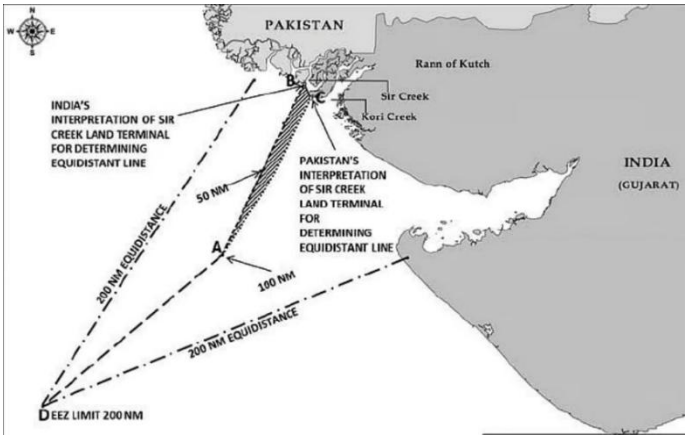
EU Leaders Invited as Chief Guests for Republic Day 2026

- In a first-ever move, India will invite EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and EU Council President Antonio Costa as chief guests for the 2026 Republic Day celebrations.
- The formal invitation and acceptance process is underway, with an announcement expected soon.
- The invitation is symbolic and strategic, reflecting the deepening India–EU relationship. This marks the first time EU leadership, representing all 27 member nations, will jointly attend the event.
- **Strengthening India–EU Ties**
  - India–EU relations have intensified in 2025, especially after the EU College of Commissioners' visit to India in February.
  - Recently, the EU approved a new strategic agenda to elevate bilateral ties — focusing on:
    - Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations,
    - Defence and technology cooperation,
    - People-to-people and educational exchanges.
  - The India–EU Leaders' Summit, originally planned for early 2026, will now coincide with the Republic Day visit.

Sir Creek Dispute

- During Vijaya Dashami celebrations at the Bhuj Military Station in Gujarat, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh issued a strong warning to Pakistan, stating that "any misadventure in the Sir Creek sector will invite a decisive response."
- Referring to the strategic location, he remarked that "the road to Karachi passes through the Creek," signalling India's readiness to counter any provocation.

The Sir Creek Dispute: A Legacy of Colonial-Era Boundaries



- Sir Creek is a narrow, less than **100 km-long tidal estuary** located between Gujarat's Rann of Kutch (India) and Sindh (Pakistan).
- It forms the westernmost border between the two countries, but control over it remains unresolved due to conflicting interpretations of maritime boundaries.
- **Colonial Roots of the Dispute**
  - The origins of the dispute trace back to pre-Independence India, when the Maharaja of Kutch ruled the region.
  - Differing interpretations of colonial-era maps and agreements led to overlapping territorial claims after Partition, sowing the seeds of the present conflict.

- **India claims** that the boundary should lie along the **mid-channel of Sir Creek**, effectively dividing the creek and adjacent marshlands equally.
  - This claim is supported by a **1925 map** and the **Thalweg principle**, which defines the border along the deepest navigable channel of a waterway.
- Pakistan, however, cites a 1914 resolution between the Rao of Kutch and the Sindh government, asserting that the eastern bank of the creek marks the boundary—giving it greater access toward Gujarat's coastal region.
  - Pakistan also disputes India's reliance on the Thalweg principle, arguing that Sir Creek is non-navigable and hence exempt from that rule.

Significance of Sir Creek

- Though small in size, **Sir Creek** lies at the **heart of an unresolved border dispute** between India and Pakistan.
- Its **strategic location and economic potential** make it vital for both nations, preventing a lasting settlement despite decades of dialogue.
- **Strategic Importance: A Gateway to Karachi and Beyond**
  - Sir Creek is critical to Pakistan's defence of Karachi, the country's economic and naval hub.
  - Following Operation Sindoor, Pakistan has strengthened its military presence in the region by constructing bunkers, radars, and forward bases capable of launching drones and infantry operations.
  - India has responded by maintaining a strong defensive deployment to deter any misadventure.
  - Beyond military concerns, **Sir Creek poses a terrorism risk** — the 2008 Mumbai attacks exposed vulnerabilities in coastal surveillance, as the attackers infiltrated India via sea routes from Pakistan.
- **Economic Importance: Energy, Fishing, and Maritime Rights**
  - The region is believed to **contain untapped oil and gas reserves**, which could be crucial for both economies.
  - For India, currently diversifying away from Russian oil, such reserves represent a strategic energy alternative.
  - The creek also supports rich fishing grounds, sustaining communities in Gujarat and Sindh.
  - However, the absence of a defined boundary leads to frequent arrests of fishermen who unintentionally cross into each other's waters, creating humanitarian and diplomatic tensions.
- **Impact on Maritime Claims**
  - The definition of the Sir Creek boundary directly affects the delimitation of the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of both nations in the Arabian Sea.
  - EEZs, extending 200 nautical miles from a country's coast, determine control over marine resources and seabed minerals.
  - Hence, settling the Sir Creek dispute is not merely a territorial issue—it is key to defining **sovereign maritime rights and accessing significant energy and resource wealth in the northern Arabian Sea**.

India–Australia Defence Ministers' Dialogue

Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh and Australian Deputy PM/Defence Minister Richard Marles held the **first Australia–India Defence Ministers' Dialogue** in Australia.

Key Outcomes

- **Institutionalisation**
  - There will now be an **annual Defence Ministers' Dialogue**.
  - New **Joint Staff Talks** to coordinate joint exercises and interoperability across all domains.
- **Maritime & submarine cooperation**
  - Both sides discussed a **Joint Maritime Security Collaboration Roadmap**.
  - Signed the **Implementing Arrangement on Mutual Submarine Rescue Support & Cooperation**.
  - Progress noted on **Air-to-Air Refuelling Agreement (signed 2024)**.
- **Exercises & training**
  - India participation in Australia's Exercise Talisman Sabre 2025 & invitation for 2027.
  - Australia took part in IAF's **Exercise Tarang Shakti 2024**.

- India to take part in submarine rescue Exercise **Black Carillon**.
- More Indian students to attend Australian Defence College (2026) + ADFA (Australian Defence Force Academy) placement from 2027.

- **Defence industry ties**
  - Both sides emphasised **defence industrial collaboration** and high-tech cooperation.
  - Australia held its **first defence trade mission to India (Oct 2025)**.
  - India offered **MRO for Australian Navy ships** in Indian shipyards.

Visit of the President of Mongolia to India

- India and Mongolia strengthened their strategic partnership during Mongolian President Khurelsukh Ukhnaa's visit to New Delhi.
- The visit marked **70 years of diplomatic relations** and **10 years of Strategic Partnership**.

Key highlights

- India reaffirmed funding support for the **US $1.7 billion Mongol oil refinery project**.
- **Defence ties to deepen**: more collaboration in exercises like Nomadic Elephant & Khaan Quest; India will establish a Defence Attaché Wing in Ulaanbaatar.
  - India also agreed to **train Mongolian armed forces**, launch new programmes for **border security forces**.
- **Free e-visas** will be given to Mongolian citizens.
- 10 agreements were signed — including in **culture, immigration, cooperatives, mining & geology, yoga**, humanitarian aid and preservation of **Bogd Khan Palace**.
- **Cultural ties to deepen**
  - MoU linking **Ladakh** (LAHDC) with Mongolia's **Arkhangai province**
  - Buddhist cooperation: holy relics of Sariputra & Maudgalyayana to be sent to Mongolia next year
  - A Sanskrit teacher will be posted to Gandan Monastery
  - Project to digitise 1 million ancient manuscripts; Nalanda–Gandan linkage
- India is exploring cooperation in **critical minerals, rare earths, digital tech and mining**.
  - Mongolia has large coking coal reserves; India examining transport options via **Tianjin (China)** or **Vladivostok (Russia)**.

India, Canada Agree to Restore Ties

- India and Canada have pressed the **reset button** on bilateral ties after years of tension. During Canadian Foreign Minister Anita Anand's visit to New Delhi — the first such visit in over 2 years — the two sides agreed on a **New Roadmap** to revive cooperation.
- In 2023, relations between India and Canada hit one of their lowest points in decades. The then Canadian PM Justin Trudeau claimed in Parliament that there was "credible potential" evidence suggesting Indian government involvement in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

Key Outcomes

- Both sides agreed to rebuild relations **based on mutual respect** and sensitivities (implied reference to Khalistan issue).
- They will restart **ministerial-level discussions** on trade & investment.
- **India-Canada CEOs Forum** to resume in early 2026.
- Energy dialogue to restart; cooperation renewed in **clean fuels, hydrogen, CCUS, LNG/LPG**.
- Expand collaboration in **civil nuclear energy**, including uranium supplies.
- New cooperation in **AI, digital infrastructure, critical minerals**; first Critical Minerals Dialogue in March 2026 (Toronto).

India Gets 6-Month Waiver on U.S. Sanctions Against Chabahar

- India has received a fresh six-month waiver from US sanctions on Iran's Chabahar port.
- The waiver — confirmed by the MEA — allows India to continue operating and supplying essential goods to Afghanistan via Chabahar.
- India has been working on Chabahar since 2005 and signed an MoU in 2015 to develop the Shahid Beheshti terminal.
- Earlier, the Trump administration had also granted a waiver in 2018, as the port was considered vital for supporting Afghanistan's development.
- However, with the Taliban takeover in 2021, the strategic equation changed, and the US State Department had announced the withdrawal of the waiver in September 2025, triggering concerns of sanctions under the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act.

47th ASEAN Summit

- The 47th ASEAN Summit concluded in Kuala Lumpur. It was chaired by Malaysia's PM Anwar Ibrahim.
- Leaders from ASEAN and its dialogue partners — Japan, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea — attended, along with Brazil, South Africa, and Canada.
    - The summit marked Trump's first ASEAN appearance since 2017.

Key Highlights

- **PM Modi's Absence and Diplomatic Fallout**
    - PM Modi skipped the summit — only the **second time since 2002** an Indian PM has done so — and addressed it **virtually**.
    - His absence was widely seen as an attempt to **avoid meeting Trump**, amid **strained India–US ties** over:
        - **Trade tariffs**,
        - Trump's claims of **brokering the India–Pakistan ceasefire**, and
        - His assertion that India agreed to **cut Russian oil imports** — all **denied by New Delhi**.
    - Skipping the summit hurt India's regional image, suggesting reluctance to engage directly in multilateral diplomacy.
    - The move undermined India's claim to regional leadership and allowed media in China and Pakistan to question its credibility.
    - India–ASEAN relations suffered indirectly, appearing hostage to India–US tensions — contradicting India's goal of strategic autonomy.
- **ASEAN-India Year of Maritime Cooperation**
    - While addressing the summit virtually, PM Modi declared 2026 as the "ASEAN-India Year of Maritime Cooperation".
    - He also outlined key priority areas:
        - Maritime security, HADR (Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief), and the blue economy.
        - Education, tourism, science & technology, health, green energy, and cyber security.
        - Cultural and people-to-people ties grounded in shared history and values.
        - Support for digital inclusion, food security, and resilient supply chains under ASEAN's theme of *"Inclusivity and Sustainability."*
- **ASEAN's Parallel Engagements**
    - The summit saw major US and Chinese diplomatic advances:
        - Trump signed trade deals with Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia, and Vietnam, reinforcing US engagement.
        - China signed ASEAN–China FTA 3.0, deepening regional economic ties. The new agreement expands cooperation to **digital trade, green economy, and emerging industries**.
- **Philippines to Lead ASEAN in 2026**
    - Malaysia handed over the ASEAN chairmanship to the Philippines at the conclusion of the Summit.
- **East Timor Joins ASEAN**
    - At the Summit, East Timor (Timor-Leste) was formally admitted as the 11th member of the ASEAN.
        - Located **north of Australia**, East Timor occupies the eastern half of Timor Island (the western part belongs to Indonesia).
    - The last expansion occurred in **1999**, when **Cambodia** joined.
- **Peace deal between Thailand and Cambodia**

- During the summit, a peace deal between Thailand and Cambodia was signed, resolving their long-**standing border dispute**

ASEAN

- It was established on 8 August 1967 in **Bangkok, Thailand**, through the **Bangkok Declaration**.
- Founding members: **Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand.**
- ASEAN now has **11 member states**: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, and **Timor Leste** (newest member).

