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CURRENT AFFAIRS

JULY 2025

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- Five Years of NEP
- SC to Examine OBC Certificates for Single Mothers' Children
- Law On Phone-Tapping
- Right to Vote
- National Sports Governance Bill, 2025
- Over 97% 'Untouchability' Cases Still Pending in Courts
- India 4th Most Equal Country
- PM Modi Visit to Maldives
- India-U.K. Trade Deal
- PM Visit to Ghana, Trinidad & Tobago, Argentina, Brazil & Namibia
- BRICS Summit 2025
- ICJ Ruling on Climate Change

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Five years after its launch, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has led to notable changes in classrooms, especially in early schooling. However, much of its ambitious vision for overhauling school and higher education remains unfulfilled. Delays caused by Centre-state disagreements and institutional bottlenecks have slowed implementation across the country.

Five Years of NEP 2020: Key Gains and Early Implementation

- **The NEP 2020** aimed to transform India's education system. While complete implementation is ongoing, key reforms have begun to take root.
- **Shift in School Structure and Curriculum**
 - The traditional 10+2 structure has been replaced by a **5+3+3+4 system**: foundational (pre-primary to class 2); preparatory (classes 3–5); middle (6–8), and secondary (9–12).
 - The 2023 National Curriculum Framework laid out outcomes for each stage.
 - NCERT released new textbooks (classes 1–8), merging subjects like history and geography into single volumes. Books for classes 9–12 are awaited.
- **Early Childhood Education Gets a Boost**
 - NEP aims for universal pre-primary education by 2030. NCERT's *Jaadui Pitara* kits and a national ECCE (*Early Childhood Care and Education*) curriculum are now in use.
 - Delhi, Karnataka, and Kerala are enforcing a minimum age of six for class 1, improving readiness but reducing enrolments.
 - However, better Anganwadi training and infrastructure are still needed.
- **Foundational Learning Under NIPUN Bharat**
 - Launched in 2021, NIPUN Bharat targets literacy and numeracy by class 3.
 - A recent survey shows 64% average language proficiency and 60% in math—progress, but still below universal goals.
- **Credit-Based Flexibility Introduced**
 - To allow flexibility in higher education, the NEP introduced the Academic Bank of Credits (**ABC**) and the National Credit Framework (**NCrF**).
 - Learners can exit after one, two, or four years with a certificate, diploma, or degree. CBSE is piloting this credit model in schools as well.
- **CUET for Uniform College Admissions**
 - The CUET, launched in 2022, standardizes college admissions nationwide, reducing the need for multiple entrance exams, in line with NEP's goals.
- **Expanding Global Footprint of Indian Campuses**
 - Institutes like IIT Madras (Zanzibar), IIT Delhi (Abu Dhabi), and IIM Ahmedabad (Dubai) have set up global campuses.
 - Meanwhile, international universities, including the University of Southampton, are entering India, with 12 more awaiting approval.

Reforms Still in Progress

- These reforms aim to reduce academic pressure, promote flexibility, and encourage inclusive, student-centric learning environments.
- **Reimagining Board Exams**
 - To lower the pressure of high-stakes assessments, the NEP proposes flexible board exams.
 - Starting 2026, CBSE will allow class 10 students to appear for board exams twice a year.
 - Karnataka has already piloted this idea. Other education boards are cautiously observing these changes before implementing them.
 - Additionally, the NEP encourages offering all subjects at two levels (standard and higher), but this has only been implemented for mathematics in class 10 by CBSE since 2019–20.

- **Progress Cards with a Holistic Approach**

- NCERT's PARAKH unit developed new-style report cards including peer and self-assessments. However, most boards have not adopted this approach yet.

- **Slow Rollout of Four-Year Undergraduate Degrees**

- NEP promotes four-year undergraduate programs with flexible exit options after each year.
- While central universities and the state of Kerala have begun implementation, progress is slow in other regions due to faculty shortages and inadequate infrastructure in many colleges.

- **Emphasis on Mother Tongue as Medium of Instruction**

- NEP recommends teaching students in their mother tongue at least until class 5.
- CBSE has directed affiliated schools to implement this from pre-primary to class 2, with flexibility for classes 3–5.
- Meanwhile, NCERT is developing textbooks in more Indian languages to support this multilingual shift.

ROADBLOCKS

- ❑ Despite several successes, critical components of the NEP 2020 remain stalled due to political resistance, institutional inertia, and lack of consensus.
- ❑ These bottlenecks reflect deep structural and federal challenges in India's education landscape.
- ❑ **Resistance to the Three-Language Formula**
 - NEP's proposal for students to learn three languages, at least two of which must be Indian, has been met with strong opposition.
 - Tamil Nadu, which follows a Tamil-English model, views the move as a covert attempt to impose Hindi and has rejected the proposal outright.
- ❑ **Delays in Teacher Education Reforms**
 - The overhaul of teacher training is yet to materialize. The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE), expected in 2021, has not been released.
 - Although a four-year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) has been proposed, existing teacher education colleges offering B.El.Ed. (Bachelor of Elementary Education) have resisted the changes, stalling reform.
- ❑ **Delay in Higher Education Regulatory Reform**
 - The NEP envisages replacing the University Grants Commission (UGC) with the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI), a single regulator for funding, accreditation, standards, and regulation.
 - Despite being formalized in the policy, the Education Ministry is still working on drafting the HECI bill.
- ❑ **No Breakfast Scheme in Schools**
 - NEP recommends providing breakfast in addition to midday meals for students in pre-primary and elementary classes. However, the Finance Ministry rejected this proposal in 2021, citing budgetary constraints.
- ❑ **Centre-State Frictions Over NEP Implementation**
 - States like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal have declined to adopt NEP-linked PM-SHRI schools.
 - The Centre withheld Samagra Shiksha funds in response. Tamil Nadu challenged the move in the Supreme Court.
- ❑ **Karnataka's Changing Position**
 - Karnataka initially adopted the four-year undergraduate degree model proposed under NEP but later scrapped it.
 - The current government is working on a state-specific education policy as per its 2023 election promise.



SC to Examine OBC Certificates for Single Mothers' Children

The Supreme Court (SC) flagged the absence of guidelines for issuing Other Backward Class (OBC) certificates to children of single mothers. The plea, citing Article 14 raises questions on gender equality and challenges the current patrilineal norms in caste certification.

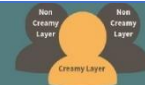
Case Background

- **Petition:** A single mother with OBC status challenged the Delhi Revenue Department's guideline that requires paternal-side caste proof to issue an OBC certificate to her child.
 - ✓ Current rules mandate submission of an **OBC certificate from the father or paternal relatives** along with the OBC application form. It excludes **maternal lineage**, even when the mother is a sole caregiver and OBC.
- **Core Issue Raised:** Denying OBC status to a child based on **father's caste identity** violates **Articles 14 (equality) and 21 (personal liberty)** of the Constitution especially in cases where the child is raised by a single mother who is herself OBC.
- **Centre's Argument:** The Centre while referring to the 2012 *Rameshbhai Dabhai Naika* case, sought broader **policy discussion** and inclusion of **States** as parties.

✓ In the 2012 *Rameshbhai Dabhai Naika* case, SC held that while caste is usually presumed from the father in inter-caste marriages, this presumption is rebuttable—especially if raised solely by the mother (especially SC/ST), the child may inherit her caste, depending on social upbringing and environment.

- **SC Response:** It flagged the lack of clarity and uniformity in OBC certificate issuance to children of single mothers and listed the matter for further hearing.

About OBC Reservation



OBC Reservation

Introduction: Based on the **Mandal Commission's recommendation**, the government notified **27% reservation for OBCs** in civil services on **August 13, 1990**. SC **upheld this** in the **Indira Sawhney case (1992)**, with the condition of **excluding the creamy layer**.

Classification:

1. **Creamy Layer** - Socially advanced OBC families are ineligible for reservation. Example- children of people in constitutional posts, senior Central and State government employees, managerial positions in PSU, Colonel or higher-ranked officers of the armed forces, and property owners.
2. **Non-Creamy Layer (NCL)** - Eligible for reservation benefits based on criteria such as **parental income** and **occupational status** under Articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution.
 - Articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution both allow for special provisions to be made for certain groups to address historical disadvantages.

Income Limit: ₹8 lakh per annum (with certain exemptions)

OBC Certificate Issuing Authorities: State authorities like District Magistrate, SDM, and Tehsildar.

Issues Raised: **Unequal application of the income test** by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has led to **discrimination among OBC candidates**, especially in determining who qualifies as non-creamy layer (NCL).

- **Category VI(a):** For most OBCs, the ₹8 lakh limit **includes**- parents' **salary and income from farming**. So, if a person's parents are salaried or farmers, and their total income is over ₹8 lakh, **he/she won't get OBC reservation benefits**.
 - These include salaried professionals (doctors, lawyers, engineers), people in trade and industry, owners of non-agricultural property, and employees of State and Central PSUs etc.
- **Category VI(b):** For exceptions (MPs, MLAs, promoted govt. staff, unirrigated landowners etc), the ₹8 lakh limit **does NOT include** their salary and farming income. So even if their total income is over ₹8 lakh, **they still qualify for OBC reservation benefits**. This leads to **unfair advantage** for some OBCs over others.
 - The **twin income test issue** was first flagged by the **National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) in 2015**, followed by a **Parliamentary Committee**. A **draft Cabinet note** proposed raising the ₹8 lakh limit and **including salaries** for all OBC categories, but it was **never approved**.

Previous Rulings in Similar Cases

- **Rumy Chowdhury v. Dept. of Revenue, Govt. of NCT Delhi (2019):** A single mother from SC community sought caste certificates for her sons. Delhi High Court (HC) **upheld rejection** by Executive Magistrate reasoning that children did not face socio-economic deprivation; simply being raised by SC mother was insufficient.
 - This decision was appealed in 2020, wherein the Delhi HC Division Bench reiterated that children must show **clear evidence of deprivation** to claim mother's caste. Granting caste status without such proof could **displace genuinely disadvantaged SC individuals** in reserved categories.
- **Smti. Moonsoon Barkakoti v. State of Assam (2024):** A junior officer claimed OBC status inherited from her mother (father was from general category). Gauhati HC **upheld validity** of her OBC certificate on the basis that she was raised within her mother's OBC community and **suffered related disadvantages**. The court reaffirmed that **lived experience and community integration** determines caste identity in inter-caste scenarios- not just paternal lineage.



Law On Phone-Tapping

The legality of phone tapping in India is under renewed scrutiny after contrasting rulings by the Madras and Delhi High Courts (HC). The debate centers on whether the government can legally intercept communications as a preventive measure, before any crime is committed.

Phone tapping: It refers to interception and recording of telephone conversations without the knowledge of the user. It is often used by law enforcement agencies for national security, crime prevention, and investigation.

Procedure for Phone Tapping:

- Request must come from a law enforcement agency like ED or CBI.
- Requires written approval from Union Home Secretary (for Centre), or State Home Secretary (for States).
- These Authorized interceptions are supervised by a **Review Committee** headed by the Cabinet Secretary.
- All service providers have mediation servers to intercept and forward recordings to authorized agencies.

Unauthorized tapping is punishable under Section 26(b) of the Telegraph Act, with imprisonment up to 3 years.

Legal Basis	Constitutional Provisions and Safeguards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indian Post Office Act, 1898 - governs interception of postal communication. • Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 - used for tapping phone calls (voice communication). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Section 5(2) of the Telegraph Act: allows Central and State governments to authorize phone tapping during a “public emergency” or in the “interest of public safety.” ✓ Such interception must be based on reasonable restrictions defined under Article 19(2) of the Constitution which include- Sovereignty and integrity of India; Security of the state; Friendly relations with foreign states; Public order; Preventing incitement to an offence • Information Technology Act, 2000 - regulates interception of digital communications (e.g., emails, WhatsApp). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ IT (Procedure and Safeguards) Rules, 2009: introduced the procedures for digital surveillance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to Privacy (Article 21): Recognized as a fundamental right in K.S. Puttaswamy v. UoI (2017). Any interference must pass the tests of legality, necessity, and proportionality. • Freedom of Speech (Article 19(1)(a)): Tapping a phone conversation impinges on free speech and is permissible only under reasonable restrictions in Article 19(2).

Admissibility of Tapped Conversations as Evidence: Tapped conversations are considered electronic evidence under IT Act, 2000 and Indian Evidence Act, 1872 (Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023 (BSA))

- ✓ In the *R.M. Malkani v. State of Maharashtra* (1973), the Supreme Court (SC) held that intercepted phone conversations are admissible if:

Voice is authenticated	No tampering occurred	Obtained in accordance with procedure
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Illegally obtained evidence may still be admissible if relevant and genuine (e.g., Parliament attack case, 2005)

Challenges and Concerns of Phone Tapping in India	Remedies Against Unauthorized Tapping:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Judicial Oversight: Phone tapping is authorized by executive officials (Home Secretary) without needing a court order raising concerns about arbitrariness and misuse. (Violates the doctrine of separation of powers.) • Weak Safeguards and Transparency: Though Rule 419A of the Telegraph Rules exists, it lacks robust enforcement. The Review Committee operates in secrecy with no public accountability. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ RTI Act exemptions often cited to deny surveillance-related data, even if no ongoing investigation is involved. • Risk of Political Misuse: To target journalists, opposition leaders, activists, especially in cases like the Pegasus spyware issue. • Privacy Violations: Infringes fundamental right under Article 21 as it is often done without the individual's knowledge or legal recourse. • Technological Overreach: With modern tools like encrypted messaging (WhatsApp, Signal) and spyware, surveillance has extended beyond phone calls, increasing the scope of intrusion. • Admissibility and Abuse of Evidence: Illegally obtained recordings are often still admissible in court, undermining procedural safeguards. • Outdated Legal Framework: The Indian Telegraph Act (1885) and IT Act (2000) are outdated for current tech realities. They lack clarity on digital surveillance and do not define “public emergency” or “public safety” clearly. • International Criticism: Organizations like Amnesty International, UNHRC, and Reporters Without Borders have criticized India's lack of transparency in surveillance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • File a complaint with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). • Lodge an FIR under Telegraph Act. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Section 26 of the Telegraph Act penalizes unauthorized interception. ✓ Section 72 of IT Act, 2000 penalizes breach of confidentiality and privacy in digital communication. • Approach courts under Article 226 or 32 for enforcement of fundamental rights. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Justice A.P. Shah Committee (2012) recommended independent oversight through a judicial or parliamentary body. ✓ The US Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Agency (FISA) requires pre-authorization from a judge for electronic surveillance • Use the Right to Information (RTI) Act to access intercepted content (in limited cases).



What did the Delhi and Madras HCs Rule on the Phone Tapping Issue?

✓ Delhi HC – Interception Upheld	✗ Madras HC – Interception Quashed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Background: The case involved alleged corruption in a ₹2,149.93 crore government redevelopment project (ITPO complex). The CBI intercepted phone calls based on suspicion that officials and contractors conspired to influence public servants through bribery. • Petitioner's Claim: Petitioner argued the phone tapping was illegal and that he merely acted on instructions, unaware of any wrongdoing. • Court's Ruling: Court upheld the interception and trial court's decision to frame charges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Economic offences of such a large scale can pose a threat to public safety. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case Background: The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in 2011 authorized the CBI to tap the phone of the MD of Everonn Education Ltd., suspected of offering a ₹50 lakh bribe to an Income Tax officer to suppress unaccounted income. • Court's Ruling: It held the interception unlawful and unconstitutional on the basis that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A ₹50 lakh bribery case did not qualify as a “public emergency” or “public safety” issue. ○ The law does not allow phone tapping merely for tax evasion detection. ○ There was non-compliance with procedural safeguards, including failure to submit the recording to the Review Committee as mandated under Rule 419-A(17). ○ Referred to PUCL v. UoI (1997)- Interception must be limited, transparent, and justified only in clear and present threats.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Corruption affects national economic health, infrastructure, and public trust in institutions. ○ Interception was thus justified under Section 5(2) and met the threshold of a reasonable restriction under Article 19(2). ● Significance: The Court adopted a broad interpretation of “public safety” to include economic corruption of a large scale, legitimizing preventive surveillance in such cases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Held that right to privacy under Article 21 was violated. ● Significance: The Court declared the MHA order ultra vires, ruled the evidence from the tapped calls inadmissible, and barred it from being used in any proceeding. However, the CBI could still use independent evidence collected lawfully.
<p>PUCL v. Union of India (1997): Supreme Court (SC) provided procedural guidelines, including mandatory recording of reasons, oversight by a Review Committee, and limited duration for phone tapping. It also ruled that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Telephone conversations are part of the right to privacy. ● Interception can only occur when there is a public emergency or threat to public safety. 	