Importance of ASEAN for India

- **Economic strength:** ASEAN's intra-trade (25–30%) is second only to the EU, making it a dynamic regional bloc. Rapidly growing economies make it a lucrative market.
- **Geopolitical importance**: Region is central to Indo-Pacific, through which 40–50% of India's trade passes.
- **Collective voice**: ASEAN's 11 members together represent **680 million people** and a **$3.8 trillion GDP**, making it one of the world's most dynamic regional blocs. It often speaks as one on global issues, amplifying its influence.
- **Connectivity projects**: India's Act East Policy focuses on infrastructure like:
  - India–Myanmar–Thailand Highway,
  - Kaladan Multi-Modal Project,
  - Sustainable tourism and cultural linkages.

India's IIAS Presidency - Proposal to Introduce an International Governance Index

- India, as the current President of the **International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS)**, has proposed the development of a new ***International Governance Index.***
- This initiative comes **amid India's declining rankings** in several existing global indices, which the government has often criticized for being **perception-based and lacking transparency**.

Key Highlights

- **Proposal of International Governance Index:**
  - Plans to leverage existing frameworks of the **World Bank (WB),** **OECD** (Organisation for

International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS):

- **About:**
  - ➡ The IIAS is **an international non-profit organization** created in 1930.
  - ➡ It is a Federation of **31 Member Countries** (including India, Japan, China, Germany and Saudi Arabia), 20 National Sections and 15 Academic Research Centres jointly **collaborating for scientific research on public administration**.
- **Working relationship with the UN**: While the **Brussels** (Belgium)-based IIAS is not a formally affiliated body of the UN, it actively engages with the UN's work in public administration.
- **India's participation**: The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (**DARPG**) represents India as a Member State of the IIAS since **1998**.
- **India's IIAS Presidency:**
  - ➡ **Many firsts:** This is the first time in the history of IIAS that the election to the post of President was held by **ballot process** and it is the first time that **India has secured the historic mandate** for the Presidency (for 2025-2028) of the IIAS.
  - ➡ **DARPG involvement**: It is spearheading the proposal, with IIAS President V. Srinivas highlighting the agenda for strengthening scientific strategy in governance measurement.

Concerns with Current Global Indices	India's Strategic Objectives
• **Subjectivity:** Reliance on perception-based data and expert opinions without adequate on-ground presence.	• **Rebalancing narratives**: Challenge dominance of Western-centric governance assessments.
• **Transparency issues:** Unclear weighting in credit rating agency assessments.	• **Bridging North-South divide:** Promote **inclusivity** and balanced representation of developing nations.
• **Bias**: Concentration of assessment by **Western institutions**, raising questions of contextual accuracy.	• **Governance reform agenda**: Align with the Indian government's vision of "**maximum governance, minimum government.**"

Economic Cooperation and Development) and **UN DESA** (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs).
    - **A working group will be formed**, and the agenda will be part of the IIAS Annual Conference 2026.
- **India's criticism of existing indices:**
    - In its reports, the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute of the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, has **listed India as an electoral autocracy** since 2017. The latest report (2025) ranked India **100** out of 179 countries.
    - **Freedom in the World Index** and **EIU Democracy Index** placed India at levels comparable to the emergency period.
    - **Economic Advisory Council to PM (2022)** highlighted lack of transparency in methodologies.
    - **World Governance Index (WGI)** covers over 200 economies with 6 parameters - voice and accountability, political stability & absence of violence/terrorism, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption. The 2023 WGI gives India the percentile rank of:
        - 51.47 for voice & accountability; 21.33 for political stability; 67.92 for government effectiveness; 47.17 for regulatory quality; 56.13 for rule of law and 41.51 for control of corruption.

Way Forward

- **Establishing methodology**: Ensure evidence-based, transparent, and inclusive metrics for governance.
- **International collaboration** with global bodies (World Bank, OECD, UN DESA) for credibility.
- **Strengthening domestic research**: Encourage **Indian think tanks** to develop independent indices.
- **Promoting inclusivity**: Incorporate perspectives from both developed and developing nations.

16th Session of the UN Conference on Trade and Development

- The 16th session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD16) was held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.
- Theme - "***Shaping the future: Driving economic transformation for equitable, inclusive and sustainable development***."
- It was co-hosted by **Switzerland and UNCTAD**.

Key Outcomes

- **Adoption of the Geneva Consensus**
    - The conference concluded with a landmark agreement titled "The Geneva Consensus for a Just and Sustainable Economic Order."
    - It reaffirms development as a global priority, centred on equity, inclusion, and sustainability.
- **Core Areas of Agreement under the Geneva Consensus**
    - **Trade -** Reaffirmed support for a rules-based, open, transparent, and equitable multilateral trading system.
    - **Investment** - Acknowledged declining global investment flows and the need for facilitation measures. Called for frameworks to reduce cost of capital and strengthen both domestic and foreign investment ecosystems.

UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development)

- **UNCTAD** is a permanent intergovernmental body of the **United Nations**, established in **1964**.
- It is a body within the United Nations Secretariat that reports to the UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.
- It works to promote **inclusive and sustainable development** through trade, investment, technology and finance.
- Headquarters: **Geneva, Switzerland**.
- **Major Reports Published by UNCTAD**

Trade and Development Report	World Investment Report	Digital Economy Report	Technology and Innovation Report	Least Developed Countries Report

- **Digital Economy** - Recognised rising digital inequality alongside technological opportunities. UNCTAD tasked with supporting developing countries on skills, digital infrastructure, and governance frameworks.
- **Debt and Financing for Development** - Member states agreed to **establish a Borrowers' Forum** to help developing nations coordinate and strengthen their voice in global debt discussions.
  - Announcement of the **Sevilla Forum on Debt** as a platform for addressing sovereign debt challenges.
- **Support for Vulnerable Economies**
  - **LDCs (least developed countries):** Dedicated graduation support programme.
  - **SIDS** (**small island developing states**): Tailored assistance for climate shocks and high transport costs.
  - **LLDCs (landlocked developing countries):** Continued support on trade facilitation and transit corridors.

- **Major Announcements**
  - **Saudi Arabia** to host the **2nd UN Global Supply Chain Forum** in **November 2026**, strengthening supply chain resilience and financing for small firms.
  - Switzerland pledged 4 million Swiss francs for **UNCTAD's e-commerce and digital work**.
  - Agreement signed with the Digital Cooperation Organization to support digital capacity-building and women's participation

19th NAM Mid-Term Ministerial Meeting

- Kirti Vardhan Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs and Environment, Forest and Climate Change, represented India at the 19th mid-term ministerial meeting of the **Non-Aligned Movement (NAM),** held in **Uganda.**
- The meeting was held under the theme **"Deepening Cooperation for Shared Global Affluence."**
- Uganda, which currently **chairs NAM for the 2024–26 term**, hosted this high-level gathering to reinforce **unity among developing nations**.

Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)

- It is an alliance of developing nations that do not align with any major global superpower.
- It was formally established in **1961** during the Cold War, with its origins traced back to the **Bandung Conference of 1955 in Indonesia**.
- NAM today has **121 member countries** — 54 from Africa, 39 from Asia, 26 from Latin America & the Caribbean, and 2 from Europe — along with Palestine (non-UN member), 18 observer states, and 10 observer organizations.
- India is a founding member, and NAM is the second-largest grouping of countries after the UN.
- The movement operates without a permanent secretariat, charter, or formal treaty, functioning instead on principles of political consensus and cooperation.

3rd India–Central Asia NSA Meeting

- The 3rd meeting of Secretaries of Security Councils / National Security Advisers was held in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic. India was represented by NSA Ajit Doval.
- Other participants included NSAs/Security Council Secretaries from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan (represented by Deputy Secretary).
- **Focus Areas of Discussion**
  - The meeting reaffirmed the need for **regular dialogue** to respond to evolving regional security threats.
  - Key areas of cooperation discussed: Counter-terrorism; Countering radicalisation & extremism; Narcotics trafficking; Security and stability in Afghanistan.
  - The countries agreed on the need for **close engagement with Afghanistan** on security, connectivity, and economic development.
- **Institutional Background**
  - The mechanism originates from the **1st India–Central Asia Summit** (January 2022).
  - Previous meetings:
    - **1st meeting:** December 2022 (New Delhi, India)

    - **2nd meeting:** October 2023 (Astana, Kazakhstan)
  - The **3rd meeting** was held following the **4th India–Central Asia Foreign Ministers' Meeting** (June 2025, New Delhi).
- The NSA dialogue in Bishkek highlights India's growing strategic engagement with Central Asia, particularly in counterterrorism coordination and regional security involving Afghanistan.

India to Host 2030 Commonwealth Games

- India is set to host the **centenary edition of the Commonwealth Games** (CWG) in 2030, with Ahmedabad proposed as the host city.
  - The 2026 CWG will be hosted by Glasgow, Scotland.
- This will be India's second time hosting the event after the 2010 CWG in New Delhi.
- The decision also aligns with India's broader ambition of bidding for the 2036 Olympics.
  - India has a strong record at the Games, finishing 4th at the Birmingham 2022 edition.

About the Commonwealth Games

- **Origin & Evolution**
  - The Commonwealth Games are the world's second-largest multi-sport event after the Olympics.
  - First held in 1930 in Hamilton, Canada, as the British Empire Game**s**.
  - It is held once every four years.
- **Renamed**
  - British Empire and Commonwealth Games (1954)
  - Commonwealth Games (from 1978)
- **Participants:** Athletes from 71 nations and territories of the Commonwealth.
- **Governing Body:** Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) oversees its organisation and direction.

UNESCO Launches Virtual Museum of Stolen Cultural Objects

UNESCO has launched a digital museum to document and reconnect communities with cultural heritage stolen through theft, trafficking, and colonial-era looting.The initiative aims to raise awareness, build public engagement, and support recovery and repatriation efforts.

- Launched at the MONDIACULT conference, it reinforces the idea that stolen artifacts represent a loss of identity for communities.
  - MONDIACULT is the acronym for the **UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development**.
  - It's the world's largest ministerial forum on cultural policy, bringing together UNESCO's 194 Member States to define the global agenda for culture.

- MONDIACULT 2025 conference was held in Barcelona, Spain.

G20 Disaster Risk Reduction Ministerial Meeting

- Dr. P. K. Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, led India's delegation at the **G20 DRR Ministerial Meeting hosted by South Africa**.
- The meeting adopted the declaration "**Resilience for All: Strengthening Disaster Risk Reduction through Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability**" on 13 October, coinciding with the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction.
- **India's Contributions and Message**
  - Dr. Mishra stressed that disaster risk reduction (DRR) is an investment in the future, not a cost.
  - He highlighted India's leadership in:
    - Establishing the G20 DRR Working Group (2023)
    - Expanding multi-hazard early warning systems
    - Using anticipatory financing
    - Promoting public-private partnerships
  - Reiterated India's global support through the **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)**, which has assisted 50 countries.
    - CDRI is a global partnership that promotes the resilience of infrastructure to climate and disaster risks. It was launched by India in 2019.
  - Dr. Mishra outlined India's integrated governance framework, embedding DRR into:

National Adaptation Plan	sectoral policies	dedicated financing structures

Clash Along Disputed Assam-Meghalaya Border

- A 44-year-old man from Tapat village in Assam's West Karbi Anglong, was killed during a clash between residents of Assam's Tapat and Meghalaya's Lapangap village in West Jaintia Hills, along a **disputed stretch of the Assam-Meghalaya border**.
- The site of the incident is among **six unresolved areas** along the **884.9 km Assam-Meghalaya border**, where tensions persist despite a 2022 MoU settling disputes in six other zones.