Comparison with Other Countries

Aspect	UK	USA	Canada
Main Law	Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, 2000	Electronic Communications Privacy Act (ECPA) 1986, PATRIOT Act, 2001	Criminal Code, Charter of Rights
Who Approves	Home Secretary	Judge (court warrant)	Judge (court warrant)
When Allowed	National security, serious crime	Serious crime, terrorism	Serious crime only, as last resort
Judicial Oversight	Tribunal review	Court approval needed	Full judicial control
Privacy Law	Article 8 (European Convention on Human Rights)	4th Amendment	Section 8 of Charter
Illegal Evidence Admissible?	Sometimes	No (mostly excluded)	Rarely
Recent Issues	MI5 (intelligence agency) overreach case	NSA spying case (Snowden)	Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) spyware use case



Right to Vote

The Supreme Court (SC) asked the Election Commission (EC) to accept Aadhaar, voter ID, and ration cards for the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar (**last conducted in 2003**).

- ✓ The Court emphasized that the right to vote is central to India’s democracy, highlighting the distinctiveness of India’s universal adult suffrage (UAS).
- ✓ **Universal Adult Suffrage (UAS)**- the right of all adult citizens to vote regardless of wealth, gender, caste, religion, or education- is a defining feature of Indian democracy.

Key Features of India’s UAS Journey:

- **Constitutional Provision:** Article 326 allows every Indian citizen aged 18 or above to vote in Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections, unless disqualified by law due to non-residence, unsound mind, criminal conviction, or corrupt practices. The **61st Constitutional Amendment (1988)** reduced the voting age to 18, further expanding democratic participation.

- **Electoral Inclusion of Marginalized Groups:** SCs/STs given reserved constituencies, not separate electorates (unlike the Poona Pact's earlier proposals). Women, minorities, tribal groups, and Dalits participated on equal footing.

- **Institutional Efforts by Election Commission:** The EC, under leaders like **Sukumar Sen**, tackled monumental challenges- including enrolling **173 million mostly illiterate voters**. Introduction of **symbols for political parties** enabled even illiterate voters to participate meaningfully.

Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of Electoral Rolls or Voter List

VS

Judicial View on Right to Vote

- The SIR is a hybrid of two processes- **intensive** (door-to-door verification for outdated/inaccurate rolls) and **summary** (annual updates based on citizen inputs).
 - ✓ SIR is undertaken when there are widespread errors, as seen in Bihar. The Booth Level Officers (BLOs) shall be conducting house-to-house survey for verification during the process of intensive revision.
 - ✓ SIR is undertaken in exercise of its powers under Article 324 of the Constitution.
 - ✓ **Representation of the People Act (RPA), 1950** governs preparation and revision of electoral rolls under Section 21.
- The goal is to remove ineligible voters (e.g., deceased, relocated, or duplicate entries) and add new or previously missed eligible voters, including migrants.
 - ✓ Recently, the EC removed 35 lakh names in Bihar- 12.5 lakh deceased, 17.5 lakh relocated, and 5.5 lakh duplicate entries.
 - ✓ It also flagged inclusion of some foreigners who had fraudulently obtained Indian documents.



- **N.P. Ponnuswami Case, 1952:** The **Constitution Bench** of Supreme Court (SC) held that the **right to vote is a statutory right**, not a fundamental right.
- **Jyoti Basu Case, 1982:** Reiterated that the **right to vote is neither a fundamental right nor a common law right**, but purely a **statutory right**.
- **PUCL Case, 2003:** Justice P.V. Reddy observed that the **right to vote**, if not a fundamental right, is certainly a 'constitutional right.'
- **Kuldip Nayar v. Union of India, 2006:** A **Constitution Bench** of the SC held that the '**right to vote**' is a **statutory right** granted under **Section 62 of RPA, 1951**, not a fundamental or constitutional one
- **Rajbala v. State of Haryana, 2016:** A two-judge bench referred to the right to vote as a **constitutional right**, but this did not override the Kuldip Nayar ruling.
- **Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India, 2023:** The Court reaffirmed that the matter had been settled by the **Kuldip Nayar verdict**. Hence, the **current legal status of the right to vote** is that it is a **statutory right**.
 - ✓ In a dissenting opinion, **Justice Ajay Rastogi** linked the right to vote to **Articles 19(1)(a)** (expression of choice). Even if not considered a fundamental right, this right originates from Article 326 of the Constitution and is shaped by statutes made by Parliament. Considering these factors, the SC may consider elevating the status of right to vote into a constitutional right.

- **Judicial Reinforcement:** In **Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala (1973)**, the SC recognized democracy as part of the **basic structure**, making the right to vote foundational to the Republic.

Challenges Faced in Practicing Right to Vote by Citizens

- **Disenfranchisement of Migrant and Marginalized Populations:** Workers who migrate to urban areas for employment often cannot vote as they are registered in their native constituencies. The **logistical and financial burden** of returning home to vote discourages participation.
- **Legal & Institutional Challenges:** Voting is not a Fundamental Right, limiting remedies available under Article 32. In cases of wrongful exclusion, no automatic redressal through Supreme Court.
- **Errors and Exclusions in Electoral Rolls:** Issues such as **missing names, duplicate or manipulation of entries, Arbitrary Deletions** and inclusion of **deceased or ineligible voters** undermine voter confidence and lead to **genuine voters being denied their rights**.
- **Low Voter Turnout:** Especially in **urban areas, youth and middle-class voters ("silent majority")** often show apathy due to disillusionment with the political system or lack of awareness. In regions affected by Naxalism (Maoist insurgencies),

Way Forward for Strengthening the Right to Vote in India

- **Implement Remote Voting Mechanisms:** Use secure digital or blockchain-based voting platforms to allow **internal migrants**, government employees, and defence personnel to vote from their place of work or residence.
- **Postal Ballots Expansion:** Extend postal ballot facilities to migrant workers, similar to those available for armed forces and senior citizens (above 85 years).
- **Portable Voting:** Enable voters to cast votes from any part of the country by linking Voter ID with Aadhaar to ensure duplication-free, location-independent access. Develop a pilot project allowing voting from any polling booth in the country using biometric authentication.
- **Electoral Roll Reform:** Create a dynamic system for updating voter registration in case of migration, job transfers, or address changes. Promote digital and mobile-based voter registration and grievance redressal systems, especially for youth and migrants.
- **Voter Awareness & Accessibility:** Conduct IEC (Information, Education, and Communication) drives for migrant workers, tribal populations, and first-time

ensuring the safety of voters and election officials is a challenge.

- **Voter Suppression and Influence: Threats, intimidation, caste-based pressure, and vote buying** in some regions compromise the free exercise of vote. **Money and muscle power** continue to distort the electoral process.
- **Digital Divide and Accessibility Issues:** Despite online registration tools, the **lack of digital literacy and internet access**, especially in rural and tribal areas, hampers registration and awareness. **Elderly, disabled, and women voters** in conservative settings often face physical and social barriers at polling booths.
- **Legal Disqualification:** The right to vote is denied to individuals on grounds like **unsoundness of mind, criminal convictions, or corrupt practices**, but the processes sometimes lack **fair procedural safeguards**.

voters. Ensure polling booths are accessible, especially in remote and conflict-prone areas. Expand facilities like ramps, drinking water, shade, and security.

- ✓ **Right to Information:** Reinforce judicial mandates like the **Association for Democratic Reforms (2002) ruling**, ensuring voters' access to candidates' criminal and financial details for informed choices.
- **Inclusive Electoral Policy:** Ensure the inclusion of displaced populations, persons with disabilities (PwDs), and third-gender individuals. Institutionalize voting rights for Indian diaspora
- **Strict Enforcement Against Money and Muscle Power:** Enhance monitoring mechanisms (like cVigil), fast-track courts, and higher penalties for electoral malpractice. Make voter choices more informed through **mandatory disclosure of candidate backgrounds and party funding**.



National Sports Governance Bill, 2025

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports introduced the **National Sports Governance (NSG) Bill, 2025** in Lok Sabha aimed at reforming sports governance in India.

Key Objectives of the NSG Bill, 2025

- Promote the development of sports and ensure welfare of sportspersons.
- Establish ethical, transparent, and fair governance in line with Olympic and Paralympic Charters.
- Align with international best practices and legal standards.
- Create a unified and effective mechanism for resolving sports-related disputes.
- Regulate matters incidental to sports administration and governance.

Key Provisions of the Bill

Establishment of Key Institutions:

- **National Sports Bodies (NSBs):** The Bill provides for the establishment of the following governing bodies for each sport:
 - ✓ **National Olympic Committee (NOC)**- Affiliated to the IOC (International Olympic Committee)
 - ✓ **National Paralympic Committee (NPC)**- Affiliated to the IPC.
 - ✓ **National Sports Federations (NSFs)**- One per designated sport; internationally affiliated.
 - ✓ **Regional Sports Federations**- For each designated sport at the regional level.

Structure of National Sports Body:

General body: consisting of equal number of representatives from affiliate member and ex-officio members.

Executive Committee: Max 15 members with at least **2 outstanding sportspersons, 4 women, and 2 Athletes Committee members**. Eligibility & Tenure of Members include-

- ✓ Must be an **Indian citizen ≥25 years** of age.
- ✓ Age limit: **≤70 years (extendable to 75 if allowed by international rules)**.
- ✓ Max **three consecutive terms (up to 12 years)** with **mandatory cooling-off period**.
- Every National body will have a President, a Secretary General, and a Treasurer. To be appointed on these positions, a person must be a sportsperson of outstanding merit or must have served as a member of the executive committee for at least two full terms.
- Government servants must have prior approval to contest.

Mandatory Statutory Committees:

- **Ethics Committee** (or covered by NOC's Ethics Committee);
- **Dispute Resolution Committee** (or covered by NOC's equivalent);
- **Athletes Committee** – elected members representing athletes' interests.



- **National Sports Board:** A **statutory authority** to recognize, regulate, monitor, and deregister all **NSBs**. Powers include granting/suspending recognition, issuing guidelines, framing Safe Sports Policy, and ensuring compliance.
 - **Composition of the Board:** Chairperson and members (eminent individuals with expertise in sports law, governance, or administration) appointed by the Central Government based on recommendations from a **Search-cum-Selection Committee** including the Cabinet Secretary, DG-Sports Authority of India (SAI), eminent sportspersons & two experienced sports administrators.
- **National Sports Tribunal (NST):** An independent body for **time-bound resolution** of all sports disputes (selection, administration, elections, eligibility, etc.). Functions with the powers of a civil court. It will consist of a chairperson (a sitting/retired Supreme Court (SC) Judge or Chief Justice of a High Court (HC)) and two other members.
 - Existing cases will be **transferred from civil courts** to the Tribunal. Appeals lie directly to the SC- not lower courts (unless international sports statutes provide for appeal before the Court of Arbitration for Sport).
 - Jurisdiction excludes doping cases (as its under NADA (*National Anti-Doping Agency*) jurisdiction), international events like Olympics/commonwealth/ Asian games, and cases under exclusive international jurisdiction.
- **National Sports Election Panel (NSEP):** Composed of retired election commissioners. It will ensure **free and fair elections** in sports bodies and maintain an election roster of eligible panel members

- **Code of Ethics and Safe Sports Policy:** NSFs must implement a **Code of Ethics** (in line with Olympic Charter and Indian laws) for administrators, coaches, players, affiliate & sponsors guided by international charters. A **Safe Sports Policy** will be framed to protect women, minors, and vulnerable athletes from harassment or abuse. Internal grievance redressal systems are mandated.
- **Right to Information (RTI) and Public Transparency:** Recognized sports organizations will be **public authorities under RTI Act, 2005**, ensuring public access to financial and administrative information. Likely point of conflict with **BCCI**, which has historically opposed RTI applicability.
- **Use of National Names and Symbols:** Any sports organization wanting to use “India”, “National”, or the Tricolour must obtain a **No Objection Certificate (NOC)** from the government. Suspended or derecognized bodies cannot represent India.

Significance of the Bill	Criticism of the Bill
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Legal Backing for Sports Governance: replacing ad hoc guidelines like the 2011 Sports Code and empowers institutions like the Board and NST with legal authority. ● Ensures Uniformity and Accountability: By bringing all sports bodies, including autonomous entities like the BCCI, under a common regulatory structure and mandating RTI compliance, enhancing transparency and public accountability. ● Athlete-Centric Reforms: as it ensures representation of athletes and women in decision-making and mandates a Safe Sports Policy to protect athletes from harassment and abuse. ● Effective Dispute Resolution: NST will help reduce judicial backlog and avoid delays. ● Alignment with Global Standards: like the Olympic Charter, Paralympic Charter, and international best practices- essential for India's aspirations to host global events like the 2036 Olympics. ● Checks on Misgovernance: National Sports Board has powers to deregister or suspend NSFs for financial mismanagement or electoral irregularities. ● Encouragement of Ethical Conduct: with adoption of a Code of Ethics, promoting good governance and fair play. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Risk of Government Overreach: with discretionary powers to the Centre, including the ability to relax provisions or impose restrictions, raising fears of political interference in board and NSBs, lack of independence, and conflict of interest. ● Autonomy of Sports Federations at Stake: Treating all NSBs, including the financially independent BCCI, under the same regulatory framework may undermine their autonomy and efficiency. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ BCCI will have to comply with RTI Act, recognition norms of board, tribunal jurisdiction and age and tenure restrictions. This will end BCCI's long-standing autonomy in governance, particularly after cricket's inclusion in the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. ● Tribunal Concerns: Doubts remain about the independence and effectiveness of the proposed NST, especially since many tribunals in India have suffered from delays and lack of credibility. ● Age and Tenure Relaxation: Allowing extended tenures upto 75 years may encourage entrenchment and institutional capture by long-standing administrators. ● Implementation Challenges: Effective implementation requires qualified personnel, legal expertise, and administrative coordination, which may be difficult given existing capacity gaps. ● Unclear Jurisdictional Boundaries: No NST jurisdiction over international events or anti-doping cases, can potentially lead to confusion over dispute resolution routes. ● RTI Pushback: Bodies like the BCCI have strongly opposed inclusion under the RTI Act, citing lack of government funding- this could lead to legal challenges and non-compliance.

- **Funding and Regulation:** Only recognized NSBs will be eligible for **central government grants**. The **NSB Fund** will be created for operations, sourced from grants, fees, and other earnings. Accounts will be audited by the **CAG** and laid before Parliament.

✓ Recognition by Board is only for entities registered under relevant Acts (e.g., Societies Registration Act, 1860).

• **Central Government Powers:** Power to relax provisions or issue binding directions to board or sports bodies. It can impose reasonable restrictions on national team participation in extraordinary circumstances.

• **Protection Against Action Taken:** Legal immunity is granted to members of the Board, NSBs, NST, and their employees for actions taken in good faith.

• **Guidance from International Charters:** NSBs shall be governed primarily by International Charters and Statutes. In case of a conflict, the Central Government may issue a clarificatory notification after consulting the Board and the relevant international body.

Extra Mile: National Sports Policy 2025 (Khelo Bharat Niti 2025)



The Union Cabinet recently approved the **National Sports Policy (NSP) 2025**, replacing the existing NSP 2001 policy. It aims to transform India into a global sporting powerhouse and enhance its prospects for events like the **2036 Olympics**.

✓ In 1984, India introduced its first National Sports Policy (NSP) that focused on infrastructure, mass participation, and elite excellence.

Objectives of NSP 2025: The policy is anchored on five key pillars-

- **Excellence on the Global Stage:** by strengthening grassroots-to-elite programs, building competitive leagues, rural-urban sports infrastructure, and enhancing athlete training and support systems. It also promotes sports science, medicine, & technology to boost athletic performance and the development of skilled sports personnel and federations.
- **Sports for Economic Development:** by boosting sports tourism and attracting international events. Promoting sports equipment manufacturing and startups and encouraging Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and innovative funding initiatives.
- **Sports for Social Development:** by promoting participation among women, weaker sections, tribals, and differently abled; reviving indigenous games and promoting sports as a career and involve Indian diaspora.
- **Sports as a People's Movement:** To make sports a national movement, the policy aims to drive mass participation via campaigns and community events, launch **fitness indices** for institutions and ensure universal access to sports facilities.
- **Integration with Education (NEP 2020):** Embed sports in school curriculum and train teachers and educators for sports promotion.

Implementation of Strategic Framework for NSP 2025: To effectively implement its vision, NSP 2025 outlines a multi-dimensional strategy which includes-

- **Governance:** Establish a strong legal and regulatory framework to ensure transparency and accountability in sports administration.
 - ✓ The Supreme Court's 2016 Lodha Committee recommendations for BCCI reforms set a precedent for governance improvements, which the NSP 2025 builds upon.
- **Private Sector Funding:** Promote innovative financing through PPP and CSR to boost investments.
- **Technology & Innovation:** Utilize cutting-edge tools like **AI and data analytics** for athlete performance, program evaluation, and decision-making.
- **Monitoring Framework:** Introduce a national system with clear **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), benchmarks, and time-bound goals** to measure progress and outcomes.
- **Model for States:** Act as a guiding policy for States/UTs to align their sports initiatives with national priorities.

Whole-of-Government Approach: Encourage collaboration across all ministries and departments to mainstream sports promotion into national development efforts.



Over 97% 'Untouchability' Cases Still Pending in Courts

Criminal cases under the Protection of Civil Rights Act (PCR Act), 1955 have declined, but court pendency remains over 97%, with most disposed cases ending in acquittals, as per the Union government's 2022 report recently released by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (**MoSJE**).

Key Findings from the 2022 Annual Report on the PCR Act, 1955

- **Decline in Case Registration:** Only **13 cases** were registered under the PCR Act in 2022, down from **24 in 2021** and **25 in 2020**.
- **Police-Level Data:** **51 cases** were pending with police (including previous years). **Chargesheets were filed** in only **12 cases**. **No area** in any State/UT was declared as "untouchability prone".
- **Court-Level Data:** **1,242 cases** were pending trial in courts under the PCR Act. In **2022**, only **31 cases** were disposed of- **1 conviction and 30 acquittals**. From **2019–2021**, all **37 cases** disposed ended in **acquittals**.

- ✓ **Contrast with Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act (SC/ST (PoA) Act), 1989:** 62,501 cases registered under the SC/ST Act in 2022. Pendency is over 17,000 cases with police and over 2.33 lakh cases pending in courts.
- **Inter-Caste Marriage Incentives:** 18,936 couples received ₹2.5 lakh each under PCR provisions in 21 States/UTs. **Top States comprised of-** Maharashtra; Karnataka; and Tamil Nadu.
 - ✓ Several States including Bihar, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Jharkhand did not provide data regarding inter-caste marriage incentives.
- **“NIL” information:** Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Lakshadweep submitted “NIL” information with respect to the implementation of the PCR Act, while Manipur did not submit any input despite repeated reminders.
- **Long-Term Trend:** PCR Act case numbers have declined significantly since 1989, following the enactment of the SC/ST (PoA) Act, 1989.

Way Forward

- **Strengthen Enforcement Mechanisms:** Ensure strict implementation of the PCR Act at the local level through better monitoring and accountability for police and administrative delays in registering, investigating, and prosecuting cases.
- **Improve Prosecution and Judicial Efficiency:** Establish more dedicated fast-track courts for PCR and SC/ST (PoA) Act cases. Train prosecutors and judges in handling caste-related offences sensitively and efficiently.
- **Data Transparency & Compliance from States:** Mandate timely and complete data submission from all States/UTs. Impose penalties for non-compliance or furnishing “NIL” information without due diligence.
- **Revive Identification of ‘Untouchability-Prone’ Areas:** States should proactively identify areas where untouchability is practiced and target interventions accordingly.

About Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955



The PCR Act, 1955 (originally called the Untouchability (Offences) Act, 1955) was enacted by Parliament under Article 35(a)(ii) of the Constitution to give effect to Article 17, which abolishes “untouchability” in any form. It was renamed as PCR Act, 1955 in 1976 and its scope widened through amendments.

- ✓ PCR Act is complemented later by the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, which addressed more severe and targeted caste-based crimes.
- ✓ Article 35(a)(ii) empowers the Parliament (and not State legislatures) to create laws that punish violations of Fundamental Rights.
- ✓ Since ‘Police’ and ‘Public Order’ are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule (List-II) to the Constitution of India. The primary responsibility for implementation of the PCR Act, 1955 and the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 rests with the State Governments/UT Administrations.

Objective: To criminalize and prevent the practice of untouchability and protect the civil rights of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and other marginalized communities by ensuring equal access to public spaces, institutions, and services.

Key Features of the Act:

- **Definition:** Civil rights refer to any right accruing due to the abolition of untouchability under Article 17. “Untouchability” includes both direct and indirect social disabilities.
- **Offences Covered (Sections 3 to 7A):**
 - Denial of entry to places of worship, shops, restaurants, or educational institutions.
 - Refusal to sell goods or render services (Sec. 6).
 - Discrimination in employment, housing, water sources, or public transport.
 - Forced manual scavenging or degrading labor (Sec. 7A).
 - Preaching or justifying untouchability in any form.
- **Punishment:** Minimum 1 month to 6 months imprisonment and ₹100 to ₹500 fine for most offences. Enhanced penalties for repeat offences (up to 2 years imprisonment and ₹1000 fine).
- **Legal Provisions:**
 - Offences are cognizable and can be tried summarily (Sec. 15).
 - Public servants showing negligence in enforcement are punishable (Sec. 10).
 - Collective fines can be imposed by State Governments on communities abetting untouchability (Sec. 10A).
- **Enforcement Mechanism:** Duty of State Governments to implement the Act (Sec. 15A)- provision for legal aid, special courts, special officers, periodic surveys, and committees for effective monitoring.
- **Power to Make Rules:** The Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, make rules to carry out the provisions of this Act (Sec. 16B).

Significance of the Act:

- Enforces equality before law and dignity of individuals from SCs.
- Acts as a deterrent against discrimination and institutional untouchability.
- Forms the legal basis for social reform and justice in India.

Judicial Example:

- In State of Karnataka vs Appa Balu Ingale (1992), the Supreme Court (SC) upheld punishment under the PCR Act, emphasizing that untouchability in any form is a crime against the Constitution.
- Asiad Workers Case (1982): The SC linked untouchability to forced labor practices, directing stricter enforcement of the PCR Act to protect marginalized workers.
- Safai Karamchari Andolan vs. UoI (2014): The Court banned manual scavenging, citing the PCR Act and Article 17, and mandated rehabilitation for affected communities.

- **Mass Awareness & Social Campaigns:** Launch sustained **public awareness campaigns** at school, village, and district levels to change social attitudes. Collaborate with **civil society, educators, and influencers** to counter caste stigma.
- **Inter-Caste Marriage Support:** Standardize and **streamline disbursement** of incentives for inter-caste marriages across all states. Provide **non-financial support**, such as protection from backlash and social integration support.
- **Stronger Role for NCSC & Local Vigilance Committees:** Empower the **National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC)** to conduct surprise audits and issue binding directives. Activate and monitor **vigilance committees** at the district and sub-divisional level.
- **Legal Reforms: Amend the PCR Act** to include more stringent and clear provisions, ensuring better convergence with the SC/ST (PoA) Act.

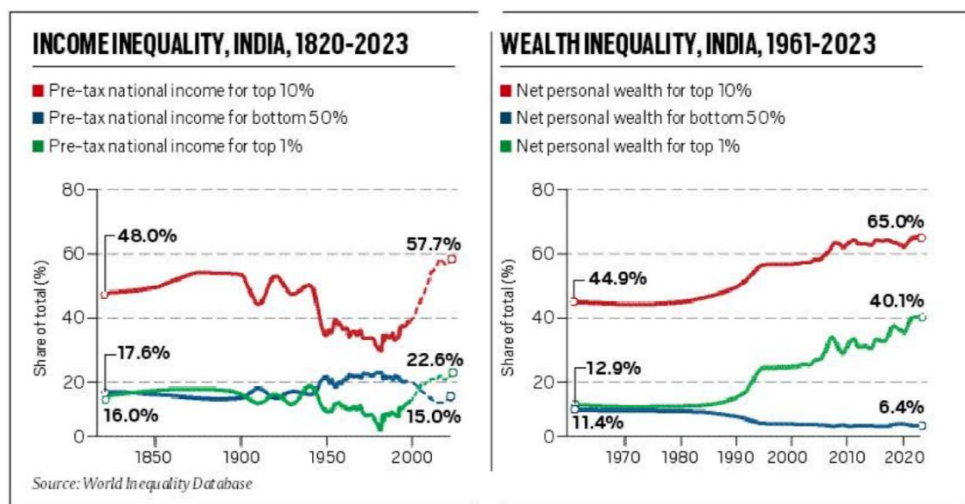


India 4th Most Equal Country

- According to the latest World Bank data, **India's Gini Index stands at 25.5**, making it the **fourth most equal country in the world**.
- The data for the Index is based on **primary household survey data** obtained from government statistical agencies and World Bank country departments.
- Data for high-income economies are mostly from the Luxembourg Income Study database.

Gini Index or Gini coefficient

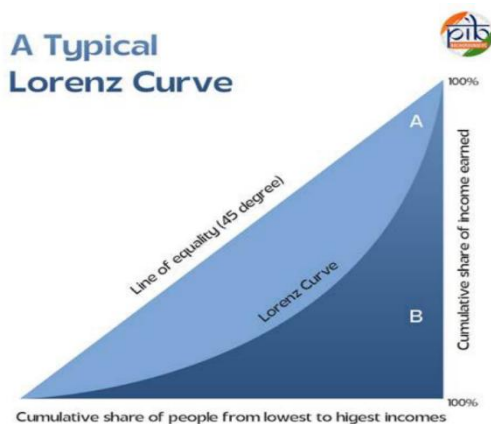
- It was developed in **1912** by Italian statistician **Corrado Gini**.
- It has been the most commonly used **measure of inequality** and **measures the distribution of income, wealth or consumption** across households or individuals in a country.
- It ranges in **value from 0 to 100**. A score of **0** means **perfect equality**. A **score of 100** means one person has all the income, wealth or consumption and others have none, hence **absolute inequality**. The **higher the Gini Index, the more unequal the country**.



Lorenz Curve

- Graphically Gini Index can be explained by the **Lorenz curve**. A Lorenz curve plots the cumulative percentages of total income received against the cumulative number of recipients, starting with the poorest individual or household.
- A perfectly equal distribution will be shown by a diagonal line, while the actual distribution will be shown by the Lorenz curve.
- The Gini index measures the area between the Lorenz curve and a hypothetical line of absolute equality, or the gap between the two, expressed as a percentage of the maximum area under the line. The **bigger the gap, the more unequal the income**.

A Typical Lorenz Curve



Highlights from the Report

- India's score was **28.8 in 2011-12** and reached **25.5 in 2022-23**. This steady shift shows that India has made consistent progress in combining economic growth with social equity.
- India falls into the **moderately low inequality category**, which includes Gini scores between **25 and 30**.
- Globally, just 30 countries fall into the moderately low category including several European countries with strong welfare systems.
- India is only a fraction away from **joining the low inequality group**, which includes countries like the **Slovak Republic (score 24.1), Slovenia (24.3), and Belarus (24.4)**.
- Apart from these three, India has a better score than all of the other 167 countries for which the World Bank has released data.
- India's score is much lower than **China 35.7, the USA (41.8), and the United Kingdom (32.4)**. It is also **more equal than every G7 and G20 country**, many of which are considered advanced economies.

Extreme Poverty Indicators

- A recent World Bank report — **The Spring 2025 Poverty and Equity Brief** — also highlighted that **India has successfully lifted 171 million people out of extreme poverty** over the past decade.
- The share of people living on less than \$2.15 per day, which was the global threshold for extreme poverty till June 2025, **fell sharply from 16.2% in 2011-12 to just 2.3% in 2022-23**.
- Under World Bank's revised extreme poverty threshold of \$3.00 per day, the 2022-23 poverty rate would be adjusted to 5.3%.

Bigger Picture on Inequality

The point of studying inequality is to allow governments to design appropriate policies to reduce excessive inequality. However, an inaccurate reading of inequality can lead to policies that worsen existing inequalities.

An incomplete picture



THE WORLD BANK

- ❑ However, the World Bank report said that the inequality in India may be underestimated due to data limitations.
- ❑ The **World Inequality Database** shows **income inequality rising in India from a Gini of 52 in 2004 to 62 in 2023**. Wage disparity remains high, with the median earnings of the top 10% being 13 times higher than the bottom 10% in 2023-24.

Consumption-based Gini

- ❑ To map income inequality, countries often conduct surveys on income data. India, however, collects data on **consumption, not income**.
- ❑ When it comes to inequality, this makes a big difference because variation in income is far more than variation in consumption. As people earn more, the bulk of their additional income is turned into savings.
- ❑ Thus, a Gini Index of inequality using **consumption** data underestimates the level of inequality in a society and undermines comparability with other countries.

Limitations of survey data

- ❑ It is widely acknowledged that the gap between the bottom 10% and top 10% of the population is widening, even if it is assumed that everyone in the country is becoming better off.
- ❑ However, the calculation of inequality is **unlikely** to capture the widening gap. This is because surveys are generally unable to capture the data of the richest, as the rich tend to decline to participate in surveys much more than the poor do.
- ❑ This becomes a big reason for underestimation of inequality if just a handful of the extremely rich are driving up inequality.
- ❑ Thus, if 90% of the population is not unequal while most of the inequality is being driven by the top 1%, any survey that fails to sample the top 1% will fail to capture the real picture on inequality.
- ❑ Researchers have highlighted this underestimation in several other countries such as the US, the UK, and many other European countries as well.
- ❑ A way to correct this is to use the survey data along with **income tax data**, which is quite accurate in capturing the incomes of the top earners.
- ❑ Studies that did this in the UK, US, and elsewhere found that relying solely on survey data underestimated inequality.
- ❑ The **World Inequality Lab** Gini Index, which shows that inequality in India has increased, uses income tax data to correct for this gap.

Problems with Gini Index

- ❑ The Gini Index too does not capture all aspects of the inequality picture. This is because it is not sensitive to changes at the extremes of a population but is overly sensitive to changes in the middle.
- ❑ This has to do with the way the Gini Index is calculated, and experts have been urging for other measures to be considered.
- ❑ One option is the **Palma Ratio**, named after a Chilean economist who suggested looking at the shares of income (or wealth) at the extremes — the bottom 50% and the top 10%, for instance.
- ❑ When such comparisons are calculated with the use of **income tax data**, it shows income inequality is now worse than in the colonial period, and the top 1% earn far more than the bottom 50%.

PM Modi Visit to Maldives

PM Modi paid an official visit to the Maldives. This was his third visit to the Maldives and the first by any Head of State or Government during President Muizzu's tenure.