2022 Border Pact

- In March 2022, Assam and Meghalaya partially resolved their 50-year-old border dispute, settling differences in six of the 12 disputed sectors along their 884.9 km boundary.
- **Key Features**
  - The agreement covers **36.79 sq. km of disputed land**.
  - **Assam** will retain **18.51 sq. km**, while **Meghalaya** will receive **18.28 sq. km**.
  - Following the pact, **around 70% of the boundary** between the two states is now **dispute-free**.
  - Negotiations will continue over the **remaining six areas**, including **Langpih, Borduar, Nongwah, Matamur, Deshdemoreah Block I and Block II, and Khanduli**, which are more sensitive and complex.

Assam–Meghalaya Border Dispute: Historical Roots and Key Issues

- The Assam–Meghalaya border dispute dates back to the colonial era, when **undivided Assam included present-day Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, and Mizoram**.
- When Meghalaya was carved out of Assam as an autonomous state in 1970 and later became a full-fledged state in 1972, boundary differences arose.
- The separation was formalised under the **Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act of 1969**, which Meghalaya refused to accept.
- **Reasons Behind Meghalaya's Refusal to Accept the 1969 Act**
  - ✔ The 1969 Act was based on the recommendations of a 1951 committee that sought to define the boundary between the two states.
  - ✔ According to these recommendations, parts of East Jaintia Hills, Ri-Bhoi, and West Khasi Hills (in present-day Meghalaya) were transferred to Assam's Karbi Anglong and Kamrup districts.
  - ✔ After achieving statehood, **Meghalaya contested these transfers**, arguing that the areas historically belonged to indigenous tribal chieftains.
- **Assam's Position**
  - ✔ The Assam government has maintained that Meghalaya lacks documentary and archival evidence to substantiate its territorial claims.
  - ✔ Assam insists that the boundary defined in 1969 is legally valid and that Meghalaya's claims are not supported by historical or administrative records.
- **Extent of the Dispute**
  - ✔ Following years of **claims and counterclaims**, the boundary conflict was **narrowed down to 12 disputed sectors** in **2011**, covering parts of **West Khasi Hills, Ri-Bhoi, and Jaintia Hills** in Meghalaya and adjoining districts of Assam.
    These areas remain **points of contention**, occasionally triggering **tensions and clashes** between communities living along the border.

Efforts to Resolve the Assam–Meghalaya Border Dispute

- **Joint Official Committee (1983) -** To address the boundary dispute. It recommended that the Survey of India should re-delineate the border in consultation with both state governments.
- **Independent Panel (1985) -** Headed by Justice Y.V. Chandrachud. Meghalaya rejected the panel's report, citing disagreement with its findings.
- **Survey of India's Role and Partial Demarcation (1991)**- Around 100 km of the inter-state border was demarcated with the help of the Survey of India. Despite this technical effort, Meghalaya refused to accept the demarcation, keeping the dispute unresolved.
- **Central Intervention (2011)**
  - ✔ In 2011, the Meghalaya Assembly passed a resolution seeking the Centre's intervention and demanded the creation of a boundary commission.
  - ✔ The Union Government directed both states to appoint nodal officers to facilitate discussions and collect relevant records for negotiation.
- **Renewed Political Will (2021–2022)**
  - ✔ In June 2021, Assam and Meghalaya adopted a give-and-take approach to advance talks and formed three regional committees each, headed by cabinet ministers, to examine ground realities and gather local inputs.
  - ✔ Based on the committees' recommendations, a draft resolution was prepared in January 2022.

Maoist Movement's Waning Influence

- Nearly six decades after the Naxalbari uprising, India's Maoist insurgency is witnessing deep internal rifts and sustained government pressure.
- Union Home Minister Amit Shah has pledged to end the insurgency by March 2026, intensifying state action.
- Amid this backdrop, CPI (Maoist) ideological head **Mallojula Venugopal Rao** has twice urged the group to consider ending armed struggle to save the party. However, other leaders strongly rejected his stance, reaffirming commitment to armed rebellion.
- The contrasting positions highlight a weakening movement at odds over whether to persist with armed conflict or adapt to survive.

Maoist Insurgency: From Naxalbari to Decline (1967–2025)

- The Maoist-Naxal movement began in **Naxalbari, West Bengal**, on May 18, 1967, when armed peasants attacked landlords and seized land.
- Its ideologue, **Charu Mazumdar**, framed the "Historic Eight Documents," calling the Indian state bourgeois institution and urging a protracted revolutionary war on the model of **Mao** and Castro.
- The uprising split CPI(M), leading Mazumdar and **Kanu Sanyal** toform CPI (ML- Marxist-Leninist) in 1969.
  - ✔ CPI(M) had opposed armed struggle.
- However, a strong government crackdown saw leaders killed, arrested, or underground. Mazumdar died in police custody in 1972.
- **Spread Beyond Bengal**
  - ✔ Though it weakened in Bengal, the movement spread to Andhra Pradesh, Srikakulam, and later across central India — Maharashtra, Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and parts of Bengal.
  - ✔ The leadership became Telugu-dominated, mobilising youth and students, particularly from Warangal's Regional Engineering College in the 1970s, where many went underground to join the armed struggle.
- **Organisational Growth (1980s–2000s)**
  - ✔ In 1980, Kondapalli Seetaramaiah founded CPI(ML-PW) **People's War,** strengthening guerrilla warfare tactics.
  - ✔ The Maoists engaged in armed violence, extortion, destruction of infrastructure, and forced recruitment, including of children.
  - ✔ The insurgency peaked in the 2000s. The **People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA)** was formed in 2000 by the CPI(ML)-PW. In the 2004 CPI(ML)-PW merged with the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI) to form the Communist Party of India (Maoist) (CPI (Maoist)).
  - ✔ By the late 2000s, left-wing extremism affected ~180 districts across 92,000 sq km.
- **The Road Ahead**
  - ✔ After nearly six decades, the Maoist insurgency stands at a crossroads.
  - ✔ Once widespread and feared, it is now confined to shrinking strongholds, weakened leadership, and declining recruitment, marking what could be its final chapter.

Decline of the Maoist Movement

- The Maoist movement has been severely weakened by continuous operations of central armed forces and elite state police units.
- Top leaders like former General Secretary **Nambala Keshav Rao (Basvaraj)** and several Central Committee members have been killed this year, alongside many cadres.
- Maoist strongholds are now restricted to small pockets in **Bastar, Dandakaranya, and the Chhattisgarh-Telangana border**, with dwindling supplies of arms and ammunition.

[Also refer the topic "***Decline of Maoists in the Red Corridor***" from The Recitals – August 2025]

Conference on Extradition of Fugitives

- Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah participated in a two-day conference titled "Extradition of Fugitives – Challenges and Strategies" in New Delhi.
- The event was organized by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

- The aim of this conference was to enhance international police cooperation and expedite extradition of fugitives to India.
- This conference holds significance as India is intensifying efforts in **international criminal investigations**.
- There are **over 300 pending extradition requests** with various foreign countries.
- **Challenges Highlighted**
  - Delays in extradition proceedings abroad.
  - Fugitives misuse legal loopholes or parallel jurisdictions to evade return.
  - Many organized crime-linked offenders continue to operate from foreign soil.
- **Technology and Coordination Platforms**
  - Recently, MHA launched the BHARATPOL portal developed by CBI.
  - The platform integrates: State and district police units; Central law enforcement agencies; CBI.
  - It facilitates seamless information-sharing for faster action.

UN Troop Contributing Countries' (UNTCC) Chiefs Conclave

- India hosted the United Nations Troop Contributing Countries' (UNTCC) Chiefs Conclave at the Manekshaw Centre, New Delhi.
- The event aimed to strengthen global peacekeeping cooperation and position India at the centre of global peacekeeping discourse.
- The conclave coincides with **75 years of India's contribution to UN peacekeeping**, which began in **1948** with a medical mission during the Korean War.
- The conclave focused on:
  - Sharing best practices in peacekeeping.
  - Enhancing cooperation among troop-contributing countries.
  - Building a unified vision for future UN peace operations.
- **Participation**
  - Army chiefs from over 33 nations—mainly from the Global South and Europe—attended the conclave.
  - Invitees include Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bhutan, but China and Pakistan have not been invited.
- **India's Role in UN Peacekeeping**
  - India currently has about 5,500 personnel (men & women) deployed in 9 UN missions worldwide.
  - India has made the highest number of sacrifices among all troop-contributing nations, with 179 personnel losing their lives in service of global peace.
  - Experts highlighted India's evolution from a passive participant to an active stabiliser in conflict zones, reflecting its growing leadership in peace operations.

Saksham Counter-Unmanned Aerial System (CUAS) Grid

- The Indian Army has begun procurement of the indigenously developed 'Saksham' Counter-Unmanned Aerial System (CUAS) Grid, marking a major step in enhancing operational readiness against drone and aerial threats.
- Developed jointly with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), Ghaziabad, Saksham stands for Situational Awareness for Kinetic Soft and Hard Kill Assets Management.
- The system is designed to **detect, track, identify, and neutralise hostile drones** in real time.
- **Key Features of Saksham**
  - AI-enabled predictive threat analysis and real-time detection.
  - Integration of CUAS sensors and weapons for coordinated, automated response.
  - 3D battlefield visualisation and automated decision support for commanders.

- Ensures interoperability with other Army systems, including the Akashteer System, to map all friendly, neutral, and hostile airspace users.

- **Significance:** Represents a key milestone in the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative and the Army's Decade of Transformation (2023–2032).

Indian Army Inaugurates Tent-Based Homestay in Border Village Garbyang

- The Indian Army inaugurated a tent-based homestay facility in Garbyang village, Pithoragarh district, Uttarakhand.
- The initiative aims to promote sustainable tourism and enhance rural livelihoods under Operation Sadbhavana.
- Garbyang, known as the **Gateway to Gunji**, lies at the **tri-junction of India, Nepal, and Tibet**.
- It is a key point for pilgrims travelling to Adi Kailash and Om Parvat-Kalapani

Indian Navy Commissions INS Androth

- The Indian Navy commissioned INS Androth, the 2nd Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC), at the Naval Dockyard, Visakhapatnam.
- The first ship in the series, **INS Arnala**, was commissioned earlier in **June 2025**.
- Built by GRSE, Kolkata, INS Androth has over 80% indigenous content.
- It has capability for maritime surveillance, search and rescue, coastal defence, and Low Intensity Maritime Operations (LIMO).
- Named after **Androth Island** in Lakshadweep, it is known for its **strategic and historical maritime importance**.

Exercises

India–UK Naval Exercise Konkan-25	• The Indian Navy's Carrier Strike Group (CSG) led by INS Vikrant and the UK Royal Navy's CSG led by HMS Prince of Wales conducted their **first-ever bilateral carrier strike group exercise** — ***Konkan-25*** —off India's western coast. • **About Exercise Konkan** o Biennial naval exercise between India and the UK, initiated in 2004, named after India's Konkan coast. o This was the first edition to feature both nations' aircraft carrier groups operating together, a rare capability shared by only a few "blue-water, multi-carrier navies." • **Strategic Significance: Focus on the Indo-Pacific** o Reinforces India–UK alignment in ensuring security, stability, and freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region. o Demonstrates commitment to a rules-based maritime order amid regional geopolitical challenges. o Both sides co-lead the Maritime Security Pillar of India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI). • **Part of India–UK Vision 2035** which prioritises: o Defence and security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. o Establishment of a Regional Maritime Security Centre of Excellence (RMSCE).