Key Highlights of PM Modi's Visit to Maldives

- **60th Independence Day of Maldives**
 - Indian PM participated as the Guest of Honour.
- **Stamp to mark 60 years of India-Maldives friendship released**
 - PM Modi and President Mohamed Muizzu issued a stamp to mark 60 years of India-Maldives relations.
 - India was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with Maldives following its independence in 1965.
 - The stamps feature India's Uru boat and Maldives' Vadhu Dhoni, symbolizing shared maritime heritage and centuries-old Indian Ocean trade.
 - **Uru boat** - A large wooden dhow handcrafted in the historic boatyards of Beypore, Kerala.
 - The traditional Maldivian fishing boat - **Vadhu Dhoni** - is used for reef and coastal fishing.
- **India gifts BHISHM health cube sets to Maldives**
 - As part of India's Neighbourhood First policy and Vision **MAHASAGAR**, India gifted handed over two units of **Aarogya Maitri Health Cube** (BHISHM) sets to the Government of Maldives.
 - BHISM is a state-of-the-art portable Cube containing medical essentials, designed for rapid deployment in emergencies and disaster zones.
 - With state-of-the-art medical equipment as part of the cube, it can provide medical aid to 200 casualties with in-built support to sustain a crew of six medical personnel for up to 72 hours.
- **Inauguration of the Building of Ministry of Defence in Male**
 - PM Modi and Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu inaugurate the building of the Ministry of Defence in Malé, constructed with India's financial assistance.
- **Other Inaugurations / Handing-over**
 - Handing-over of 3,300 social housing units in Hulhumale under India's Buyers' Credit facilities
 - Inauguration of Roads and Drainage system project in Addu city
 - Inauguration of 6 High Impact Community Development Projects in Maldives
 - Handing-over of 72 vehicles and other equipment
- **Agreement/MoU Signed**
 - Extension of Line of Credit (LoC) of INR 4,850 crores to Maldives
 - LoC has been extended to support the island as it faces an enduring twin deficit problem.
 - This is the **first time that such credit is being extended to the Maldives in Indian Rupee**.
 - Reduction of annual debt repayment obligations of Maldives on Gol-funded LoCs

ANALYSIS - FROM 'INDIA OUT' TO INDEPENDENCE DAY INVITATION

- Maldives' shift from the anti-India '**India Out**' campaign to extending a ceremonial invitation to PM Modi for its Independence Day celebrations in 2025 marks a significant diplomatic turnaround.
- Initially, President Mohamed Muizzu's tenure, beginning in September 2023, reflected a pro-China tilt.
- His party's campaign had strongly criticised India's military presence in the Maldives, and his early diplomatic visits to Turkey and China, bypassing India, sent a clear message of divergence.
- **Pragmatic Diplomacy Paid off**
 - Despite derogatory remarks from some Maldivian ministers and demands for troop withdrawal, India maintained composure, **choosing engagement over escalation**.
 - Modi met Muizzu at COP28 in UAE, and India replaced its 76 military personnel with HAL technicians in May 2024, addressing Male's concerns without severing strategic ties.
 - This pragmatic diplomacy coincided with Maldives facing internal economic stress, limited Chinese support, and the ruling PNC gaining a supermajority in Parliament.
 - Seeking stability and economic aid, Foreign Minister Moosa Zameer visited India in May 2024, followed by President Muizzu's five-day visit in October.
 - The visit concluded with the **adoption of a joint vision on economic and maritime security partnership**.
 - India's assistance played a crucial role in this reset—raising aid by ₹120 crore, rolling over Treasury Bills worth \$150 million, extending currency swaps of \$750 million, and offering the highest-ever quotas for essential goods exports.
 - Trade surged to \$548 million in 2023, backed by visa-free access for Indian business travellers and LoC projects.



- This agreement gives major relief to Maldives by reducing its yearly debt payments to India.
- Earlier, Maldives had to pay \$51 million every year for an \$800 million loan. Now, after a 40% cut, it will only have to pay \$29 million annually.
- Launch of India-Maldives Free Trade Agreement (IMFTA) negotiations
- **Climate Cooperation and Green Commitments**
 - Joint tree-planting under India's "*Ek Pedh Maa Ke Naam*" and Maldives's "*Pledge of 5 Million Tree Plantation*" campaigns.

Conclusion

President Muizzu's public statement affirming that "Maldives will not do anything that would harm India's security interests" marked a clear departure from the earlier rhetoric. India's patient diplomacy and sustained economic engagement turned a strained relationship into one of renewed trust and cooperation, exemplifying a successful recalibration in the Indian Ocean neighbourhood.



India-U.K. Trade Deal

- India and the United Kingdom signed a landmark **Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA)** during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the U.K.
- Alongside the agreement, both countries unveiled a new strategic cooperation plan — the **India-U.K. Vision 2035**, replacing the earlier *Roadmap 2030*.
 - The Vision document outlines a comprehensive roadmap to deepen strategic ties across trade, technology, defence, education, climate, and innovation.
 - It aims to boost jobs, investments, clean energy, and people-to-people links, anchored in shared democratic values and high-level political engagement.

Key Highlights of India-UK Free Trade Agreement

- **Market Access: 99% Duty-Free Trade**
 - **India's Gains:** 99% of Indian exports to the UK will now be duty-free, benefitting nearly all trade value.
 - **UK's Gains:** 90% of tariff lines will be reduced, with 85% becoming zero-duty within 10 years.
 - **Sectors Impacted:** Labour-intensive industries like marine, textiles, chemicals, base metals, and processed foods.
 - Tariffs on processed foods drop from 70% to zero; tea, coffee, spices, rubber, and plastics gain free access.
- **Agriculture: Boost to Rural Economy**
 - **Duty-Free Access:** 95%+ tariff lines now zero-duty.
 - **Products Covered:** Fruits, vegetables, pulses, spices, pickles, jackfruit, millets, organic herbs.
 - **Export Potential:** Agri-exports could rise 20% in 3 years, aiding India's \$100B agri-export target by 2030.
 - **Sensitive Items Protected:** Dairy, oats, apples, edible oils.
- **Marine Products: A \$5.4 Billion Opportunity**
 - **Tariff Elimination:** Zero tariffs on shrimp, tuna, fishmeal, etc.
 - **Current Share:** India has only 2.25% share in UK marine imports.
 - **Growth Potential:** Major boost expected for India's coastal economy.
- **Textiles & Apparel: Enhanced Competitiveness**
 - **Coverage:** 1,143 product categories, all duty-free.
 - **Market Impact:** India may gain 5% more UK market share.
 - **Key Products:** Ready-made garments, carpets, handicrafts, home textiles.

India-UK Trade Deal In Numbers

- 99% of Indian exports to UK to enjoy zero-duty access
- \$56 BILLION bilateral trade to double by 2030
- FTA covers nearly 100% of trade value
- Indian farmers access UK's \$37.5 billion agri market

- Advantage: Levels playing field with Bangladesh and Cambodia.
- **Engineering Goods: Export Surge Expected**
 - Current Status: \$4.28B exports to UK; UK imports \$193.5B globally.
 - Tariff Cuts: Up to 18% duties scrapped.
 - Projection: Engineering exports may double to \$7.5B by 2030.
- **Pharmaceuticals & Medical Devices**
 - Tariff Elimination: On generic medicines and medical devices.
 - Market Potential: UK imports \$30B pharma; India exports just \$1B.
 - Products Covered: ECG machines, X-ray systems, surgical equipment.
- **Chemicals & Plastics**
 - Chemical Sector: Exports to rise 30–40% to \$650–750M in FY26.
 - Plastic Sector: Focus on films, sheets, kitchenware; 15% export growth targeted.
 - Advantage: More competitive pricing versus global suppliers.
- **Toys, Sports Goods, Gems & Jewellery**
 - Toys & Sports Goods: Export edge over China and Vietnam.
 - Jewellery: Exports may double in 2–3 years to capture UK’s \$3B market.
- **Leather & Footwear**
 - Tariff Removal: 16% duties scrapped.
 - Export Target: To exceed \$900M.
 - Beneficiaries: MSME hubs in Agra, Kanpur, Kolhapur, Chennai.
- **Services & Professionals: A Global Edge**
 - Worker Benefits: 75,000 Indians **exempt** from UK social security for 3 years.
 - Sectors Opened: 36 services sectors without Economic Needs Test.
 - Professional Access: Indian professionals can work in 35 UK sectors for 2 years without needing to establish a UK office
 - Cultural Exchange: 1,800 chefs, yoga trainers, and artists to be welcomed annually.

Impact of India-UK Trade Deal

- **Gains for Indian Sectors** - India’s key export sectors — including agriculture, processed food, textiles, footwear, seafood, gems and jewellery, and engineering goods — will enjoy expanded market access in the U.K. thanks to reduced tariffs.
- **Benefits for British Exports** - British exporters will also benefit significantly. The deal is set to ease the sale of whisky, cars, and other British goods in India, helping diversify and broaden the trade portfolio.
- **Boost to Bilateral Trade** - UK exports to India are projected to grow by nearly 60%, contributing an additional £15.7 billion by **2040**. Overall bilateral trade is expected to surge by 39%, adding £25.5 billion annually (*2040 projected levels*) compared to trade levels in the absence of the agreement.

India-U.K. FTA: Unusual Provisions on Cars and Government Procurement

- For the first time, India has agreed to reduce import duties on cars through a trade pact.
 - Import duties on large-engine luxury petrol/diesel cars from the U.K. will gradually drop from 110% to 10% over 15 years, though within a quota system on the number of car units as well.
- However, electric, hybrid, and hydrogen vehicles are excluded from duty cuts for the first five years to protect India’s emerging green vehicle sector.
- Another unusual feature is that the U.K. will now be allowed access to Indian government contracts.
 - India will open up around 40,000 high-value central government contracts in areas like transport, renewable energy, and infrastructure, allowing U.K. companies to bid for them.

India-UK FTA Overlooks Carbon Tax

- India’s push to secure relief for its small and medium enterprises from the UK’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) has failed to find space in the final text of the India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA).
- The UK’s CBAM, set to begin in January 2027, will initially apply to high-emission sectors such as aluminium, cement, fertiliser, hydrogen, and iron & steel.
 - CBAM will levy carbon taxes on imported carbon-intensive goods.
- Despite India’s goods exports to the UK rose 12.6% to \$14.5 billion in 2024-25, while goods imports grew 2.3% to \$8.6 billion, the expanding CBAM regime could threaten India’s competitiveness in the UK market.

- **Services and Mobility Provisions** - The FTA includes chapters on services, innovation, and intellectual property, offering enhanced mobility for Indian professionals.
 - Additionally, a *Double Contribution Convention Agreement* will prevent Indian workers in the UK from paying into both Indian and British social security systems.
- **Strategic Shift after RCEP Exit** - India's decision to exit the RCEP in 2019 due to fears of Chinese import surges shifted focus to Western economies. The India-UK deal is part of India's strategy to forge stronger ties with high-income nations like the UK and EU.

Conclusion

The India–UK FTA marks a pivotal shift in India's global trade posture. It not only strengthens bilateral relations but also signals India's readiness to engage in complex, high-standard economic agreements aligned with its broader goals of export growth, services integration, and global competitiveness.



PM Visit to Ghana, Trinidad & Tobago, Argentina, Brazil & Namibia

PM Modi undertook a landmark five-nation tour, covering Ghana, Trinidad & Tobago, Argentina, Brazil, Namibia. This visit was aimed at boosting India's ties with the global south and multilateral bodies.

Visit to Ghana

- PM Modi became the **first Indian Prime Minister to visit Ghana in over three decades** and to address its Parliament.
- During this visit, both sides decided to **elevate their bilateral ties to a Comprehensive Partnership**.
 - India is the largest destination for Ghanaian exports, with gold making up over 70% of India's imports from Ghana.
- **Shared Legacy of Colonial Struggle & Values**
 - PM Modi recalled the shared history of colonial struggle between India and Ghana.
 - He quoted Ghana's first President Dr. Kwame Nkrumah on the intrinsic unity between the two nations.
- **Signing of Four Key Bilateral Agreements**
 - India and Ghana signed agreements to deepen cooperation in:
 - Cultural Exchange Programme (arts, heritage, people-to-people ties).
 - Certification and Quality Control Cooperation.
 - Traditional Medicine Research and Training.
 - Joint Commission Framework for *regular high-level dialogues and review of bilateral cooperation*.
- **Trade, Investment, and Digital Innovation Partnership**
 - Bilateral trade has crossed USD 3 billion; Indian companies have invested over USD 2 billion in nearly 900 projects in Ghana.
 - Goal to double bilateral trade within the next five years.
 - Announced plans to share India's Bharat UPI digital payment platform with Ghana to boost FinTech collaboration.
- **Recognition: Ghana's Highest Civilian Award Conferred**
 - PM Modi was awarded Ghana's highest civilian honour — Officer of the Order of the Star of Ghana.

Visit To Argentina

- First Indian Prime Ministerial **bilateral visit** to Argentina in 57 years.
 - PM Modi's second visit to Argentina, the first being for the G20 Summit in 2018.

- Marking 75 years of India-Argentina diplomatic relations and 5 years of Strategic Partnership.
- **Collaboration in Critical Minerals & Energy Sector**
 - Argentina's rich reserves of lithium, copper, rare earth elements, shale gas, and shale oil seen as crucial for India's energy security.
 - PM Modi emphasized Argentina's role in supporting India's clean energy transition.
 - KABIL, India's public sector JV, has already secured mineral concessions in Argentina.
- **Defence, Space & Digital Cooperation**
 - India to share expertise in telemedicine, digital health solutions, information technology, and Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).
 - Argentina expressed interest in adopting India's UPI digital payment system.
- **Strengthening Bilateral Cooperation Across Key Sectors**
 - Focus areas for collaboration include defence, agriculture, mining, oil & gas, renewable energy, trade, and investment.
 - Lithium reserves in Argentina are a key interest for India's green energy transition.
 - India was Argentina's 5th largest trading partner in 2024.

Visit to Trinidad & Tobago (T&T)

- First bilateral visit by an Indian Prime Minister to T&T in 26 years. PM Modi became the first Indian PM to address T&T's Parliament.
- Coincided with the 180th anniversary of Indian immigrants' arrival in T&T (1845).
 - Around 40–45% of the Indian diaspora in the Caribbean resides in T&T.
 - Both PM Kamla Persad-Bissessar and President Christine Carla Kangaloo are of Indian origin.
- India-T&T bilateral trade reached \$341.61 million in FY 2024–25, indicating steady economic growth and deepening commercial relations.
- PM Modi was conferred T&T's highest national honour — Order of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.
- **Key Agreements and MoUs Signed**
 - Signed MoUs in pharmaceuticals, development cooperation, academia, cultural exchange, diplomatic training, and sports.
 - Focus on Quick Impact Projects for community development.
- **Digital Cooperation & FinTech Partnership**
 - T&T became the first Caribbean country to adopt India's UPI digital payments platform.
 - Plans to collaborate on India Stack solutions (DigiLocker, e-Sign, GeM).
 - India to assist T&T in digitization of land registration systems.
- **Education & Capacity Building Initiatives**
 - Announcement of 2,000 laptops donation for T&T's education programme.
 - Scholarships and higher education opportunities for T&T students in India.
 - 85 ITEC slots offered annually for capacity building.
 - Support for digitization of education and training of T&T officials and Parliamentarians in India.
- **Agriculture & Food Security Cooperation**
 - India gifted agro-machinery worth USD 1 million to T&T's NAMDEVCO.
 - Collaboration on natural farming, seaweed fertilizers, and millet cultivation.
- **Healthcare Collaboration**
 - India to organize a prosthetic limb fitment camp for 800 individuals in T&T.
 - Donation of 20 Haemodialysis Units and 2 Sea Ambulances.
 - Closer cooperation in pharmaceuticals after recognition of Indian Pharmacopoeia.
- **Climate Action and Sustainability Initiatives**
 - T&T joined Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and Global Biofuel Alliance.
 - Agreement on collaboration in early warning systems for disaster risk reduction.
 - India to provide a rooftop solar PV system for T&T's Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs.
- **Cultural and Diaspora Engagement**
 - Joint celebration of Geeta Mahotsav in India and T&T.
 - Training for Pundits from T&T in India.
 - Issuance of OCI cards up to sixth-generation diaspora.
- **Sports Collaboration**
 - MoU on Sports Cooperation for infrastructure development, talent exchange, and capacity building.
 - Offer to train young women cricketers from T&T in India.

Visit to Namibia

- In the final leg of his visit, PM Modi Visited Namibia. This was the first visit of PM Modi to Namibia, and the third ever Prime Ministerial visit from India to Namibia.
- Bilateral trade has surged from under \$3 million in 2000 to nearly \$600 million in 2025. Indian investments span mining, manufacturing, diamond processing, and services.
- The visit recalls the historic 2022 translocation of eight Namibian cheetahs to India's Kuno National Park—marking the world's first intercontinental relocation of a major carnivore species.

- **Digital Cooperation: UPI Rollout in Namibia**
 - Namibia to launch India's UPI later in 2025.
 - Focus on enhancing digital public infrastructure and financial inclusion.
- **Namibia Joins Key India-Led Global Initiatives**
 - Namibia officially joined the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI).
 - Joined the Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA) to promote sustainable energy transition.
- **PM Modi Conferred Namibia's Highest Civilian Award**
 - Awarded the 'Order of the Most Ancient Welwitschia Mirabilis'.
 - Modi described the *Welwitschia plant* as a symbol of Namibia's struggle, courage, and culture.
- **Agreements Signed During the Visit**
 - MoU on Health and Medicine Cooperation
 - MoU on *Entrepreneurship Development Center*
 - Framework Agreement on CDRI Membership
 - Framework Agreement on Global Biofuels Alliance Membership

Visit to Brazil

- In the fourth leg of his visit, PM Modi travelled to Brazil to attend the 17th BRICS Summit 2025 followed by a State Visit. This was his fourth visit to Brazil.
- During this visit, India and Brazil set a target to increase bilateral trade to \$20 billion over the next five years.
- **PM Modi Conferred Brazil's Highest State Honour**
 - PM Modi was awarded the Grand Collar of the National Order of the Southern Cross, Brazil's highest civilian award.
- **Strengthening India-Brazil Strategic Partnership**
 - Relationship elevated to Strategic Partnership since 2006.
 - Both leaders committed to bolstering bilateral ties for the next decade under five priority pillars:
 - Defence and Security
 - Food and Nutritional Security
 - Energy Transition and Climate Change
 - Digital Transformation and Emerging Technologies
 - Industrial Partnerships in Strategic Areas
- **Defence and Security Cooperation Deepened**
 - Agreement on Exchange and Mutual Protection of Classified Information signed.
 - Bilateral Cybersecurity Dialogue established.
 - Signed Agreement on Combating International Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime.
- **Energy Transition and Climate Collaboration**
 - Renewed commitment to Global Biofuels Alliance.
 - Partnership in Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) development.
 - India welcomed Brazil's Tropical Forests Forever Fund (TFFF) initiative.
- **Digital Transformation and Emerging Technologies Partnership**
 - Signed MoU on sharing of large-scale Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) solutions.
 - Collaboration in AI, Quantum Technologies, Digital Governance, and Innovation Ecosystems.
 - Establishment of Joint Commission on Science and Technology Cooperation.
 - India to host AI Summit in 2026, with Brazil's participation.
- **Expanding Industrial Partnerships in Strategic Sectors**
 - Collaboration in pharmaceuticals, defence equipment, mining & critical minerals, and oil & gas.
 - Support for Indian pharma companies' local production in Brazil.
 - Emphasis on critical minerals supply chain collaboration.
 - Joint ventures in carbon capture and clean energy technologies.
- **Trade, Investment and Business Facilitation**
 - Establishment of a Commerce and Trade Review Mechanism at the ministerial level.
 - Signing of MoU on Industrial Promotion and Intellectual Property Cooperation.
 - Exim Bank of India opened a representative office in Sao Paulo; Brazil's ANVISA opened office in Delhi.
- **Bilateral Agreements & MoUs Signed**
 - Agreement on Combating International Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime.
 - Agreement on Exchange and Mutual Protection of Classified Information.
 - MoU on Renewable Energy Cooperation.
 - MoU on Agricultural Research (EMBRAPA-ICAR).
 - MoU on Sharing Large-Scale Digital Solutions.

India's Global South Diplomacy: Aspirations & Hurdles

- **PM Modi's five-nation tour** aims to bolster India's leadership role among Global South nations.
- India aspires to be the **voice of postcolonial, developing countries**, showcased through initiatives like the **2023 Voice of the Global South Summit**.

Key Challenges

- **Aspirations vs. Execution Gap**
 - Translating leadership rhetoric into **tangible, sustainable outcomes** remains difficult.
- **Modest Institutional Scale & Weak Follow-Through**
 - India's outreach lacks the **infrastructure scale and execution strength** of China's BRI.
 - Announced initiatives often suffer from **poor implementation and trade facilitation bottlenecks**.
- **Overreliance on Soft Power**
 - Cultural diplomacy and diaspora outreach are strong, but **lack economic depth** without robust development programs.

Conclusion: The Road Ahead

- The tour sets the groundwork for partnerships in **critical minerals, digital public goods, climate action, and vaccine production**.
- Could mark the rise of "**Modi Doctrine 3.0**"—focused on **Global South solidarity, tech-led diplomacy, and global institutional reforms**.



BRICS Summit 2025

- The **17th BRICS Summit** was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, under the theme "**Strengthening Global South Cooperation for a More Inclusive and Sustainable Governance**".
- This Summit, which concluded with the 'Rio de Janeiro Declaration', marks a strategic shift towards inclusivity, expansion, and stronger South-South cooperation.

Key Highlights

- **Expansion of BRICS**
 - Indonesia formally joins as a full BRICS member.
 - **10 new BRICS partner countries welcomed** - Belarus, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Nigeria, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Uganda, Uzbekistan.
- **Global Peace & Security**
 - Condemned unilateral coercive measures and military strikes on Iran.
 - Called for peaceful resolution of conflicts, including Ukraine, Palestine, Sudan, Syria, and Haiti.
 - Strong condemnation of terrorism, especially cross-border terrorism and attacks in Jammu & Kashmir.
- **Key Declarations/Initiatives**
 - **BRICS Leaders' Framework Declaration on Climate Finance** - BRICS adopted its Climate Leadership Agenda and Climate Finance Framework, rejecting unilateral carbon border taxes.
 - **Statement on Global Governance of Artificial Intelligence (AI)** - BRICS released a joint statement on AI global governance; supported the new UN Cybercrime Convention.
 - **Launch of BRICS Partnership for the Elimination of Socially Determined Diseases (SDDs)** and strengthened cooperation on vaccines and health system
 - These highlight BRICS' commitment to inclusive innovation, climate action, and equitable health systems.

- **Economic & Financial Cooperation**

- BRICS Pay and national currency settlement frameworks were discussed, though a common BRICS currency was ruled out.
- A BRICS Multilateral Guarantee (BMG) mechanism was launched by the New Development Bank (NDB) to mobilize private investment in infrastructure, climate, and sustainable development.
- Endorsed BRICS Cross-Border Payments Initiative (BCBPI).
- Supported expansion of NDB membership and leadership continuity.
- Initiated discussions on a BRICS Grain Exchange and BRICS Carbon Markets Partnership.

- **2026 Presidency:** India will assume the XVIII BRICS Summit Chairship in 2026.

US Threats to BRICS



- President Trump has threatened 10% tariffs on BRICS nations after their Rio summit 2025, continuing his pattern of trade-related warnings.
- **Reasons**
 - Donald Trump views BRICS as “anti-American” due to its push for a BRICS common currency and cross-border payment systems that bypass the US dollar.
 - He has repeatedly threatened high tariffs to deter such moves, especially after BRICS expanded and promoted local currency trade following Western sanctions on Russia.
 - **BRICS as a growing power bloc:** With the addition of new members, BRICS now represents ~45% of the global population and contributes ~35% to global GDP.
- **India's calibrated stand and resistance to Yuan's dominance:**
 - As per EAM, India does not target the dollar, but explores alternative trade settlements due to practical constraints.
 - **Yuan's role in BRICS:** Yuan became the most traded currency in Russia.
 - **India's resistance:** India refused to use the yuan for Russian oil imports, indicating reluctance to accept Chinese monetary hegemony.

BRICS: Diverse Members, Common Frustration

- Founded in 2009 after the U.S. financial crisis, BRICS now includes 10 countries.
 - BRICS has expanded beyond its original five members to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, and the UAE, with more countries seeking to join.
 - Saudi Arabia has held off formally joining the BRICS bloc of nations, finessing an issue that could upset Washington as Riyadh seeks to seal deals with its U.S. ally.
- Despite political and ideological differences, various members agree that global power favours the U.S. too heavily. Still, nations like India caution against giving BRICS an “anti-West” image.
- During the Rio summit 2025, BRICS leaders condemned unilateral tariffs, indirectly criticising U.S. trade policy.



ICJ Ruling on Climate Change

- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has issued a landmark advisory opinion declaring that countries have a legal obligation under international law to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
 - ICJ is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, settling legal disputes between states and giving advisory opinions on international legal questions.
- While not legally enforceable, the ruling can strengthen climate litigation globally and hold nations accountable for failing to act, including possible compensation.

ICJ Declares Climate Action a Legal Obligation

- In a landmark advisory opinion, ICJ ruled that climate action is not optional but a binding legal duty under international law.
- Drawing on key climate treaties such as the UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol, and Paris Agreement, along with environmental agreements like UNCLOS and the Montreal Protocol, the court stated that all countries are legally obligated to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- It emphasised that **industrialised nations (Annex I countries)** must lead in emission cuts and support developing countries through technology and financial aid.
- The court also warned that failing to meet these obligations constitutes an "internationally wrongful act," making countries **liable for compensation** to those affected by climate-related disasters.
- Furthermore, nations may be held accountable for harmful actions by private businesses if they fail to regulate or prevent such behaviour through appropriate laws and oversight.

Conclusion

Under the Paris Agreement, countries define their own targets, with no provision to judge whether their actions are sufficient. This contradiction with recent ICJ ruling could lead to legal disputes and pushback, even from developing countries.

The ICJ's ruling does not impose penalties or obligations immediately, but it sets a powerful precedent. Its real impact will emerge as national courts begin referencing it in climate-related disputes and as countries respond politically and legally to its interpretation of their duties under international law.

Case Background: Vanuatu's Climate Justice Initiative at the ICJ

Origin of the Initiative

- In September 2021, the Pacific Island nation of Vanuatu launched a campaign to seek an advisory opinion from the ICJ on climate change.
- The move highlighted the urgency for stronger legal action, especially for vulnerable small island nations threatened by rising sea levels.

UN General Assembly Resolution

- Following extensive lobbying by Vanuatu, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution in March 2023, requesting the ICJ to provide legal clarity on two questions:
 - What are the obligations of States under international law to protect the environment?
 - What legal consequences do States face when they fail to meet these obligations and cause environmental harm?

Legal Framework and Importance

- Under the UN Charter, both the General Assembly and the Security Council have the authority to request advisory opinions from the ICJ.
- Although these opinions are not legally binding, they carry significant legal and moral weight, serving to clarify and advance the development of international law.



Significance of ICJ's Advisory Opinion on Climate Change

A Moral and Legal Turning Point

- Although not legally binding, the ICJ's advisory opinion is the most authoritative interpretation of international law on climate obligations.
- It is expected to influence courts globally and could shape future litigation against countries and corporations for inadequate climate action.

Reinforcing Global Climate Responsibility

- Many countries, particularly in the developed world, are falling short of their 2030 emission targets.

Loss and Damage: A New Legal Avenue

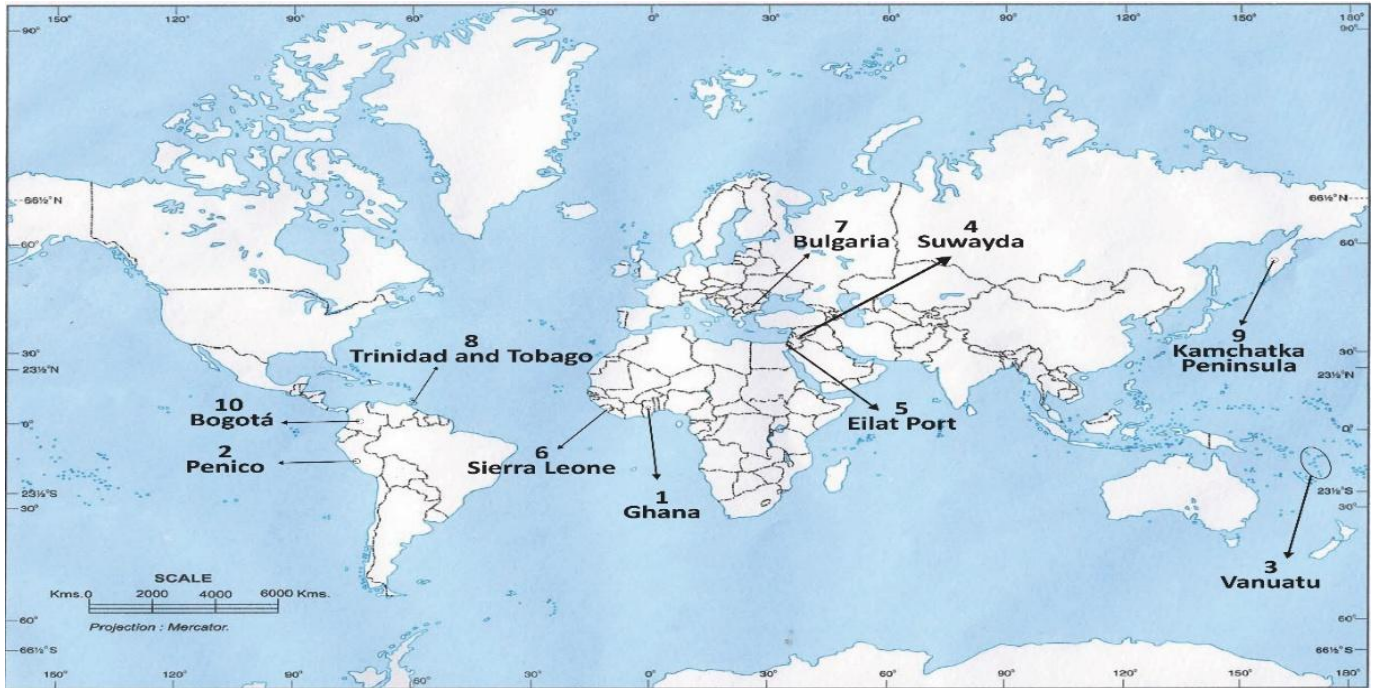
- In a significant shift, the court recognised the right of climate-impacted nations—termed “injured states”—to not just compensation but full reparations.
- This legal validation of the “loss and damage” principle could pave the way for lawsuits against rich countries and corporate polluters, especially those historically responsible for emissions.

Challenges and Future Implications

- While groundbreaking, the opinion also raises questions. For instance, the ICJ stated that merely initiating climate action isn't enough—its adequacy can be challenged.

MAPS: PLACES IN NEWS

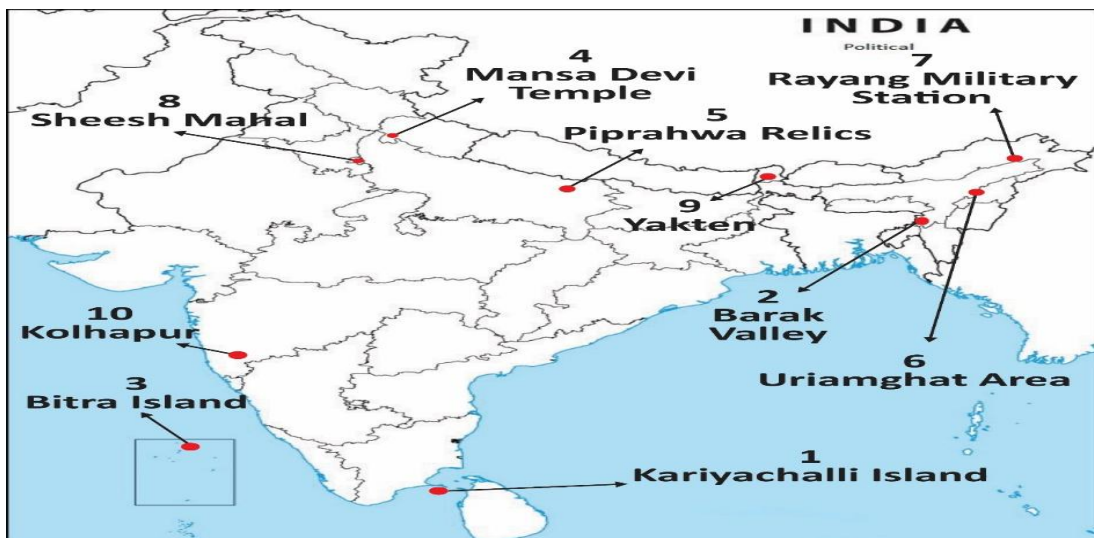
International Places in News



1	Ghana	PM of India visited Ghana. It is situated with the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean to the south, and shares borders with Côte d'Ivoire to the west, Burkina Faso to the north, and Togo to the east.
2	Penico (Peru)	In Peru, archaeologists have unearthed a 3,500-year-old ancient city named Penico. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparative Civilization: Peñico's development between 1800 and 1500 BCE places it as a contemporary of <i>early civilizations in Egypt (Middle Kingdom), Sumeria, and India (Indus Valley)</i>, though it evolved in isolation, offering unique insights into independent urban development.
3	Vanuatu	Vanuatu is leading a global climate case, backed by over 130 countries. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: South Pacific Ocean, east of Australia, west of Fiji • Geography: Archipelago of ~80 volcanic islands (65 inhabited) • Climate: Tropical; prone to cyclones, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions • Its capital and largest city is Port Vila, located on Efate Island
4	Suwayda	Syria's Druze community in Suwayda faces ethnic cleansing by Bedouin militias amid escalating violence after Assad's ouster. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bedouin-Druze Relations: Suwayda's demographic mix—90% Druze and one-third Bedouin (approximately 250,000)—has a history of coexistence and conflict.
5	Eilat Port (Israel)	Eilat Port, a strategic Red Sea trade hub, faced imminent closure due to a severe financial crisis triggered by a Houthi naval blockade and mounting debts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Impact: The crisis affects not only Israel but also Egypt, where <i>Suez Canal revenues dropped 40%</i> (\$280 million monthly), and Jordan's Aqaba port, which saw a 25% reduction in container traffic but gained diverted cargo.