	○ Joint military exercises, exchange of instructors, and logistics support across all services.
Tri-Service Exercise 'Trishul'	• The Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force launched a **major tri-service military exercise 'Trishul'** along the western border with Pakistan. • The drills span across Gujarat and Rajasthan, aiming to test joint operational capability, strategic preparedness, and inter-service interoperability. • Border Security Force (BSF) and Coast Guard are participating as auxiliary forces, reinforcing an integrated national security approach.
Exercise AUSTRAHIND 2025	• Indian Army contingent of 120 personnel participated in the 4th edition of Exercise AUSTRAHIND. This exercise was held at Perth, Australia. • Austrahind is an annual joint military exercise between the Indian and Australian armies, designed to improve military cooperation and interoperability. ○ The first edition was in 2022 in India. • The exercise focuses on sub-conventional warfare in urban and semi-urban terrain.

ENVIRONMENT AND GEOGRAPHY

Global Forest Resources Assessment (GFRA) 2025 Report

According to the Global Forest Resources Assessment (GFRA) 2025 report, India has jumped from 10th to 9th position globally in terms of total forest area, while remaining at 3rd position in terms of annual forest area growth.

About GFRA Report

- **Publishing Organization**: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).
- The 2025 edition analyzed forest-area trends over a 35-year period **covering three periods** 1990-2000, 2000-2015, and 2015-2025.
- **Importance of the report**: This report provides statistics and rankings on total forest areas, changes in forest areas (increase or decrease) and the rate of deforestation at the global level.

India's Ranking and Progress

Total Forest Area	Annual Net Gain in Forest Area
• **New position**: 9th place (in the world). Previously at 10th place. • India ranks ***fourth in forest carbon storage*** • The total forest area globally is about 4.14 billion hectares, which is about **32% of the Earth's total land area**. • More than ***half of the world's forest area (54%)*** is concentrated in just five countries: Russia, Brazil, Canada, the United States and China	• **Rank**: 3rd (in the world). • **Growth rate**: India has recorded an annual net forest area growth of about 191,000 hectares (0.191 million hectares). The other top 2 countries are: ○ China: 1.69 million hectares per year ○ Russian Federation: 0.942 million hectares per year

IUCN World Heritage Outlook 2025

The fourth edition of IUCN World Heritage Outlook (2025) was officially launched at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Abu Dhabi.

IUCN World Heritage Outlook 2025

- The IUCN World Heritage Outlook is a flagship initiative by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), in collaboration with its World Heritage Programme and the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA).
  - ✓ Armenia has officially joined the IUCN during the IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025.
- This report evaluates sites every 3-5 years to track their health, identify threats, highlight best practices, and offer recommendations for enhanced protection.
- **Conservation Outlook Categories**: Sites are rated on a four-point scale based on current status, threats, protection, and management effectiveness: (Conservation Outlook Breakdown (for 271 sites))
  1. **Good (46 Sites)**: Effective conservation with minimal threats.
  2. **Good with Some Concerns (119 Sites)**: Generally stable but with emerging issues.
  3. **Significant Concern (89 Sites)**: Serious threats impacting values.
  4. **Critical (17 Sites)**: Imminent risk of losing World Heritage values.

Positive Developments	Major Threats Identified
• **Enhanced management** has led to upgrades in sites like the Galápagos Islands (Ecuador), Yellowstone National Park (USA), Komodo National Park (Indonesia), and Aldabra • **Technological integrations**, such as AI for monitoring in the Okavango Delta (Botswana), have improved forecasting. • Natural sites contribute to global goals like **SDGs** (e.g., SDG 13 on Climate Action, SDG 15 on Life on Land)	• The report finds that 43% of sites face severe climate threats, while invasive alien species affect 30%, and wildlife and plant diseases are rising sharply, now impacting 9% of sites, up from just 2% in 2020.

India's National Red List Roadmap and Vision 2025–2030

The National Red List Roadmap was unveiled at the IUCN World Conservation Congress (WCC- "Olympics of Conservation") in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

About India's National Red List Roadmap

- This roadmap is a ***First-of-its-kind national effort*** assessing both flora and fauna, including terrestrial and marine biodiversity.
- **Objectives:** Systematically evaluate extinction risks for ~11,000 prioritized species (7,000 flora and 4,000 fauna) to create a National Red List.
  - ✓ Publish peer-reviewed National Red Data Books for flora and fauna by 2030
- **Government Bodies:** Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) as lead; ZSI (Zoological Survey of India) and BSI (Botanical Survey of India) as nodal agencies and Wildlife Institute of India (WII).
- The **roadmap aligns with**:
  - ✓ Convention on Biological Diversity (***CBD***);
  - ✓ Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (***KM-GBF***): Fulfills Target 4 (halting extinctions, genetic diversity protection, human-wildlife conflict management).
- Assessments follow ***IUCN Red List standards***, a scientifically rigorous system of classifying species based on extinction risk.

Blue Flag Certification

Five beaches in Maharashtra received the prestigious Blue Flag certification.

- ✓ As of October 2025, **India has 18 internationally recognized Blue Flag beaches** (including the recent 5 beaches in Maharashtra)
- ✓ ***Spain*** leads with 729 certified sites, followed by **Greece**
- ✓ **The Five Certified Beaches in Maharashtra are** Shrivardhan Beach, Nagaon Beach, Parnaka Beach, Guhagar Beach and Ladghar Beach. All are in Raigad district.

Extra Mile: Blue Flag Certificate-A symbol of environmental sustainability

- This certification is awarded **by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE)** in Denmark
- The program was launched in France in 1985, initially focusing on European beaches.
- It expanded globally in 2001 and has become one of the most recognized voluntary eco-awards in the world.
- The program was launched in India in 2018. In India, the campaign is implemented under the "**BEAMS**" (Beach Environment & Aesthetic Management Services) project of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
  - ✓ BEAMS was launched under the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project (ICZMP).
- Once a beach has earned the Blue Flag award, it is valid for one year/season and must be **renewed annually** based on compliance with the criteria.

- Compliance with **33 strict criteria** is required to obtain the Blue Flag certificate, which are divided into ***four main categorie***s:
  1. Environmental Education & Awareness
  2. Water Quality for Bathing
  3. Environmental Management
  4. Safety & Services
- The selection is made by an international jury representing **UNEP**, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (**UNWTO**), Foundation for Environmental Education (**FEE-** Denmark-based NGO**)** and **IUCN**.

Synchronous All India Elephant Estimation (SAIEE) 2021-25

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has conducted the ***country's first DNA-based population estimation of Asian elephants*** (Elephas maximus).

- ✓ The exercise is being conducted by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), under the aegis of Project Elephant (1992).
- ✓ The official publication is titled **"Status of Elephants in India: DNA-Based Synchronous All India Population Estimate of Elephants (SAIEE: 2021-2025)"**

Key Highlights of SAIEE

- The report estimates India's ***wild elephant population at 22,446*** (range: 18,255–26,645), a reported 18–25% decline from the 2017.
  - ✓ SAIEE highlights systemic threats to elephants (an **Endangered species**) on the IUCN Red List, listed under *Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and Appendix I of CITES*.
- SAIEE adopts *a standardized, technology-driven approach to overcome limitations of previous methods* (e.g., direct sightings, waterhole counts, dung-decay estimates), which varied regionally and led to inconsistencies.
- It uses ***non-invasive genetic sampling and spatial capture-recapture (SECR)*** modeling for accurate abundance estimates.

Landscape Wise and State-wise Distribution

Regional distribution (% of National Total)	State-wise
• **Western Ghats:** ~11,934 elephants (largest stronghold) (53%) • **North-Eastern Hills & Brahmaputra flood-plains**: ~6,559 elephants. (29%) • **Shivalik Hills & Gangetic plains**: ~2,062 elephants. (9%) • **Central India & Eastern Ghats**: ~1,891 elephants (8%)	• **Karnataka**: ~6,013 elephants (highest) • **Assam**: ~4,159 • **Tamil Nadu**: ~3,136 • **Kerala**: ~2,785 • **Uttarakhand**: ~1,792 • **Odisha**: ~912 ✓ Trends show declines in Odisha (-54%) and Jharkhand (-68%) due to habitat degradation but increases in Chhattisgarh (+82.6%) and Madhya Pradesh from migrations

Adaptation Gap Report 2025: "Running on Empty"

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) released its flagship Adaptation Gap Report (**AGR**)2025: "Running on Empty", just ahead of the COP30 climate negotiations in Belém, Brazil.

- ✓ It tracks global progress on climate adaptation planning, implementation, and finance, assessing how far the world is from achieving climate resilience goals.

- ✓ The report warns that adaptation of finance flows is "***running on empty***," leaving vulnerable populations exposed to irreversible risks.
- ✓ These findings highlight a ***"triple gap"***: ***finance, implementation, and governance***, with inflation and geopolitical shifts (e.g., Ukraine war's fiscal drain) exacerbating the divide.

Dimension	Key Findings
Finance Gap	• The adaptation finance needs of developing countries by 2035 are at least 12 times as much as current international public adaptation finance flows; • The Glasgow Climate Pact goal of doubling 2019 adaptation finance flows by 2025 to ~US$40 billion will be missed if current trends continue • **Current international public flows**: Dropped to US$26 billion in 2023 (from US$28 billion in 2022).
Planning & Implementation	• **Positive progress**: A total of 172 out of 197 countries worldwide have a national adaptation plan, strategy or policy in place. Out of the 25 that do not, only four have not started developing one. • However, 36 countries possess plans that are outdated or have not been updated for a decade.
Private Sector Role	• AGR 2025 examined the potential role of the private sector in bridging the adaptation finance gap. The private sector could contribute 15–20% of total adaptation needs (around US$50 billion annually of the US$310–365 billion required by 2035) though this share will vary by country and sector. Currently, private adaptation finance remains low (about US$5 billion per year).

Maitri-2: India's 4th Research Station In Antarctica

The Union Finance Ministry has given in-principal approval to the Maitri-2 project.

Key Features of Maitri II Project

- **Implementation**: The project will be planned by the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (**NCPOR**), Goa, under the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)
- **Location:** In the ***Schirmacher Oasis region*** of East Antarctica, near the existing Maitri Base.
- **Modern Facilities and Capacity:** larger and technologically more advanced than the current Maitri Base. It will include modern laboratories, accommodation, and sanitation facilities.
  - ✓ Approximately 90 scientists and staff members will be able to stay here during summer, and around 40 during winter.
  - ✓ **Automated Equipment:** The station will be equipped with **automated instruments**, enabling remote data transmission to India even when the station is unstaffed.
- **Long Operational Life:** This new research station is designed to operate for **30 to 45 years**, which is significantly longer than the existing Maitri Base.
- **Green Research Station:** The facility will utilize **renewable energy sources**, such as **solar power** and **wind energy** generated from strong Antarctic winds.

Extra Mile: Indian Antarctic Research Stations

Station	Location	Key Information
Dakshin Gangotri (1983)	Queen Maud Land	Decommissioned in 1990 after being buried under ice; currently used only as a **supply base**.

Maitri (1989)	Schirmacher Oasis	Initially built for 10 years but has been functional for over three decades; located near **Priyadarshini Lake**.
Bharati (2012)	Larsemann Hills, East Antarctica	Focused on **multi-disciplinary research**; equipped with **state-of-the-art technology systems**.
Maitri II (Expected 2029)	Near Schirmacher Oasis	Will replace the existing Maitri Station; envisioned as **India's largest and most advanced green research station**.

AmazonFACE Experiment

The Amazon Free-Air CO_2 Enrichment (AmazonFACE) experiment, launched near Manaus, Brazil, is a large-scale **climate simulation project** designed to study how the Amazon rainforest will respond to the elevated atmospheric CO_2 levels predicted for the future (around 2050–2060).

Methodology — Experimental Design & Instrumentation

- **Plot design:** Six large rings of metal towers are installed above canopy; each ring surrounds ~50–70 mature trees. Three rings will be enriched with CO_2 (treatment) and three will remain ambient (controls). Fumigation systems release CO_2 to reach target concentrations derived from emission scenarios.
- **High-frequency monitoring:** Sensors record CO_2, humidity, temperature, sap flow, leaf-level photosynthesis, soil fluxes and microclimate variables every few minutes to capture diurnal and event.
- **Interdisciplinary measurements:** Teams measure tree growth, leaf chemistry, root dynamics, microbial responses, insect and bird interactions.