6	Sierra Leone	<p>Sierra Leone's Gola-Tiwai complex has been inscribed as its first UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: West Africa, bordered by Guinea, Liberia, and the Atlantic Ocean. • Key sectors: Mining (iron ore, diamonds, titanium) remains top export contributor (~70% exports are iron ore) • Drug crisis: Synthetic <i>opioid "kush" epidemic</i> emerges; President declares national fight.
7	Bulgaria	<p>Bulgaria officially approved to adopt the euro on January 1, 2026, becoming the 21st member of the single currency area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU Integration: Bulgaria joined the Schengen area for air and sea borders (March 2024) and land borders (January 2025), issuing Schengen visas. • Strategic Location: Situated in Southeast Europe (Balkan Peninsula), Bulgaria borders Romania, Serbia, North Macedonia, Greece, Turkey, and the Black Sea, controlling key routes to the Middle East and Europe.
8	Trinidad and Tobago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geography: A twin-island republic located off Venezuela's northeastern coast in the southern Caribbean. • Strategic Location: Trinidad and Tobago's capital is Port of Spain, with San Fernando as its largest city. Its proximity to South America makes it a key transshipment hub, though this fuels drug trafficking.
9	Kamchatka Peninsula, Russia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8.8-magnitude earthquake triggered tsunami warnings in Russia, Japan, Hawaii, Peru, and Chile. • Geographical & Seismic Context: Located in Russia's Far Eastern Federal District, Kamchatka is a ~1,200 km volcanic peninsula lying on the Pacific Ring of Fire, where the Pacific and North American tectonic plates meet. • It is positioned between the Sea of Okhotsk to the west and the Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea to the east.
10	Bogotá, Colombia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bogotá hosted the Emergency Ministerial Conference of The Hague Group at the San Carlos Palace, where 32 nations discussed Israel's actions in Gaza, labeled as "genocide" by participants. • Geographical Context: Capital and largest city of Colombia. Nestled on a high Andean plateau (2,640 meters above sea level).

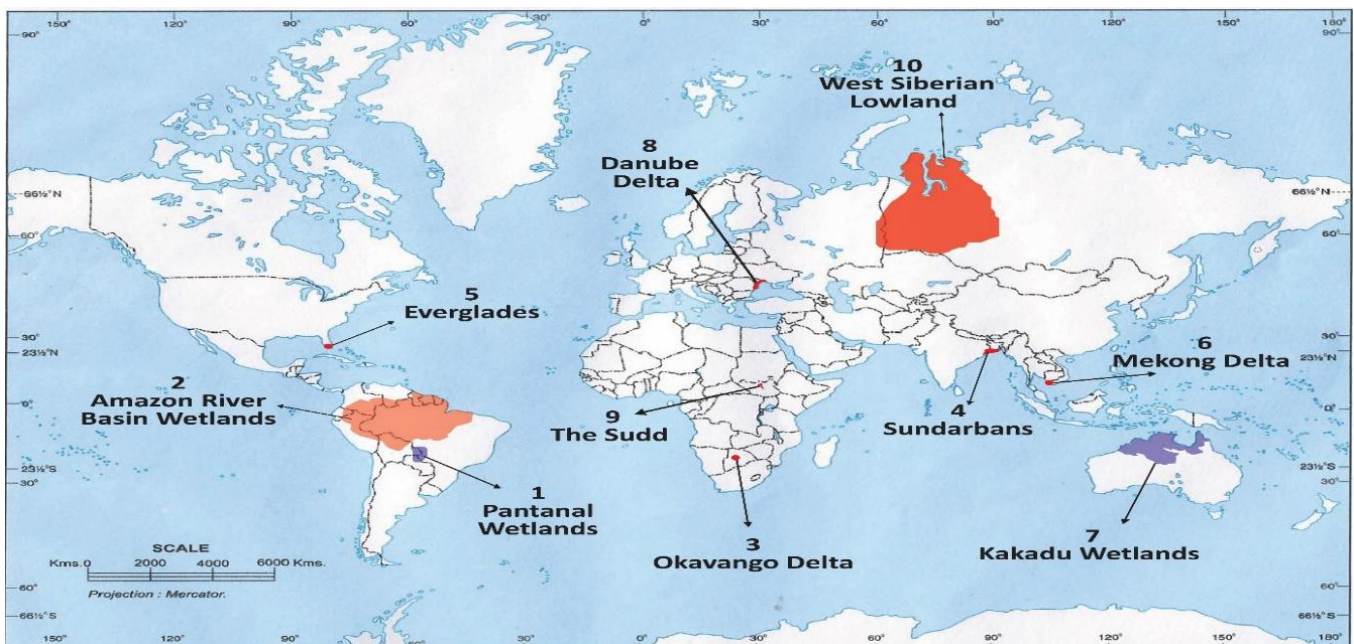
National Places in News



1	Kariyachalli Island	<p>Tamil Nadu is actively working to save the sinking Kariyachalli Island in the Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park by deploying 8,500 artificial reef modules.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecological hotspot: Surrounded by coral reefs and seagrass meadows, it supports species like the <i>endangered dugong</i> and over 132 coral types. • The island, which <i>has lost over 70% of its landmass</i> since 1969, is threatened with <i>complete disappearance by 2036</i> if erosion continues. • The project, part of the larger <i>Tamil Nadu Sustainably Harnessing Ocean Resources (TNSHORE) initiative</i>, aims to restore the island's degraded habitats and boost marine biodiversity.
2	Barak Valley (Southern Assam)	<p>The Lumding–Badarpur railway section, a lifeline connecting Barak Valley to the rest of India, passes through the unstable hills of Dima Hasao.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: The Barak Valley shares a 129-km border with Bangladesh. • It shares borders with Meghalaya on its north, Mizoram on its south, Manipur on its east, and Tripura (south west) and Sylhet division of Bangladesh on its west
3	Bitra island	<p>Lakshadweep administration is considering acquiring Bitra island for defense purposes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location and Features: Bitra, the smallest inhabited island in Lakshadweep, is located near Agatti Island in the Arabian Sea, • Strategic Importance: Positioned along key maritime trade routes between the Strait of Malacca and the Gulfs of Aden and Hormuz, Bitra's location enhances India's maritime surveillance.
4	Mansa Devi temple (Haridwar)	<p>A stampede on pedestrian route to Mansa Devi temple near Har Ki Pauri claimed 8 lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Mansa Devi temple is situated atop Bilwa Parvat in the Shivalik Hills, Haridwar, at an elevation of over 500 feet. • Mansa Devi temple, dedicated to Goddess Mansa, is one of Haridwar's Panch Tirthas and a Siddhpeeth. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Panch Tirthas: Gangadwara (Har Ki Pauri), Kushwart (Kankhal), Kankhal, Bilwa Tirtha (Mansa Devi Temple), and Neel Parvat (Chandi Devi Temple-opposite to Mansa devi temple)
5	Piprahwa Relics (Uttar Pradesh)	<p>The Buddha's relics from Piprahwa were returned to India after 127 years. (Originally slated for auction in Hong Kong in May 2025)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovery in 1898: The Piprahwa relics were <i>unearthed by British civil engineer William Claxton Peppé</i> during an excavation of a stupa in Piprahwa, near the India-Nepal border. • Confirmation of Kapilavastu: Excavations by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in 1971-77 uncovered additional caskets and 40 terracotta sealings, reinforcing Piprahwa's identification as Kapilavastu. • The stupa's stratigraphy revealed three phases: a Sakya-era mud stupa, an Asokan brick expansion, and a Kushana-period monastery.
6	Uriamghat area (Golaghat district, Assam)	<p>The Assam government launched an eviction drive to clear over 3,600 acres of encroached forest land in the Rengma Reserve Forest.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecological Importance: The Rengma Reserve Forest supports species like the <i>Indian elephant and hoolock gibbon</i> and serves as a vital ecological corridor near the Assam-Nagaland border. • Forest Rights Act, 2006: The eviction spared families with FRC certificates, recognizing their rights as <i>forest dwellers under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006</i>.

7	Rayang military station (Arunachal Pradesh)	<p>The Indian Army conducted "Exercise Drone Prahar," a high-tech military drill to validate the use of drone technology in tactical battlefield operations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location: Rayang, near Pasighat, East Siang district, Arunachal Pradesh • The district space partly includes <i>D'Ering Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary</i>.
8	Sheesh Mahal, Shalimar Bagh	<p>The Sheesh Mahal in Shalimar Bagh, Delhi, has been reopened to the public after 370 years following restoration by the ASI and the Delhi Development Authority (DDA).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mughal Legacy: Constructed in 1653 during Shah Jahan's reign, the Sheesh Mahal (Palace of Mirrors) is known for its floral stucco, and red sandstone structures. • Key Historical Events: The palace gained prominence as the site of Aurangzeb's first coronation in July 1658.
9	Yakten	<p>Yakten, a serene village in Sikkim's Pakyong district, has been declared India's first Digital Nomad Village under the 'Nomad Sikkim' initiative.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 'Nomad Sikkim' initiative <i>ensures year-round income</i> by attracting digital nomads—remote workers, freelancers, and entrepreneurs—who are less constrained by seasonal tourism patterns. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Himachal Pradesh's "Work from Hills" initiative, launched in 2021, attracted remote workers to villages like Bir-Billing. • Policy Alignment: The initiative aligns with Sikkim's "One Family, One Entrepreneur" mission and India's Digital India program, promoting rural digital inclusion and entrepreneurship.
10	Kolhapur (Maharashtra)	<p>Prada (Global fashion giant) has acknowledged that its new leather sandal design was inspired by India's famous Kolhapuri "chappals"-got GI Tag ("<i>traditional Indian handcrafted footwear</i>")</p> <p>It is situated on the banks of Panchganga river and is surrounded by Sahyadri mountain ranges (bauxite mineral resource). Kolhapur was a princely state during British rule of India. Shahu Maharaj ruled it from 1894 - 1922.</p>

Important Wetlands around the World



1	Pantanal (Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The world's largest tropical wetland, covering approximately 75,000 square miles. (One of the highest biomass densities globally) Type: <i>Tropical seasonal floodplain wetland</i> It's a vast mosaic of flooded grasslands, rivers, and swamps, often called the "Serengeti of South America" due to its incredible biodiversity.
2	Amazon River Basin Wetlands (South America)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type: <i>Riverine & rainforest wetlands</i> Part of the vast <i>Amazon Rainforest</i>, these wetlands include extensive floodplains, oxbow lakes, and seasonally inundated forests. Stores ~10% of world's carbon in vegetation and peat soils. They are a biodiversity hotspot, supporting unique species like the pink river dolphin and giant otter.
3	Okavango Delta (Botswana)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of the world's largest inland deltas (no outlet to sea) and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It's renowned for <i>its exceptional wildlife</i>, attracting a huge number of animals seeking water in the otherwise arid Kalahari.
4	Sundarbans (India, Bangladesh)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type: <i>Deltaic mangrove wetland</i> The world's largest single contiguous mangrove forest, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It's <i>home to the elusive Royal Bengal Tiger</i>.
5	Everglades (Florida USA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type: <i>Subtropical marshland ecosystem</i> Often called the "River of Grass," this subtropical wetland is a slow-moving expanse of water, sawgrass marshes, and cypress swamps. It's a home to iconic species like the Florida panther and American alligator.
6	Mekong Delta (Vietnam)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type: <i>River delta + estuarine wetlands (Rice bowl of Vietnam)</i> One of the world's most fertile wetlands, this network of rivers, swamps, and rice paddies is a lifeline for millions. It faces challenges from rising sea levels and upstream dam construction.
7	Kakadu Wetlands (Australia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type: <i>Seasonal floodplains, estuarine mangroves, billabongs</i> It's a UNESCO World Heritage Site, recognized for both its natural and cultural values. It has been home to Aboriginal peoples for over 65,000 years, with rich rock art and oral traditions. Home to saltwater crocodiles and diverse birdlife.
8	Danube Delta (Romania & Ukraine)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Europe's one of the largest river deltas and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It's the largest continuous marshland in Europe and hosts an incredible diversity of birds (including the <i>largest colony of pelicans outside Africa</i>) and freshwater fish.
9	The Sudd (South Sudan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type: <i>Inland floodplain & swamp</i> One of the largest freshwater wetlands in Africa, covering ~57,000 square miles. Its vast expanse of marshes and floating vegetation makes it a rich ecosystem. It is vital for the livelihoods of local communities (e.g., the Dinka people) for fishing and grazing.
10	West Siberian Lowland (Russia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Type: <i>Boreal peatland, swamp forests, tundra wetlands</i> Spanning ~1 million km², the world's largest wetland comprises peatlands, bogs, and marshes across Siberia. It stores vast carbon reserves, mitigating climate change, and supports migratory birds like Siberian cranes.

SOCIAL ISSUES

Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)

Launched on **October 2, 2014**, **SBM** aimed to eliminate open defecation and improve solid and liquid waste management across India, revolutionizing the sanitation landscape. Its key components include:

SBM-Grameen (SBM-G)	SBM-Urban (SBM-U)					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Phase I (2014–2019): Focused on achieving ODF (Open Defecation Free) status by constructing household toilets and promoting behavioral change through awareness campaigns. ● Phase II (2019–2025): Focuses on sustainability through <i>ODF Plus villages and integrated waste management</i>. <p>Swachh Survekshan Grameen (SSG) 2023–24 (by Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS)):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Key Sanitation Parameters: Faecal Sludge Management (FSM), waste segregation, Grey Water Management (GWM), Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan (GOBARdhan) plants, Plastic Waste Management Units (PWMUs) assets. ● Survey Coverage: 17,304 villages, 729 districts, 2.6 lakh households, 85,901 public places. ● Household-Level Insights: 95.1% have toilet access, 92.7% dispose biodegradable waste, 78.7% manage greywater and 39.9% segregate waste. ● Village Infrastructure: 45% have waste collection vehicles, 29.4% have segregation sheds and 62.1% have plastic waste linkages. ● Public Places: 76.7% have toilets and 91.1% have minimal stagnant water. ● Asset Functionality: 61.4% PWMUs functional and 58.5% GOBARdhan plants functional. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Phase I (2014-21): Focused on achieving ODF Urban India with a target of 100% scientific processing of municipal solid waste in 4,041 statutory towns. ● Phase II- SBM-U 2.0 (2021-2026): launched with a vision of Garbage-Free Urban India focusing on sustainability, circular economy, behavioral change. The goal was to contribute to SDG 2030 and improve urban quality of life. <p>Swachh Survekshan Urban (SSU) 2024-25 (9th edition) conducted by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA): It recognizes urban local bodies (ULBs) across India for exemplary performance in sanitation, waste management, and public hygiene.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Theme: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. ● Cities covered: 4,500+ cities. ● Survey Parameters: 10 broad parameters, 54 indicators- Waste processing, citizen feedback, Open Defecation Free+ (ODF+), certifications, sustainable practices. ● Assessment Tools: On-ground inspections and feedback via MyGov, Swachhata App, face-to-face surveys. Over 3,000 assessors and over 11 lakh households evaluated. ● What's New in SSU 2024-25? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Super Swachh League introduced to honour consistently top-performing 3 cities over past 3 years. ○ Population-based categories created for fair comparison across city sizes- <table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center; margin: 10px 0;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Very Small Cities (< 20,000 population)</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Small Cities (20,000 – 50,000)</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Medium Cities (50,000 – 3 lakh)</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Big Cities (3 – 10 lakh)</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Million Plus Cities (> 10 lakh)</td> </tr> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Focus on tourist and high-footfall areas to ensure sanitation in key public spaces. ○ Simplified 10-section framework for holistic sanitation assessment. ○ New indicators added for project grounding and CTU (City Transport Unit) transformation. ○ School-level assessments launched to instill Swachhata values in students. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Top Performers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cleanest Mega Cities (>10L): Indore, Navi Mumbai, Surat ○ Best Ganga Town: Prayagraj ○ Best SafaiMitra Surakshit Shehar: Visakhapatnam, Jabalpur, Gorakhpur ○ Special Recognition: Mahakumbh for exceptional urban waste management during the Mahakumbh (66 crore footfall). 	Very Small Cities (< 20,000 population)	Small Cities (20,000 – 50,000)	Medium Cities (50,000 – 3 lakh)	Big Cities (3 – 10 lakh)	Million Plus Cities (> 10 lakh)
Very Small Cities (< 20,000 population)	Small Cities (20,000 – 50,000)	Medium Cities (50,000 – 3 lakh)	Big Cities (3 – 10 lakh)	Million Plus Cities (> 10 lakh)		

- **Significance of SSU 2024-25:** This year, the awards not only celebrate the top Swachh Shehar but also recognize and encourage small cities showing strong promise and progress.