Key Expected Findings (and Scientific Importance)

- **Short-term carbon fertilization vs long-term limits:** FACE experiments elsewhere often show initial photosynthetic stimulation under elevated CO_2, but nutrient (especially phosphorus in Amazon soils) or water limitations can reduce long-term carbon storage.
- **Hydrological implications:** Reduced stomatal conductance under higher CO_2 could lower transpiration per leaf area, but greater leaf area or growth could offset that.
- **Model improvement:** Empirical data from AmazonFACE will reduce uncertainty in Earth System Models about tropical carbon–climate feedback — crucial for 21st-century projection accuracy.

Green Fireworks

The Supreme Court eases the blanket ban on fireworks in Delhi-NCR to allow the use of NEERI and PESO-approved 'green fireworks' for Deepavali.

- ✓ **CSIR–NEERI:** Council of Scientific and Industrial Research – National Environmental Engineering Research Institute for Scientific development and emission testing.
- ✓ **PESO:** Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation: Authorisation for manufacturing and storage safety.

What Makes a Cracker "Green"?

- Green crackers are defined as having at least 30% reduction in Particulate Matter (PM), Sulfur Dioxide, and Nitrogen Dioxide emissions compared to traditional crackers.
  - ✓ Developed under CSIR-NEERI's TAPFIRE project (2018), green crackers minimise harm through reformulated chemistry.
- **Reduced Emission Formulations (REF):** Uses alternative oxidisers and low-emission chemicals (e.g., **Potassium Nitrate**, **Zinc**, **Magnesium**) instead of banned **Barium Nitrate**.
- **Elimination of toxic chemicals:** No use of **Lithium, Arsenic, Lead, Mercury**, or **Barium** compounds
- **Reduced Particulate Matter (PM):** Emission reduction: **~30% less particulate matter and gaseous pollutants** (SO_2, NO_x, CO).

- **Noise control:** Sound intensity maintained **below 125 decibels** at a 4-metre distance.
- **QR-code based certification:** Each approved product carries a **unique NEERI QR code** for traceability and authenticity.

Types of Green Crackers

Type	Description	Emission Reduction
SWAS (Safe Water Releaser)	Releases water vapour to suppress dust & particulate matter.	~30–35%
STAR (Safe Thermite Cracker)	Produces minimal NOx and SO_2, emits thermite reactions with less smoke.	~35–40%
SAFAL (Safe Minimal Aluminium)	Reduces aluminium usage to control smoke and PM emission.	~25–30%

The Axial Seamount

Scientists from the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) reported renewed volcanic activity at the Axial Seamount, an underwater volcano located off the U.S. Pacific Northwest coast.

Geological Characteristics of the Axial Seamount

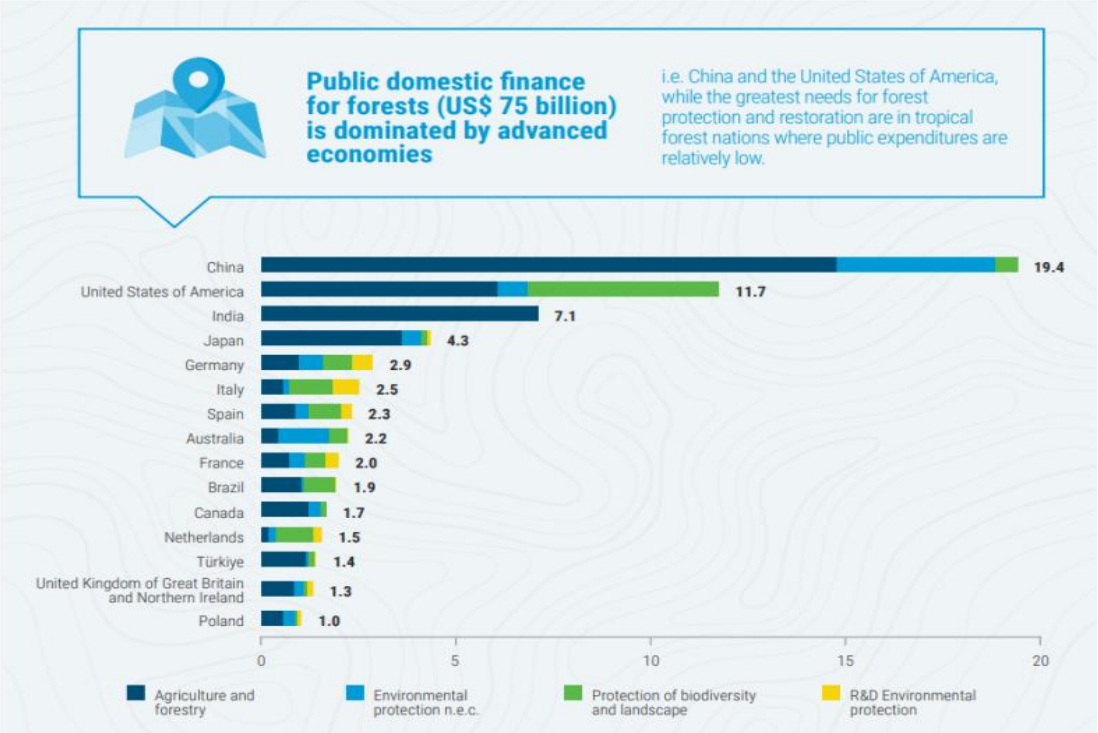
- **Tectonic Setting**: Axial Seamount lies along a **spreading center (mid-ocean ridge)** where the **Juan de Fuca Plate diverges from the Pacific Plate**. (between the Pacific Plate (west) and the North American Plate (east))
  - ✓ As the plates move apart, **magma rises** from the mantle, forming new oceanic crust.
- **Morphology:** It is an **underwater shield volcano** with a large, rectangular **caldera** (central crater) at its summit, which lies about 1,400 meters below sea level.
- **Hydrothermal Vent Ecosystems**: Axial Seamount hosts ***unique chemosynthetic ecosystems***, where organisms derive energy from **hydrogen sulfide and methane**, not sunlight.
- **Biodiversity Hotspot**: These ecosystems are **analogues for early Earth and extraterrestrial life**, aiding **astrobiology research**.
- **NeMO:** It hosts the world's first underwater volcanic observatory, the **New Millennium Observatory (NeMO)**.

State of Finance for Forests (SFF) 2025 Report

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) released the first State of Finance for Forests (SFF) 2025 Report.

Highlights of the State of Finance for Forests (SFF) 2025 Report

- **Underfunding:** Global forest investment must triple by 2030 to meet climate and biodiversity goals, from the current ~$84 billion annually to ~$300 billion.
- The report reveals severe underfunding, with only ~$14 billion invested in 2023 (91% public, 9% private), a lack of private sector participation, and continued harmful subsidies
- **Public finance dominance:** Governments, primarily China and the U.S., provided the majority of the funding. Tropical forest nations contributed only about 17% of their own domestic spending.
- **Harmful subsidies:** The report notes that environmentally harmful agricultural subsidies reached $500 billion in 2023, a flow that works against forest conservation efforts.



#23for23 Initiative

The #23for23 Initiative was launched on the occasion of International Snow Leopard Day (23 October 2025) to promote the conservation of the Snow Leopard and its high-altitude mountain ecosystems.

Core Objectives and Mechanism

- The central tenet of the campaign is to encourage citizens, institutions, and the military across the country to dedicate 23 minutes of physical activity (walking, running, cycling, yoga, etc.)
- **Organizational Backing:** The campaign is an initiative of the **Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Programme (GSLEP)** and the **Snow Leopard Trust**, with celebrations in India led by the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**.

Significance for Snow Leopard Conservation

- **First National Census (2019-2023):** The campaign highlighted the release of India's **first-ever Snow Leopard Census (Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India - SPAI)**, which recorded **718 individual snow leopards** across the Indian Himalayas (with Ladakh hosting the highest population).
- **Global Commitment:** It reaffirms India's dedication to the goals of the **GSLEP**, an intergovernmental alliance of the 12 snow leopard range countries, and aligns with national programs like **Project Snow Leopard** and the **SECURE Himalaya** project

Conservation Status: The Snow Leopard is listed as **Vulnerable** on the **IUCN** Red List of Threatened Species.

The snow leopard is listed in CITES Appendix I since 1975 and Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) Appendix I since 1986.

Species in News

Green Sea Turtle	According to the IUCN, Global green sea turtle population has increased by 28 per cent since 1970s. • **Diet**: The only species of sea turtle that is largely herbivorous as an adult, feeding primarily on seagrasses and algae.

	• **Habitat**: Adults typically inhabit shallow coastal waters, lagoons, coral reefs, and seagrass meadows. ✓ **Global Range:** Found in tropical and subtropical seas worldwide, including the Atlantic, Pacific, Indian Oceans, and the Mediterranean Sea. ✓ **Presence in India:** Common along eastern coastlines (Odisha) and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. • **Ecological Importance**: They are keystone species in marine ecosystems. By grazing on seagrasses, they prevent overgrowth • **IUCN Status**: The Red List status has improved from Endangered to Least Concern due to sustained conservation.
Blackbuck 	After being declared locally extinct for nearly 50 years, the blackbuck has made a comeback in Chhattisgarh's Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary. • **Key Features:** Blackbucks are known for the **striking contrast** between the male's black and white coats and the distinctive, **ringed, spiral horns.** • **Habitat:** They are endemic to the Indian subcontinent and thrive primarily in **grasslands and open scrub forests** • **Indicator of Biodiversity Health**: Their presence signals **improved predator–prey dynamics** (foxes, jackals, and occasional leopards) and **better vegetative diversity**. • **IUCN Red List Status: Least Concern** (Globally, due to significant recovery efforts, though localized threats persist).

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Research Development and Innovation Scheme

The Executive Council of Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) recently approved a **Special Purpose Fund (SPF)** under the **Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Scheme.**

About Research Development and Innovation Scheme:

- **Corpus**: ₹1 Lakh Crore
- **Nodal Ministry**: Department of Science & Technology (DST) **| Implementing Agency:** ANRF
- **Key Objectives**: Provide low or zero-interest financing to boost private R&D in sunrise and strategic sectors; fund high-Technology Readiness Level (TRL) projects; support acquisition of critical technologies; and establish a Deep-Tech Fund of Funds to strengthen innovation financing.
- **Governance:** by the Governing Board of ANRF **chaired by the Prime Minister.**
- **Funding Structure: Special Purpose Fund (SPF) under ANRF** will act as a custodian of corpus. It will channel capital to **Second-level fund managers like Alternative Investment Funds** (AIF), **Development Finance Institutions** (DFI), NBFCs which will provide concessional loans or equity to projects/startups.

SPARK-4.0 Initiative

Recently, the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS), Ministry of Ayush, has announced SPARK–4.0 (2025-26)- "Studentship Program for Ayurveda Research Ken" initiative.

Objective of SPARK 4.0: To promote scientific curiosity, research aptitude, and analytical skills among *undergraduate Ayurveda students* by providing hands-on experience in research methodology and short-term independent projects.

Beneficiaries: 300 Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery (BAMS) students from National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM)-recognized colleges (1^{st}-4^{th} year before final exams)

Studentship Value: ₹50,000 (₹25,000 per month for 2 months) paid after completion and approval of final report

Mentorship: Each student will conduct research under a full-time faculty guide within their own college.

Eligibility Restrictions: Only Indian nationals studying in recognized Ayurveda colleges;

- ✓ Interns, PG students, and NRIs not eligible; Only two students allowed per guide; no group projects.

DRAVYA Portal

In its first phase, the DRAVYA portal aims to catalogue information on 100 key medicinal substances.

About DRAVYA Portal (Digitized Retrieval Application for Versatile Yardstick of Ayush)

- **Launched by**: Ministry of Ayush
- **Implementing Agency:** Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS)
- **Objective:** To create a digital, AI-ready knowledge repository that catalogues and standardizes information on Ayush medicinal substances, integrating both classical texts and modern scientific research.
- **Key Features:**
  - **Comprehensive Database:** Covers details on Ayurvedic pharmacology, botany, chemistry, pharmacy, safety, and pharmacotherapeutics with continuous data updates for accuracy and authenticity.
  - **AI Integration:** Designed to be AI-ready, enabling data analytics and innovation in Ayush research.
  - **Interlinkages**: To be connected with Ayush Grid and other national initiatives on drug policy and medicinal plants.
  - **QR Code Integration**: Facilitates standardized information access in medicinal plant gardens and drug repositories.

- **User-Friendly & Open Access**: Intuitive interface accessible to researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and students.

AgriEnIcs Programme

MeitY recently announced the transfer of technology under the AgriEnIcs Programme.

About AgriEnIcs Programme:

- **Nodal Ministry:** MeitY
- **Implementing Agency: Centre for Development of Advanced Computing** (C-DAC), Kolkata.
- **Objective:** To develop and deploy **Electronics and ICT-based solutions** for **agriculture and environment**, enhancing productivity, quality, and sustainability through AI, IoT, and sensor technologies.
- **Key Technologies:**
  - **Go-P (**Cattle health monitoring device**) & MAST-D (**mastitis detection devices).
  - **Grain-Ex, CT-Vieu & RIGE-Sense:** AI-based systems for quality analysis of pulses, chilli, and rice respectively
  - **Odour Monitoring System:** Real-time gas-sensor device for municipal solid waste sites, industrial waste processing units, and landfill areas.

Indian Radio Software Architecture Standard

Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO), in collaboration with the Integrated Defence Staff and the Tri-Services released ***Indian Radio Software Architecture (IRSA) standard 1.0.***

About IRSA

IRSA is India's first national specification for **Software-Defined Radios (SDRs)**. It ensures **interoperability, waveform portability, and self-reliance** in military communication systems.

✓ *SDR is a flexible radio communication system where software, rather than hardware, handles signal processing and conversion*. Unlike traditional radios, SDRs are highly versatile and support modern wireless connectivity.

Key Features of IRSA:

- Based on global **Software Communications Architecture** (**SCA 4.1)** standards for uniform SDR software design.
- Defines common **APIs**, **execution environments**, and **transfer mechanisms** (like CORBA, MHAL).
- Introduces **Radio Profiles** for different SDR types and **indices** like Waveform Portability and Platform Hospitality.
- Promotes **secure, scalable, and indigenous** SDR ecosystem.

Interstellar Mapping and Acceleration Probe

Recently, NASA launched the Interstellar Mapping and Acceleration Probe (IMAP) to show how solar particles are energized and shield us.

Objective: To **map the heliosphere's boundary (**the bubble-like region formed by the **solar wind** that shields the solar system from cosmic radiation**)** and study **particle acceleration and solar wind-interstellar interaction**.

Key Features:

- It is equipped with **10 instruments** detecting neutral atoms, charged particles, magnetic fields, and dust.
- It will operate from **Sun-Earth L1 point** for continuous observation.
- It will provide **real-time space weather data** and help predict **solar storms**.
- It will produce the **most detailed map of the heliosphere**, improving understanding of Earth's **cosmic protection**.
- It will aid in **space weather forecasting**, **satellite safety**, and **future human space missions**.

Phosphine

Recently, astronomers using the James Webb Space Telescope have detected phosphine (PH3) in the atmosphere of brown dwarf Wolf 1130C.

About Phosphine (PH3 / Hydrogen Phosphide)

- **Nature:** Colourless, flammable, and highly toxic gas with a garlic/fish-like odour; slightly soluble in water.
- **Formation:** Produced naturally by **anaerobic bacteria** and artificially by reacting **to white phosphorus or calcium phosphide with water**.
- **Occurrence:** Found on **Earth** (biogenic) and in **Jupiter & Saturn's atmosphere** (chemical origin).
- **Uses:** Employed in **semiconductors**, **flame retardants**, and as a **fumigant pesticide** for stored grains.

Cassini Spacecraft

A fresh look at data collected by NASA's Cassini spacecraft has uncovered more evidence that Saturn's moon Enceladus may be able to support life.

✓ Scientists believe Enceladu's hydrothermal vents and mineral-rich waters may host conditions suitable for life.

About Cassini (Sophisticated Robotic Spacecraft)

- **Launched:** in **1997** as one of the largest interplanetary spacecraft by **NASA, the European Space Agency** and the **Italian space agency** (ASI).
- **Objectives:**
  - **Saturn:** To study its atmosphere, structure and rotation, ionosphere, origin, and evolution.
  - **Rings:** Examine their composition, dynamics, and ring-moon interactions.
  - **Titan (largest moon of Saturn):** Analyze atmosphere, weather, and surface composition.
  - **Magnetosphere:** Investigate structure, particles, and solar wind interaction.
- **Components:**
  - **Cassini Orbiter (NASA):** First to orbit **Saturn**. It consisted of a radar (for Titan mapping), magnetometer, cameras, spectrometers.
  - **Huygens Probe (ESA):** Landed on **Titan**. It consisted of six instruments for Titan's atmosphere and surface studies.

False Smut Disease

Due to incessant rain and subsequent floods, the paddy crop- currently at its maturing and harvesting stage, has been infested with false smut disease, causing widespread damage across Punjab.

About False Smut Disease of Rice (Haldi Rog/ Lakshmi disease)

- **Causal Organism**: fungal disease.
- **Favourable Conditions:** Warm (25–35°C), humid (>85%), rainy weather, high N fertilizer, poor drainage.
- **Impact:** Grain chalkiness, low weight, poor germination; yield loss of **7–25% (up to 75%)**.
- **Management**: Use clean, resistant seeds, maintain field sanitation, apply balanced fertilizers (avoid excess N), practice AWD (Alternate Wetting and Drying) irrigation, and spray fungicides (propiconazole/tebuconazole) at boot or early flowering stage for timely control.

Trichloroethylene (TCE)

Long-term exposure to the industrial solvent trichloroethylene (TCE) outdoors may be linked to an increased risk of Parkinson's disease.

Parkinsons is a progressive neurodegenerative disorder that damages brain neurons, causing movement problems such as tremors, stiffness, and balance issues. As it advances, walking, talking, and daily tasks become difficult.

About Trichloroethylene (TCE):

- **Nature:** Volatile, colorless synthetic solvent; does not occur naturally.
- **Uses:** Industrial degreasing, refrigerant production, and found in cleaners, aerosols, paint removers, and dry-cleaning products.
- **Exposure:** Present in air, soil, and groundwater **at places where it is produced** or used; enters the body via inhalation or contaminated water/food.
- **Health Effects:** Causes **kidney cancer**, possible **liver cancer** and **non-Hodgkin lymphoma**; **reproductive harm**, and **immune/genetic toxicity**.
- **Environmental Impact: Persistent and mobile**, contaminates groundwater and indoor air.
- **Regulation: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** has restricted its use
  - ✓ In India, covered under **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986** and **Hazardous & Other Waste Rules**.

Mono Ethylene Glycol (MEG)

The textile industry has appealed to the government not to levy anti-dumping duty on Mono Ethylene Glycol (MEG)- one of the main raw materials used in the production of polyester fibre and filament

About Mono Ethylene Glycol (MEG- $C_2H_6O_2$ also known as Ethylene Glycol):

It is a clear, colorless, odorless, and syrupy liquid with a sweet taste. It is produced by reacting ethylene oxide with water and is fully miscible with water and many organic compounds.

Key Uses:

- Major raw material for **polyester fibres, films, and polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastics**.
- Used in **antifreeze, coolants, de-icing fluids**, and as a **heat transfer agent**.
- Acts as a **humectant (retains moisture) and solvent** in textiles, paper, adhesives, and paints.

Hazards: Toxic if ingested; affects central nervous system, heart and kidneys.

Global relevance: Vital for polyester and PET industries- highest consumption in China.

Diethylene Glycol (DEG)

At least 14 children in India's Madhya Pradesh died after consuming Coldrif syrup, found to contain a toxic contaminant, diethylene glycol (DEG).

About Diethylene Glycol ($C_4H_{10}O_3$ also known as Di glycol)

- **Properties:** Clear, colourless, odourless, hygroscopic liquid; soluble in water and many organic compounds.
- **Uses:** Commonly used in **antifreeze, brake fluids, and industrial solvents-** not meant for human consumption.
- **Toxicity:** When ingested, metabolized into toxic compounds causing **acute kidney injury, anuria** (inability to urinate)**, and death.**
- **Symptoms:** Nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, lethargy, and rapid progression to **renal failure.**

Online National Drugs licensing system (ONDLS) Portal

While 18 State drug authorities have adopted the Online National Drugs Licensing System (ONDLS), none have fully complied with the Corrective and Preventive Action (CAPA) guidelines, according to the Union Health Ministry.

About Online National Drugs licensing system (ONDLS) Portal:

It is a single-window digital platform for processing **drug-related licences** across India developed by Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC) in partnership with CDSCO (Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare), and State/UT Drug Authorities.

Objective: To ensure uniform, transparent, and accountable drug licensing nationwide.

Functions: Handles applications for manufacturing, sales, and blood bank licences; issues certificates like COPP (*Certificate of Pharmaceutical Product*), GMP (*Good Manufacturing Practices*), WHO-GMP, Market Standing Certificate, etc.; manages post-approval changes.

Significance: Standardizes document requirements and licence issuance procedures across all States and UTs.

Crohn's Disease

Recent research suggests that diets high in ultra processed foods (UPFs) may worsen inflammation in the gut and raise the risk of Crohn's disease flare ups.

About Crohn's Disease:

- **Nature**: It is a Chronic **Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD)** causing inflammation anywhere from **mouth to anus**, usually in the **small intestine**.
- **Pathology**: Inflammation extends **deep into bowel layers**, leading to **pain, diarrhea, and weight loss.**
- **Target Age Group:** Common in **young adults (20–29 yrs)**.
- **Cause:** Unknown; linked to **genes, immune reaction, and gut microbiome**.
- **Treatment: No cure**; managed with **medications, diet, and therapy** for long-term remission.

Insecure Direct Object Reference (IDOR)

A serious data leak was narrowly avoided after the Indian government fixed a major security flaw known as an IDOR, or "insecure direct object reference," in its income tax e-filing portal.

What is Insecure Direct Object Reference (IDOR)?

It is a web security flaw where **internal object identifiers** (like user IDs, database keys or file paths) are exposed to users without proper access control.

Cause: Inadequate validation and authorization of user input.

Effect: Attackers can modify identifiers to access or modify others' data.

Example: Changing user_id=101 to user_id=102 in a URL to view another user's account.

Prevention: Implement strict access controls and validate all user requests on the server side.

Zombie Deer Disease

Health officials in Florida recently have confirmed cases of Chronic Wasting Disease, commonly known as "Zombie Deer Disease."

What is Zombie Deer Disease?

It is a **fatal prion disease** affecting **deer, elk, moose, and reindeer that** causes **brain damage**, **weight loss**, **behavioral changes**, **drooling**, and **death**.

Cause: Misfolded prion proteins- a protein infectious particle that is found in some tissues of infected animals.

Spread: Through **saliva, urine, feces, blood**, and **contaminated soil/water/plants**. **Scavengers and hunters** using deer-urine lures can spread it.

Human Risk: No confirmed human cases, but **potential risk** cannot be ruled out.

Symptoms in Animals: Wasting, stumbling, drooping ears, drooling, listlessness.

Treatment: No cure or vaccine available.

Calcium Carbide

More than 60 people, primarily children, were hospitalized in Bhopal following severe injuries sustained from the use of makeshift "calcium carbide guns" during Diwali celebrations.

About Calcium Carbide (CaC2):

- **Appearance:** Grayish-black solid with garlic-like odor (due to impurities).
- **Preparation:** Made by heating lime and coke at 2000-2100°C in an electric arc furnace.