Benefits of SBM	Challenges Faced by SBM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved Public Health: Significant reduction in infant and under-five mortality. Lower incidence of diarrhea, malnutrition, and other sanitation-related diseases due to reduced exposure to fecal-oral pathogens. • Enhanced Sanitation Coverage: Over 11.64 crore household toilets constructed in rural areas, over 63 lakh household and 6.3 lakh public toilets built in urban areas. India declared ODF in 2019. • Women’s Safety and Dignity: Improved access to toilets, especially in rural areas, enhanced privacy, dignity, and safety for women and girls. • Environmental Gains: Scientific solid and liquid waste management systems adopted. Remediation of legacy dumpsites and promotion of waste-to-energy technologies. • Behavior Change and Awareness: Created a Jan Andolan (people's movement) around cleanliness and hygiene. Promoted lasting behavioral change through IEC (Information, Education & Communication) campaigns. • Socio-Economic Impact: Employment generation in sanitation and waste sectors. Boost to startups and innovation in waste management through partnerships (SIIC-IIT Kanpur, and DPIIT for innovation). • Global Recognition: Recognized as one of the largest and most impactful sanitation programs worldwide. It became a model for community-driven public health reform. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of Sanitation Infrastructure: Community Sanitary Complexes (CSCs) suffer from poor upkeep due to lack of clear ownership and accountability, inadequate funds for routine maintenance and irregular water supply and electricity connections. • Behavioral Change and Toilet Usage: Despite high toilet coverage, toilet usage remains inconsistent in some areas due to traditional habits and cultural beliefs, lack of awareness about hygiene benefits and poor quality or incomplete toilet construction. • Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM): Many villages lack infrastructure for segregation and storage of waste and transportation and treatment facilities. Functional status of PWMUs (61.4%), GOBARdhan units (58.5%), and FSTPs (Faecal Sludge Treatment Plants)/STPs (83.8%) in Grameen area needs improvement. • Financial and Operational Bottlenecks: Delayed or inadequate funding at the state and local levels, complexity in fund utilization and gram panchayats often struggle with limited resources and personnel. • Urban Sanitation Challenges: Overburdened urban infrastructure due to rapid urbanization, difficulty in managing legacy waste dumpsites and inconsistent door-to-door collection and segregation compliance. • Monitoring and Data Gaps: Discrepancies between reported and ground realities (e.g., functional vs. constructed toilets), lack of robust real-time monitoring in some regions and insufficient third-party audits or community verification. • Inclusion and Equity Issues: Sanitation access and quality may be lower for marginalized communities. Gender-sensitive sanitation (e.g., safe toilets for women and girls) still lacking in some areas. • Sustaining Community Engagement: Post-certification (ODF/ODF+), interest and motivation wane without continued IEC. Volunteer fatigue and lack of incentives for local champions.

Way Forward

- Focus on **sustainable waste management**.
- Promote **Swabhav Swachhata, Sanskar Swachhata** (Cleanliness as a habit and value).
- Expand **community engagement**, recognize **Safai Mitras**, and build inclusive sanitation systems.
- Ensure **functionality of infrastructure** and behavioral change for long-term success.

Judicial Discretion Key in POCSO Bail Decisions

A special POCSO court in Mumbai recently granted bail to a 40-year-old teacher accused of sexually assaulting a minor, citing consensual relations. The order has renewed focus on the complexities of bail under the POCSO Act, which is stricter than standard criminal law.

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012

It is a special law enacted to safeguard **children (individuals below 18 years of age)** from sexual offences. It provides a comprehensive legal framework to address sexual abuse, harassment, and exploitation of minors.

Key features of the Act

- **Gender-neutral protection:** Applies to both boys and girls.
- **Wide range of offences:** Covers penetrative and non-penetrative assault, sexual harassment, and pornography involving children.
- **Special courts:** Mandates the establishment of child-friendly Special Courts for speedy trial.
- **Mandatory reporting:** Any person who has knowledge of child sexual abuse is legally required to report it.
- **Presumption of guilt:** The accused must prove innocence, reversing the general legal principle of “innocent until proven guilty.”
- **Confidentiality:** Protects the identity of the child during investigation and trial.
- **Support for Victims:** It provides a framework for supporting and rehabilitating victims of sexual offenses.
- **Child-Friendly Procedures:** The act emphasizes child-friendly procedures for recording statements, medical examinations, and court appearances.

Judicial Discretion and Bail in POCSO Cases

- Offences under the **POCSO Act are cognizable and non-bailable**, meaning arrests can occur without a warrant and bail is not guaranteed. However, the Act does not lay down specific bail criteria.
- Courts rely on **Section 483 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023** (formerly Section 439 CrPC), which considers factors like the gravity of the offence, potential punishment, flight risk, and risk of evidence tampering.
- Over time, courts have introduced additional considerations.
 - In ***Dharmander Singh (2020)***, the Delhi High Court listed factors like the ages of the victim and accused, their age gap, relationship dynamics, coercion, and post-offence conduct—though not binding, they serve as a guide.
 - In ***Deshraj @ Musa vs State of Rajasthan (2024)***, the Supreme Court granted bail to an 18-year-old in a consensual relationship with a 16-year-old, given the minor age gap, time spent in custody, and slow trial progress.
- These cases underscore that bail in POCSO matters ultimately depends on judicial discretion balancing individual liberty with victim protection.

Consent and Legal Grey Zones Under POCSO

- The POCSO Act does not recognise consent from individuals below the age of 18, treating all sexual activity with minors as an offence, regardless of whether it was voluntary.
- This creates a **legal grey area**, particularly in cases involving consensual adolescent relationships that are later criminalised.
- While courts have started considering such nuances during bail hearings—especially when the alleged victim confirms the consensual nature of the relationship in a magistrate’s statement—bail remains difficult in the early investigation phase.
- Courts often wait for critical evidence and victim testimony before granting relief, leading to prolonged custody for the accused.

Mental Health Guidelines

The Supreme Court has issued guidelines to educational institutions across the country.

Introduction

- Rising cases of student suicides in India have prompted urgent judicial intervention.
- Recently, the Supreme Court issued sweeping guidelines to educational institutions across the country, terming the growing mental health crisis a “**systemic failure**”.
- The Court directed a uniform, enforceable mental health policy applicable to all schools, colleges, universities, hostels, and coaching centres, irrespective of their affiliation or ownership.

Increasing Suicides on Campuses

- According to the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)**, 13,044 student suicides were recorded in 2022, comprising **7.6% of all suicides** in the country.
- The number has increased sharply from 5,425 in 2001, underscoring a disturbing trend. At least **2,248 deaths in 2022** were directly attributed to exam failure.
- The Supreme Court observed that students are being driven into a “**rat race**” where the joy of learning has been eclipsed by anxiety, performance metrics, and parental pressure.
- The Court stated, “*Education is meant to liberate, not burden the learner... its true success lies not in grades or rankings, but in the holistic growth of a human being capable of living with dignity, confidence, and purpose.*”
- The bench also described the institutional silence around mental health as a key factor exacerbating student vulnerability, warning that suicide cases cannot be viewed as isolated tragedies but rather as a **collective social failure**.

Supreme Court Key Directives

- In an unprecedented step, the Court issued **15 binding guidelines** to be followed until a central regulatory framework is enacted.
- **Mandatory Counsellors and Support Systems**
 - All institutions with 100 or more students must appoint at least one **qualified counsellor, psychologist, or social worker** trained in child and adolescent mental health.
 - Smaller institutions must establish referral linkages with external mental health professionals.
 - Staff must be trained **twice a year** by certified mental health experts.
- **Infrastructure and Physical Safety Measures**
 - Residential institutions must install **tamper-proof ceiling fans** and restrict access to rooftops and high-risk areas to deter impulsive acts of self-harm.
- **Ending Discriminatory Academic Practices**
 - Institutions were asked to **end batch segregation based on academic performance**, avoid public shaming, and refrain from setting unrealistic academic targets.
 - Such practices were deemed detrimental to the mental health of vulnerable students.
- **Institutional Accountability and Protection**
 - Institutions must create **robust, confidential redressal mechanisms** for complaints involving harassment, bullying, caste- or gender-based discrimination, and sexual assault.
 - Retaliation against whistle-blowers or complainants will attract **institutional liability**.
 - Failure to act promptly will be treated as **administrative culpability** with legal consequences.
- **Policy Framework and National Coordination**
 - All institutions must adopt and publish an **annual mental health policy**, taking reference from government initiatives such as:
 - *Ummeed* guidelines (Understand, Motivate, Manage, Empathise, Empower, Develop)
 - *Manodarpan*, launched by the Ministry of Education during the COVID-19 pandemic
 - *National Suicide Prevention Strategy* (India’s first nationwide strategy, released in 2022)

- The Court also called for the formation of a **National Task Force** to institutionalise student mental health initiatives and suicide prevention mechanisms across the higher education landscape.

Significance and Future Implications

- This landmark ruling by the Supreme Court marks a shift in recognising **mental health as integral to the right to life and education**.
- However, the success of these measures will depend on:
 - Timely notification and enforcement by states and UTs
 - Adequate budgetary allocations for hiring professionals
 - Sensitisation of staff and students toward emotional well-being
- It also underscores the need for **collective societal change**, moving from a culture of academic pressure to one that prioritises the **well-being, dignity, and individuality** of each student.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

RECLAIM Framework

The coal ministry launched the RECLAIM- a community engagement and development framework.

Objective: To address the **social and environmental challenges** that arise when coal mines are shut down and to ensure a **just and sustainable transition** for communities that have long depended on mining for their livelihoods and development.

- Globally, countries like **Germany (aiming for coal phase-out by 2038) and the UK (which closed its last coal plant in 2024)** have implemented community-focused mine closure frameworks.

Developed By: **Coal Controller Organization** in collaboration with the **Heartfulness Institute** (a non-profit, volunteer-based educational organization focused on meditation & relaxation).

Key Features of RECLAIM Framework

- **Structured Guidance:** It provides a **step-by-step approach** to help authorities and stakeholders manage mine closures.
 - ✓ Despite mine closure guidelines existing since 2009, only three coal mines in India have been formally closed as of 2024, with 299 non-operational mines remaining abandoned or discontinued without scientific closure. This has led to ecological degradation, methane emissions, and risks of accidents and illegal mining.
- **Inclusive Engagement:** It promotes **community participation** throughout the mine closure and **post-closure phases**, making local voices central to decision-making.
- **Ecological Restoration:** Promoting *land reclamation, water table renewal, and afforestation* to mitigate environmental degradation caused by mining activities.
- **Tools and Methodologies:** It includes a **set of practical tools, templates, and proven methods** specifically adapted for the Indian socio-economic and cultural context.
- **Focus on Equity:** It emphasizes on **gender inclusivity, representation of vulnerable groups and** strong integration with **Panchayati Raj Institutions** to ensure grassroots involvement. (Aligning with **SDG 5** (Gender Equality) and **SDG 10** (Reduced Inequalities))

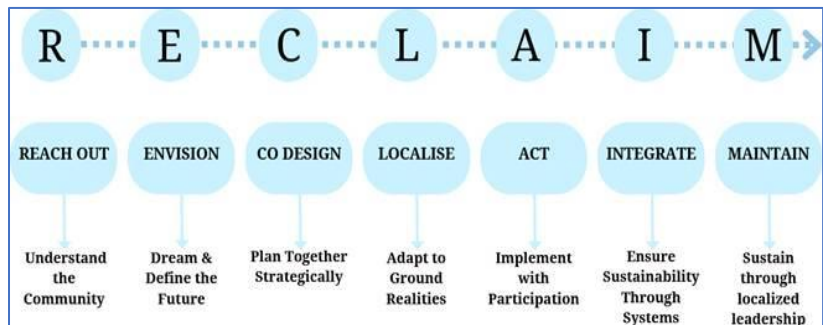
Coal Controller Organization (CCO)

CCO is a subordinate office under the Ministry of Coal; Headquartered in Kolkata with field offices in Dhanbad, Ranchi, Bilaspur, Nagpur, Sambalpur, Kothagudem, and Asansol.

CCO collects monthly coal production data from all private and public sector coal mines. Its key responsibilities include:

- ▣ Inspecting collieries to verify coal grade, class, and size.
- ▣ Issuing directives and resolving disputes related to coal grading.
- ▣ Regulating coal stock disposal and expected output.
- ▣ Ensuring quality surveillance during loading and dispatch.
- ▣ Granting permissions for opening/reopening of mines or seams.
- ▣ Assessing and collecting excise duty on raw coal.
- ▣ Sharing coal data with various national and international bodies.

Note: Directorate General of Mines Safety (DGMS) is the regulatory authority for mine safety.



Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan Vidyarthi Mitra Kits Scheme

The Andhra Pradesh government launched the 'Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan Vidyarthi Mitra Kits' scheme to provide free school kits to over 35 lakh school children.

- ✓ The scheme replaces the earlier '**Jagananna Vidya Kanuka scheme**', emphasizing a politics-free approach to education.
- ✓ Radhakrishnan served as the country's second President, from 1962 to 1967 and his birthday is observed as Teachers' Day (September 5).

What is in the Kit?

Each student receives:

- **Three uniforms** (olive green pants/gowns & light yellow-green striped shirts).
- **One pair of shoes, two pairs of socks, a belt, and a school bag.**
- **Textbooks, notebooks, and workbooks.**
- **Oxford English-English-Telugu Dictionary** (for Class 6).
- **Pictorial dictionaries** (for Class 1).
- **Dictionaries in minority languages** (Urdu, Tamil, Odia) where applicable.
- **Uniform stitching charges** covered for up to Class 10th.

Objective of the Scheme

- To **ensure equal educational opportunities** for all schoolchildren; contributes to **SDG 4** (Quality Education).
- To **eliminate political influence** in student welfare schemes.
- To provide ready-to-use, high-quality kits to **reduce the financial burden on families.**

Aadhaar Integration: The scheme utilizes Aadhaar services for authentication under the Aadhaar Act, 2016, ensuring benefits reach genuine recipients.

Budget and Quality Assurance: Total cost is ₹953.71 crore (₹778.68 crore from the state and ₹175.03 crore from the Centre). The cost per kit is approx. ₹2,279. Quality checks will be conducted in three layers (raw materials, production, packaging) by the Quality Council of India (QCI).

About Quality Council of India (QCI)



- It is an independent, autonomous, non-profit organization established in **1996** through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model on the recommendation of the EU Expert Mission and supported by the Central Government along with industry bodies- (i) Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), (ii) Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and (iii) Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).
- Registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, QCI serves as the national body for accreditation, under the nodal guidance of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- Governance:** Governed by a Council of 38 members including the Chairman and Secretary General. The Council has an equal representation of Government, Industry and other Stakeholders. The **Chairman** is appointed by the Prime Minister of India.

Key Functions:

- Provides independent third-party assessments of products, services, and processes.
- Promotes quality standards across sectors like education, healthcare, environment, infrastructure, governance, and social sectors.
- Aims to improve quality of life and well-being by fostering a national quality ecosystem.