- **Main Use:** Produces **acetylene gas (C_2H_2)** when reacts with water and is used in welding, metal cutting, and steel making.
- **Illegal Use:** As an **artificial fruit ripening agent** ("masala").
- **Health Hazards:** Causes irritation, dizziness, vomiting; leaves toxic **arsenic & phosphorus residues** on fruits due to impurities.
- **Legal Status: Banned** for fruit ripening under the Prevention of Food Adulteration Rules, 1955, and also under the **Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restrictions on Sales) Regulations, 2011**.

Intrusion Detection System

Recently, the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has successfully completed trial works of the Intrusion Detection System (IDS) in four key sections.

About Intrusion Detection System:

- **Technology Used:** Sensor and AI-based system using optical-fibre cables to detect vibrations caused by elephants near or on railway tracks.
- **Objective:** To protect wildlife and maintain operational efficiency, especially in areas where railway lines pass through forested and elephant-inhabited zones.
- **Function:** sends real-time alerts to loco-pilots, station masters, and control rooms to slow down or halt trains.

Fibromyalgia

It is a **long-term (chronic) health condition** causing widespread muscle pain, fatigue, sleep, and mood issues.
Causes: Unknown; linked to genetics, stress, trauma, and abnormal brain pain signals.
Risk: Women, age > 40, family history, chronic illness.
Symptoms: Body pain > 3 months, tiredness, poor sleep, "fibro fog," headaches, depression.
Diagnosis: No specific test; based on symptoms.
Treatment: Pain meds, exercise, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), stress control.

Skilling for AI Readiness (SOAR) Programme

India is taking a major step toward building an AI-ready generation through the Skilling for AI Readiness (SOAR) programme.

About Skilling for AI Readiness (SOAR) Programme:

- **Launched by:** Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) in July 2025.
- **Aim:** Build an *AI-ready generation* under *Skill India Mission (10-year milestone)*.
- **Target:** Students (Classes 6-12) & teachers nationwide.
- **Modules:** It will offer 3 targeted modules (15 hrs each) for students; 1 module (45 hrs) for teachers focusing on basics of AI, Machine Learning, data literacy, ethics in tech use.
- **Budget:** ₹500 crore for *Centre of Excellence in AI for Education*.
- **Goals:** To integrate AI into school education & training; promote responsible, innovation-driven digital skills; and to support *Atmanirbhar Bharat* & *Viksit Bharat @2047*.
- **Linked Policies:** NEP 2020 (AI as school subject since 2019-20), Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) 4.0, the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS-2), and the Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH).

Sinapic Acid

Nagaland University researchers have identified a naturally occurring plant compound called 'Sinapic acid' that is capable of significantly accelerating wound healing in diabetic conditions.

About Sinapic Acid:

- **Nature:** Natural phenolic acid derived from cinnamic acid.
- **Properties:** Shows antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and neuroprotective effects.
- **Sources:** Present in spices, fruits, vegetables, cereals, and oilseeds.
- **Mechanism:** Activates the **SIRT1 pathway**, aiding tissue repair and inflammation control.
- **Significance:** Promising for **diabetic wound (foot ulcer)** treatment.
- **Related Disease: Diabetes mellitus-** a metabolic disorder causing high blood sugar.

Nafithromycin

India recently developed its first indigenously discovered antibiotic, Nafithromycin.

About Nafithromycin (Miqnaf):

- **Launch:** 2024 **| Developed by:** Wockhardt with **Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council" (BIRAC)** support.
- **Use:** Treats **Community-Acquired Bacterial Pneumonia (CABP)** caused by **drug-resistant bacteria**.
- **Effectiveness: 10× stronger** than azithromycin; **3-day regimen**.
- **Targets:** Both typical & atypical **drug-resistant bacteria**; combats **Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)**.
- **Safety:** Superior tolerance, minimal side effects, no major drug interactions.
- **Significance: First new antibiotic in its class in 30+ years**.
- **Highlight:** Model of **public–private biotech collaboration** showcasing India's innovation in healthcare.

Scheme for Innovation and Technology Association with Aadhaar (SITAA)

Recently, the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has launched the Scheme for Innovation and Technology Association with Aadhaar (SITAA) to boost innovation in the **digital identity domain.**

Objective of SITAA: Strengthen India's **ID Tech ecosystem** by collaborating with **startups, academia & industry**.

Focus Areas: Biometrics, AI, authentication, data privacy, and secure ID solutions.

Partners: MeitY Startup Hub (MSH) and **NASSCOM** as strategic partners for mentoring and industry linkages.

Alignment: Supports **Atmanirbhar Bharat** and **Digital Public Infrastructure** goals.

SITAA Pilot Phase Challenges:

- **Face Liveness Detection-** to prevent spoofing/deepfakes.
- **Presentation Attack Detection (PAD)-** AI/ML-based biometric security.
- **Contactless Fingerprint Authentication-** Secure ID via smartphone cameras.

Outcome: Promote **indigenous, secure, and scalable** Aadhaar-based tech innovations.

Deadline for pilot applications: 15 November 2025.

Rhodamine B

Recently, scientists at Raman Research Institute (RRI) have developed a powerful and cost-effective technique that uses the coffee-stain effect to identify harmful dyes such as Rhodamine B.

What is Rhodamine B?

It is a **synthetic dye** known for its **bright pink colour.**

Type: Synthetic, water-soluble dye, green in powder form and turns to fluorescent pink in water).

Uses: Textile, paper, leather industries; scientific research (fluorescent marker).

Health Impact: Toxic; causes DNA damage, cancer risk, oxidative stress, skin allergies, and pigmentation changes on long exposure.

Crew Escape System

ISRO has developed a cost-effective, *single-stage Test vehicle* powered by the Vikas engine to validate the crew escape system (CES).

What is a Crew Escape System?

It is an **emergency escape measure** designed to quickly pull the crew module along with the astronauts to a safe distance from the **launch vehicle in the event of a launch abort.**

Function: It rapidly separates **crew module** from the launch vehicle using **high-thrust solid motors**, moving it to a safe distance within seconds.

Types:

- **Puller type (used by Gaganyaan, Soyuz, Saturn V, Long March):** CES *pulls* crew module away.
- **Pusher type (e.g. SpaceX Falcon 9):** CES *pushes* crew module away.

Working:

- **Activation:** Triggered automatically by the **Integrated Vehicle Health Management (IVHM)** system on detecting a critical anomaly.
- **Descent:** The module is released and slowed by a **multi-stage parachute system**, reducing speed stepwise.
- **Landing:** Ensures a **safe sea splashdown** within physiological safety limits; crew remains inside till recovery.

CRYODIL

Scientists at the National Institute of Animal Nutrition and Physiology (NIANP), Bengaluru, under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), have developed a ready-to-use, egg yolk-free solution – CRYODIL.

What is CRYODIL?

It is an egg yolk-free, ready-to-use **semen extender for buffaloes**.

Features:

- Shelf life ≥18 months.
- First such buffalo semen cryopreservation medium in India.
- Gives higher post-thaw sperm motility & fertility.
- Cheaper than traditional extenders.

Network Survey Vehicle (NSV)

NHAI is planning to deploy **Network Survey Vehicles (NSVs)-** a specialized vehicle with advanced sensors in **23 states** to assess **20,933 km of National Highways** for road inventory and pavement condition analysis.

Key Features of NSV:

- It is equipped with **laser scanners, GPS, Inertial Measurement Unit (IMU), Distance Measuring Instrument (DMI), high-resolution cameras, and image-processing tools**.
- Detects **road defects-** cracks, potholes, rutting, edge breaks, lane marking, etc.
- Records **road features-** carriageway type, pavement width, topography, land use, utilities, etc.
- Conducted **before project start** and **every six months** thereafter.
- Data uploaded to NHAI's **AI-based "Data Lake"** for analysis and actionable insights.

MAHA MedTech Mission

Recently, the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the Gates Foundation, launched the *Mission for Advancement in High-Impact Areas (MAHA)-Medical Technology* for five years duration.

- **Aim:** Boost indigenous MedTech innovation, reduce import dependence, ensure affordable & quality healthcare.

- **Funding:** ₹5-25 cr/project (up to ₹50 cr exceptional); support to academia, startups, MSMEs, hospitals, industry.
- **Focus Areas:** Medical devices, diagnostics, implants, AI/ML-based tech, robotics, etc.
- **Health Priorities:** TB, cancer, neonatal & primary healthcare.
- **Support Systems:**
  - *Patent Mitra*- IP & tech transfer
  - *MedTech Mitra*- Regulatory help
  - *Clinical Trial Network*- Validation & evidence

SJ-100

The Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Russia's United Aircraft Corporation (UAC) recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding for production of civil commuter aircraft SJ-100.

About SJ-100 (Sukhoi Superjet 100)

- **Origin:** Russia; developed by Sukhoi Civil Aircraft (now merged).
- **Type:** Twin-engine, narrow-body, short-haul jet.
- **Capacity & Range:** 103 seats; 3,530 km range.
- **Features:** Low operating cost; customizable cabin.

Global Virus Network (GVN)

The Global Virus Network (GVN) has expanded its international coalition by incorporating three distinguished Centers of Excellence located in the Americas, broadening its capacity to address pressing viral threats on a global scale.

About GVN

- **Type:** Voluntary consortium of virology labs & scientists (non-profit)
- **Founded:** 2011 **| HQ:** Baltimore, USA **|**
- **Aim:** To strengthen global capacity to detect, prevent, and control viral threats.

Focus Areas: Research support; Public education; and Policy advocacy.

Medicine Nobel 2025

The Nobel Prize 2025 (Physiology or Medicine) was awarded to Mary Brunkow, Fred Ramsdell & Shimon Sakaguchi for discovering the Mechanism of *Peripheral Immune Tolerance*- how the immune system avoids attacking the body's own cells. They discovered **Regulatory T cells (Tregs)-** immune "guards" preventing self-attacks.

- **Sakaguchi (1995):** Found Tregs – a new class of immune cells maintaining self-tolerance.
- **Brunkow & Ramsdell (2001):** Discovered **Foxp3 gene**, vital for Treg function; its mutation causes autoimmune disease (IPEX).
- **Sakaguchi (2003):** Linked Foxp3 gene to Treg development.

Significance: Explained why not everyone develops autoimmune diseases and opened new treatments for autoimmune disorders, cancer, and improved organ transplantation success.

Physics Nobel 2025

The Nobel Prize 2025 in Physics was awarded to John Clarke, Michel Devoret & John Martinis for demonstrating ***quantum tunnelling*** and ***discrete energy levels*** in macroscopic superconducting circuits- showing that large electrical circuits can behave like quantum particles.

Key Device- Josephson Junction: Two superconductors separated by a thin insulator allow *paired electrons (Cooper pairs)* to tunnel through the barrier.

Significance: They proved that **quantum effects exist in visible, man-made circuits**, not just in atoms and enabled control of macroscopic quantum states- foundation of **superconducting qubits** used in **quantum computers**.
Applications: Quantum processors (superconducting qubits); Ultra-sensitive detectors and amplifiers; and Quantum simulators and communication systems.

Chemistry Nobel 2025

Nobel Prize in Chemistry 2025 was awarded to Richard Robson (Australia), Susumu Kitagawa (Japan), and Omar Yaghi (USA) for creating **Metal-Organic Frameworks (MOFs)-** materials made by combining metal ions with organic molecules *forming porous, crystal-like structures*.

- **Robson (1970s)**: Conceptualized MOFs using copper ions and organic linkers- created porous crystals.
- **Kitagawa (1990s)**: Made flexible and breathable MOFs that can absorb/release gases.
- **Yaghi (2000s)**: Made stable, tunable MOFs capable of capturing CO_2, filtering toxins, and extracting water from air.

Applications: Carbon capture, water harvesting, pollution control, and drug/environmental cleanup.

Oral Cholera Vaccine –Shanchol

Oral Cholera vaccine- Shanchol received World Health Organization (WHO) prequalification.

✓ Cholera is an acute diarrheal infection caused by consuming food or water contaminated with the bacterium *Vibrio cholerae*. It is a global public health threat and indicates inequity and lack of social and economic development.

WHO Prequalification: Enables global procurement by UNICEF, Gavi, PAHO.
Type: Bivalent killed whole-cell oral cholera vaccine effective against *Vibrio cholerae* O1 & O139.

Plutonium

- **Formation:** Produced as a by-product in nuclear reactors from **Uranium-238** by neutron capture.
- **Energy role:** Provides **~1/3rd of nuclear power** in most reactors; can be reused as **MOX (Mixed Oxide) fuel**.
- **Main isotopes: Pu-239 (***fissile*; used in power reactors and nuclear weapons); **Pu-238 (non-fissile;** powers **space missions);** and **Pu-240 (**non-fissile, high spontaneous fission rate limits bomb use).
- **Grades: Reactor-grade (**from spent fuel, for energy) and **Weapons-grade (**Pu-239-rich, for bombs).
- **Fast neutron reactors (FNRs):** Use plutonium efficiently; part of **Gen-IV** designs.
- **Global stock:** ~260 tonnes civil plutonium worldwide.
- **Health risk:** Toxic mainly if **inhaled.**

Indigenous Production of High-RRR Niobium

Nuclear Fuel Complex (NFC- established in 1971, Hyderabad as a major industrial unit of India's Department of Atomic Energy) recently developed **indigenous technology** to produce **High Residual Resistivity Ratio (RRR) Niobium (Nb)** ingots & sheets.

✓ **High-RRR Nb** is a key material for **superconducting accelerators** used in **nuclear energy & research**.

Significance:

- Earlier **fully imported** resulting in supply vulnerability.
- India now among **few nations** with this capability, will boost **technological self-reliance**.
- Aids India's goal of **100 GW nuclear power by 2047**.

Biomedical Research Career Programme (BRCP) Phase III

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister recently approved the continuation of the Biomedical Research Career Programme (BRCP), Phase-III.

Implemented By: Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and the Wellcome Trust (WT), United Kingdom and the SPV, India Alliance.

Budget: ₹1500 cr (DBT ₹1000 cr + WT ₹500 cr)

Duration: 2025-26 to 2030-31 (+6 yrs for servicing till 2037-38)

Objective: To develop world-class biomedical research talent & promote interdisciplinary innovation aligned with Viksit Bharat.

Key Components:	**Expected Outcomes:**
• **Fellowships**: Early & Intermediate (basic, clinical, public health). • **Collaborative Grants**: Career Development & Catalytic Grants. • **Research Management:** Mentorship, networking, partnerships.	• Train 2000+ researchers. • 10-15% rise in women's participation. • 25-30% projects reach Technology Readiness Level 4. • Stronger research ecosystem in Tier-2/3 cities.

CULTURE

Yuge Yugeen Bharat National Museum

- THE first gallery at the upcoming Yuge Yugeen Bharat National Museum is slated to open in a year's time.
- The Yuge Yugeen Bharat Museum is in New Delhi aims to become **the largest museum in the world**. It will be housed in the Secretariat buildings of North block and South block.
- It is part of the larger redevelopment of the Central Vista project. The museum will repurpose the heritage Secretariat buildings (which currently house key ministries) into a world-class cultural institution.
- The name is derived from Sanskrit, meaning "**Everlasting India**" — underlining the idea of continuity of Indian civilisation, culture and heritage.
- The theme of the museum is **5,000 years of Indian civilisation**. The first gallery will be called 'Time and Timelessness' and will showcase "Bharat's civilisational relationship with time", spanning centuries of cultural, philosophical, and scientific evolution.
- Divided into thematic zones, the museum will showcase historical events, personalities, ideas and achievements related to India's past that have contributed to the making of its present.

Gyan Bharatam Mission

- The Gyan Bharatam Mission on manuscripts has signed MoUs with around 20 institutes across the country for conservation, upkeep and digitisation of manuscripts.
- The institutions have been categorised into Cluster Centres and Independent Centres.
- In the case of a **Cluster Centre**, the institution shall be responsible for executing all manuscript-related activities of its own centre, as well as those of its designated Cluster Partner Centres, which shall not exceed 20.
- In the case of the **Independent Centres**, the institution shall be responsible for executing all manuscript-related activities related solely to its own collection.
- Gyan Bharatam shall provide the overarching framework, guidance, monitoring, and support for the execution of activities under this partnership.
- In addition, it shall also provide funding, necessary equipment, and budgetary allocations to the designated Centres.

Gyan Bharatam

- Announced in the Union Budget 2025-26, Gyan Bharatam is a flagship initiative of the **Ministry of Culture**.
- Its mandate is to preserve, digitize, and disseminate India's vast manuscript heritage and revive its civilizational knowledge traditions for future generations.
- It aims to digitize and catalog **over 1 crore manuscripts** across the country and establish a **National Digital Repository** of manuscripts.
- It will integrate Artificial Intelligence, Optical Character Recognition (OCR), and blockchain technologies for smart access and transcription.
- It will establish new conservation labs for palm leaf, birch bark, and paper manuscripts.
- It will establish a network of trained grassroots volunteers called **Pandulipi Mitras** across approximately 100 districts.

Bathukamma Festival

- In Telangana, the celebrations of Bathukamma Festival, organised by the state Government, have set two new Guinness World Records.

- The records are for the largest Bathukamma floral decoration consisting of about seven tonnes of flowers and of 63.11 feet high, 11 feet wide.
- The second record for the highly synchronised performance by a large number of women (1354).
- **Bathukamma** is a **flower-festival** celebrated by the women of Telangana and some parts of Andhra Pradesh.
- Every year this festival is **celebrated for nine days** as per the Sathavahana calendar which usually coincides with the months September–October of the Gregorian calendar.
- In Telugu, **'Bathukamma' means 'Mother Goddess come Alive'**. Bathukamma is a beautiful flower stack, arranged with different unique seasonal flowers most of them with medicinal values, in seven concentric layers in the shape of a temple gopuram.
- It is a celebration of the inherent relationship human beings share with earth and water.
- During the entire preceding week, women make 'boddemma' (a deity of Gowri 'mother Durga' made with earthly mud) along with Bathukamma and immerse it in the pond.

Mera Hou Chongba Festival

- In Manipur, the Mera Hou Chongba festival, which symbolises Hill-valley unity, is being celebrated.
- **Mera** refers to the **Meitei lunar month of Mera**. **"Hou Chongba"** means **coming together** or **celebration of unity.** So, the literal meaning is the festival of unity in the month of Mera.
- The festival is celebrated on the **15th lunar day of the Mera month of the Meitei calendar** every year.
- Manipur's titular King Maharaja Sanajaoba Leishemba leads the ritual march involving tribal village chiefs from the **Manipur Royal Palace (Sana Konung) to the historic Kangla Fort in Imphal**.
- It is the only festival in Manipur in which all indigenous communities - including Meiteis, Kukis, Nagas - participate.

AWARDS/ PERSONALITIES IN NEWS

Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar 2025

- The Union Government has announced the Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar 2025.
- It is the nation's highest recognition for outstanding and inspiring contributions by scientists, technologists, and innovators in diverse fields of science, technology, and technology-led innovation.
- The **first edition** of the awards was instituted in **2024** after scrapping all the existing science awards.
- The awards are presented in **four categories - Vigyan Ratna, Vigyan Shri, Vigyan Yuva, and Vigyan Team**.
- **Vigyan Ratna** award recognises **lifetime achievements** and contributions made in any field of science and technology. This year it has been posthumously conferred on **Prof. Jayant Vishnu Narlikar (Physics)**.
- **Vigyan Shri** award recognises **distinguished contributions** in any filed of science and technology. It has been awarded to eight scientists for path-breaking work in their respective domains.
- **Vigyan Yuva - Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar (VY-SSB)** recognises and encourages young scientists up to the age of 45 years who make an exceptional contribution in any filed of science and technology. This year it has been awarded to 14 scientists.
- **Vigyan Team** is awarded to a team comprising three or more scientists/researchers/innovators who have made an exceptional contribution working in a team in any field of science and technology.
- It has been awarded to **Team- Aroma Mission** (Council of Scientific and Industrial Research) in Agricultural Science.

Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought

- Two imprisoned journalists, **Andrzej Poczobut (Belarus)** and **Mzia Amaglobeli (Georgia)** were awarded European Union's top human rights honour, the 2025 **Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought**.
- The Sakharov Prize is an **annual human rights award** given by the **European Parliament**.
- It gives recognition to individuals, groups and organisations that have made an outstanding contribution to defending human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy, and the rule of law.
- **Established in 1988**, it is named after **Andrei Sakharov** — the **Soviet physicist**, dissident, and Nobel Peace Prize laureate — who became a prominent voice for human rights and freedom of thought.
- Several Sakharov laureates, including Nelson Mandela, Malala Yousafzai, Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad, went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize.
- Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado, who won the Nobel Peace Prize this year, won the Sakharov prize last year.

India Conferred ISSA Award 2025

- India has been conferred with the prestigious **International Social Security Association (ISSA) Award 2025 for Outstanding Achievement in Social Security** at the World Social Security Forum (WSSF).
- This **triennial award** recognizes India's exceptional progress in social protection systems globally. India is the fifth recipient of this award.

ISSA

- ISSA is the world's leading international organization for social security institutions, government departments, and agencies.
- **Founded in 1927** under the auspices of the **International Labour Organization (ILO)**, its primary goal is to **promote excellence in social security administration** globally to advance social justice and well-being.
- **Headquartered in Geneva**, the ISSA has more than 330 member organizations in over 160 countries.

India to Host Commonwealth

- India is set to hold the **Commonwealth Games (CWG) in 2030 with Ahmedabad** as the venue for the **centenary edition** of the event. India last hosted the CWG in 2010 in Delhi.
- The **2022 edition** of the CWG was held in **Birmingham** after Durban had pulled out due to financial constraints.
- **2026 CWG will be held in Glasgow**.

Commonwealth Games

- The CWG is a **quadrennial international multi-sport event** among athletes from the Commonwealth of Nations, which consists mostly, but not exclusively, of territories of the former British Empire.
- The event was **first held in 1930** as the **British Empire Games** and, with the exception of 1942 and 1946 (which were cancelled due to World War II), has successively run every four years since.
- The event is overseen by the **Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF)**, which controls the sporting programme and selects host cities.

2025 Nobel Peace Prize

- Maria Corina Machado, a Venezuelan Opposition leader, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her struggle to restore democracy and promote human rights in Venezuela.
- Born in Caracas, she is an industrial engineer and comes from an upper-class family involved in the steel industry — a background often criticised by Venezuela's socialist government.
- Machado founded **Sumate** in **2002**, an organization that began as a **vote-monitoring group** and later became a major Opposition platform.
- In 2023, she won the Opposition's presidential primary with over 2 million votes, but was barred from holding office and went into hiding. Despite her ban, she continued to mobilize supporters.

Nobel Prize in Literature 2025

- The Nobel Prize in Literature for 2025 has been awarded to Hungarian writer László Krasznahorkai.
- He is the second Hungarian writer to receive the Literature Nobel, after Imre Kertész in 2002.
- Krasznahorkai writes in Hungarian and is known for his intense, complex, and philosophical novels, exploring the human condition against the backdrop of societal decay, chaos, and existential despair.
- His **major works** include Satantango (1985), The Melancholy of Resistance (1989), War and War (1999), and Baron Wenckheim's Homecoming (2016).

Kenton R. Miller Award

- **Sonali Ghosh**, the Director of Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, has become the first Indian to receive the prestigious Kenton R. Miller Award.
- She received the award, constituted by the **World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA)**, along with **Ecuador's Roque Simón Sevilla Larrea**.
- The WCPA is one of six technical commissions of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), a 1948-established global network dedicated to the conservation of nature and the sustainable use of natural resources.
- Named after a former Director General of the IUCN and **established in 2006**, the Kenton R. Miller Award for Innovation in National Parks and Protected Area Sustainability is **presented every two years by the IUCN-WCPA**.