QCI comprises five constituent boards:

- National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB):** Accredits certification and inspection bodies for management systems like ISO 9001 (Quality Management), ISO 14001 (Environmental Management), and food safety.
- National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL):** ensuring technical competence.
- National Accreditation Board for Education and Training (NABET):** Focuses on quality in education, skill training, and environmental impact assessments.
- National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers (NABH):** Accredits healthcare facilities to ensure patient safety and quality care.
- National Board for Quality Promotion (NBQP):** Promotes quality awareness and training across sectors.

Punjab's Land Pooling Policy and Its Criticism

Recently launched Land Pooling Policy, 2025- a flagship initiative of the Punjab Government aimed at acquiring over 40,000 acres of farmland for housing has sparked protests in Punjab.

What is the Land Pooling Policy, 2025

- It is a **voluntary initiative** launched by the state government to promote **planned urban development** and curb illegal colonies.
- Unlike traditional forced acquisition, this policy **involves landowners as stakeholders** in the development process.
 - ✓ Land pooling is a mechanism where the government consolidates small land parcels owned by multiple individuals into a single large tract for planned development.
 - ✓ After development, landowners receive a portion of the developed land or compensation.

Key Features of the Scheme	Land Return Ratios for Landowners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary participation: Landowners must give written consent (No Objection Certificate). • Planned and Inclusive Urban Growth: It aims to ensure holistic growth across 27 cities in Punjab targeting major districts like Ludhiana, Mohali, Amritsar, Jalandhar, Patiala, Bathinda, and Sangrur. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 acre pooled → 1,000 sq yd residential + 200 sq yd commercial plot. • 9 acres pooled → 3 acres of developed land (<i>for group housing</i>). • 50 acres pooled → 30 acres of developed land <i>for plotted development</i>.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Similar policies in Delhi (DDA Land Pooling) and Gujarat (GIFT City) have improved urban planning. • Support for Small and Marginal Farmers: With provisions for interim compensation of ₹30,000 per acre per year (up to 3 years) until possession of developed plots is given. • Curbing Land Mafia: By regulating land development and banning illegal colonies, the policy aims to dismantle networks of corruption associated with unauthorized real estate projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial/Institutional use: 1,600 sq yd plot per acre. • Commercial use: 800 sq yd per acre. • Integrated industrial parks: 1,000 sq yd industrial + 300 sq yd residential + 100 sq yd commercial per acre. ** Farmers are afforded complete freedom to keep, lease, or sell their allotted plots, allowing them to monetize their assets as they see fit.
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Way Forward

To ensure fair and sustainable implementation of the Land Pooling Policy, the Punjab government should:

- **Conduct transparent consultations** with farmers, panchayats, and civil society before acquiring land.
- **Incorporate safeguards** from the LARR Act, 2013, including fair compensation and resettlement provisions.
- **Protect fertile agricultural zones** by prioritizing non-cultivable land for urban development.
- **Ensure equitable returns** for small and marginal farmers to prevent exploitation.
 - ✓ *The Gujarat Town Planning and Urban Development Act, 1976*, successfully implemented land pooling for urban projects like the Ahmedabad Ring Road, where landowners received developed plots with enhanced value, ensuring equitable benefits.
- **Strengthen monitoring and grievance redressal mechanisms** to build public trust and accountability.

Why is the Scheme Being Criticized?

- **Fear of Forced Acquisition:** Though the policy is portrayed as voluntary, **critics allege that land can still be forcibly acquired** using provisions of the **LARR Act, 2013** (The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act 2013), particularly when some landowners in a large project area refuse to cooperate. **Farmer unions** argue that the promise of “no land without consent” is misleading, as isolated farmers surrounded by pooled land will face indirect pressure to surrender their land.
- **Bypassing the Central Land Acquisition Act, 2013:** The policy uses the **Punjab Regional Town Planning and Development Act, 1995**, which lacks the **strong safeguards** like prior compensation, consent, rehabilitation, and social impact assessment mandated under the **LARR Act, 2013**. **Opposition leaders** argue this choice is a way to **sidestep compensation norms** and fast-track acquisition without legal hurdles.
- **Loss of Fertile Agricultural Land:** Policy will **divert over 40,000 acres of fertile farmland** (much of which is triple-cropped) for urban development leading to the **loss of over 1.5 lakh tons of paddy production**, impacting **food security and agricultural livelihoods**. (directly impacting the state's role as India's "food bowl")
- **Economic and Social Displacement:** **Villages may be depopulated**, traditional rural professions lost, and auxiliary agricultural activities (like dairy, animal husbandry, horticulture) shut down. The policy is seen as a threat to **Punjab's agrarian economy**, cultural identity, and social fabric.
 - ✓ A critical gap identified by critics is the absence of a comprehensive Rehabilitation and Resettlement policy for displaced communities.
 - ✓ The explicit absence of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and Social Impact Assessments (SIAs) **further highlights a significant policy vacuum**.
- **Accusations of Corporate and Political Exploitation:** **Farmer unions and political leaders** allege the policy is designed to benefit **private developers, corporates, and land mafias**, not the public. Opposition parties claim the scheme is a “**land-grabbing Ponzi scheme**” aimed at raising thousands of crores for **AAP's political interests**, especially ahead of the 2027 elections.
- **Lack of Transparency and Public Consultation:** There was **no comprehensive survey or consultation** with farmers, panchayats, or civil society groups before launching the policy. Critics question the **need for new residential and commercial development** when many plots and housing units already lie vacant in Punjab's cities.
- **Disparities in Returns and Inequity:** **Smaller landholders (9 acres)** get back only **33% of land**, whereas **large landowners (50 acres)** get **60% return**, raising concerns of **injustice towards marginal farmers**. Farmers also fear losing rights to **sell, mortgage, or change land use** once pooling notifications are issued.

Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA)

CARA recently clarified that **digitally certified adoption orders sent via email are legally valid**, and **hard copies are not required**, addressing confusion over Regulation 13(8) of the **Adoption Regulations, 2022**.

- ✓ Regulation 13(8) requires Specialized Adoption Agencies (SAAs) to get a certified adoption order from the District Magistrate via District Child Protection Units (DCPU), email it to parents within 10 days, and upload it to the portal.

About CARA

CARA is a **statutory body** under the **Ministry of Women and Child Development** established in 1990 (as an autonomous body). It attained its statutory status under **Section 68 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (JJ Act)**.

Role of CARA: Nodal agency for **monitoring, regulating, and facilitating** adoption of orphaned, abandoned, and surrendered children in India.

Objectives

- **Promote in-country adoption** to ensure children grow up in their cultural and social environment.
- **Regulate inter-country adoption** under the **Hague Convention**.
- **Protect the best interests of the child** by ensuring transparency, legality, and accountability.
- **Facilitate deinstitutionalization** of children through family-based care.
- **Implement child-centric adoption procedures** via CARINGS (Child Adoption Resource Information and Guidance System).
 - ✓ CARINGS is a robust web-based management system designed to bring transparency in the adoption system and curtailing delays at various levels.

Functions of CARA

- **Framing and Updating Regulations:** It has the authority to **formulate, revise, and implement adoption regulations** in line with national laws and international conventions to streamline procedures.
- **Central Authority under Hague Convention:** CARA serves as **India's Central Authority** under **1993 Hague Convention (India ratified in 2003)** on Inter-country Adoption, facilitating safe, legal, & ethical overseas adoptions.
- **Maintenance of Centralized Databases:** Through the **CARINGS portal**, CARA maintains a **comprehensive centralized database** of: Children legally free for adoption; Prospective adoptive parents; Adoptive placements and follow-ups
- **Issuance of Certificates for Inter-country Adoptions:** CARA is responsible for **No Objection Certificates (NOCs)** for inter-country adoption cases and **Conformity Certificates** under **Article 23 of the Hague Convention**.
- **Coordination with Stakeholders:** It collaborates with a wide network of stakeholders including State Adoption Resource Agencies (SARAs), Specialized Adoption Agencies (SAAs), Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), District Child Protection Units (DCPUs) and Authorized Foreign Adoption Agencies (AFAAs).
- **Capacity Building and Awareness:** CARA organizes training, workshops,

Significance	Challenges Faced by CARA
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Centralized Adoption System: through the CARINGS portal,• Standardized Timelines and Protocols: It lays down uniform procedures and timelines for each stage of adoption, reducing delays and ensuring timely placement of children in families. For example, CWC declares child legally free within 2-4 months, depending on age.• Child Safety and Legal Safeguards: By regulating adoptions through licensed agencies and CWCs, CARA prevents trafficking and informal adoptions, protecting the rights and welfare of children.• Structured Support for Adoptive Parents: CARA provides a defined, step-by-step process for both Indian and overseas adoptive parents, enhancing their confidence and easing legal complexities.• Decentralized Authority for Faster Approvals: The 2021 amendment to the JJ Act authorizes District Magistrates to issue adoption orders, helping decentralize decision-making and speed up case disposal at the local level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low Number of Children Legally Available for Adoption: Despite lakhs of children in need, only 2,430 were declared legally free for adoption in 2021. CWCs and SAAs often fail to identify, and process orphaned or abandoned children due to poor infrastructure and coordination thus leading to delays• Informal and Illegal Adoptions: Hospitals, clinics, and families sometimes bypass CARA, leading to unauthorized adoptions with no legal safeguards.• Complicated Legal and Court Processes: Cumbersome laws (e.g., JJ Act and Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956 (HAMA)) and slow court orders discourage adoption. Supreme Court and experts have flagged CARA's process as tedious and parent-centric, neglecting the child's interests.• Confusion Over New Adoption Procedures: Transfer of authority from courts to District Magistrates under the revised JJ Act has caused confusion and delays due to lack of awareness.• Barriers in Inter-country Adoptions: High costs of Home Studies Report (HSR) and bureaucratic delays in NOCs create barriers. Delhi High Court in 2018 criticized the burdensome procedures imposed by CARA.• Over-centralization & Lack of Human Touch: CARA's centralized system removes personal engagement. This can lead to adoption failures or children being returned post-adoption.

seminars, and campaigns for adoption agencies, social workers, and the public to promote awareness and build capacity.

- **Research and Documentation:** It conducts and supports **research, publication, and documentation** on adoption trends, challenges, and best practices to inform policy and improve the system.

Row Over Martyr's Day in Kashmir

Politics in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) got tense over Martyrs' Day on July 13. With an elected government in power for the first time since 2019, Valley parties planned tributes at Srinagar's Martyrs' Cemetery, but the police placed several leaders under house detention to block the visit.

What is Martyrs' Day in Kashmir?

Martyrs' Day in Kashmir marks the **killing of 22 Kashmiri Muslims** by the **Dogra regime** on **13 July 1931**, who were protesting outside **Srinagar Central Jail** during the trial of **Abdul Qadeer Khan**, who had been charged with sedition for inciting rebellion against the Maharaja's rule.

Historical Background

• Political Context (1931):

Kashmir was ruled by Maharaja Hari Singh, a Dogra Hindu ruler, under British Paramountcy. Widespread unrest was growing among Kashmiri Muslims due to **political repression, economic marginalization, and religious restrictions.**

• Role of Abdul Qadeer Khan:

Delivered a **fiery speech against the Dogra regime**, urging people to revolt. His subsequent **arrest and sedition trial** drew massive public interest.

• The 13 July Protest and Massacre:

On **13 July 1931**, around **4,000–5,000 people** gathered outside **Srinagar Central Jail** during Khan's trial. The **Dogra forces opened fire**, killing **22 protestors**. The slain protestors were **buried at Mazar-e-Shuhada** (Martyrs' Graveyard) near the **Naqshband Sahib shrine** in downtown Srinagar, which became a symbolic site of resistance.

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• Declaration of Martyrs' Day: Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, then leader of the Muslim Conference (renamed as National Conference), declared **13 July as Martyrs' Day** to honour the victims and their **sacrifice against autocratic rule.**

- ✓ From **1931 to 2019**, it was a **state-recognized public holiday** in J&K. Political leaders and public figures would pay **tributes at the Martyrs' Graveyard** in Srinagar every year.

Why Was It Celebrated?	Why is Martyrs' Day Controversial?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symbol of Resistance: It was seen as the first major political awakening of the Kashmiri Muslims and was considered a turning point in the political history of J&K, marking the beginning of the struggle for civil liberties, representative governance, and Muslim identity under the autocratic Dogra rule. • Shared by Separatists and Mainstream Parties: Uniquely, both mainstream parties (like National Conference, PDP) and separatist groups recognized the day, although with different interpretations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mainstream: As a historical democratic movement. ○ Separatists: As part of the continuing struggle against oppression and Indian control. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political and Religious Identity Conflict: Kashmiri Muslims view it as a day of resistance against tyranny but some Kashmiri Pandit and Dogra groups, especially in Jammu, view it as a communal uprising or a 'Black Day', alleging it contributed to sectarian divide. • BJP's Opposition: The BJP has opposed official recognition of 13 July, arguing that the protest was anti-national and anti-monarchic. It labels the 1931 protestors as "traitors" rather than "martyrs." • Post-2019 Abrogation of Article 370: The Lt Governor's administration (appointed by the Centre) removed 13 July from the list of public holidays and also scrapped: Sheikh Abdullah's birth anniversary holiday. In contrast, the birth anniversary of Maharaja Hari Singh (Dogra ruler in 1931) was declared a public holiday in 2022. • Ongoing Political Tensions: Valley-based political parties, especially the National Conference (NC) and PDP, continue to demand restoration of the holiday and freedom to publicly commemorate the day. • Return of Elected Government: After five years of central rule, J&K got an elected government in 2024 which tried to restore official observance of Martyrs' Day. However, police denied permission, citing security concerns, and placed several leaders under house arrest on 13 July 2025.

Lok Sabha Introduces e- Attendance System for MPs

Beginning with the Monsoon Session Lok Sabha (LS) Members of Parliament (MPs) marked their attendance **electronically** from their respective division seats using a **Multi-Media Device (MMD)** through **I-card scanning, Biometric (thumb impression), digital cards, drop-down menu selections on tablets and PIN entry.**

- ✓ Till the last session, the LS members were signing their attendance in a register.
- ✓ The MMD terminals, already used to access parliamentary papers and agendas, have been upgraded to enable attendance marking.
- ✓ The **Rajya Sabha** is also expected to adopt the system soon.

Importance of Attendance

MPs must mark attendance to **claim daily allowances**. **Ministers and the Leader of Opposition (LoP)** are exempt from signing in.

Expected Benefits

- **Seat-based MMD system eliminates queues and Reduces congestion** in the lobbies.
- **Encourages MPs to stay for proceedings** instead of merely marking presence and reducing potential manipulation.
- **Saves time and improves efficiency:** promoting *a paperless environment* by integrating digital tools into parliamentary workflows. This reduces administrative costs and environmental impact.
- **Integration with other digital platforms** (e.g., PRS Legislative Research, Sansad TV) can provide a holistic view of MPs' contributions.
- **Public trust increases** when MPs are seen as accountable (e.g., *Sweden's open parliamentary records* boost transparency).

Legal Setback for Actor Saif Ali Khan

Actor Saif Ali Khan faced a legal setback as the Madhya Pradesh High Court (HC) overturned a trial court order naming him, his sisters, and mother as sole legal heirs of the Nawab of Bhopal.

- **Legal Dispute:** In 1999, other heirs of Hamidullah Khan- his brother Obaidullah Khan and daughter Rabia Begum filed a case seeking partition of the Nawab's private properties. They cited the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Act, 1937 for rightful succession.
- **HC Intervention:** The heirs argued the trial court wrongly assumed the Nawab's private properties passed automatically with the royal title. In 2024, the Madhya Pradesh HC set aside the 1999 trial court order that had favoured Saif's family. The HC remanded the case back for a fresh decision, asking it to be concluded within one year.

Case Background

Lineage and Inheritance: Saif Ali Khan inherited the Bhopal properties through his grandmother, Sajida Begum-daughter of Hamidullah Khan, the last ruling Nawab of Bhopal, who died in 1960.

Succession History: Hamidullah's eldest daughter, Abida Begum, was the heir apparent but migrated to Pakistan in 1950. As a result, Sajida Begum inherited the title and properties (worth over ₹15,000 crore).

Disputed Properties: The properties include **prime real estate in and around Bhopal**, such as Flag Staff House, Noor-Us-Sabah Palace (a luxury hotel), Dar-Us-Salam, Bungalow of Habibi, Ahmedabad Palace, and Kohefiza Property.

Enemy Property Issue: After **Abida Begum migrated to Pakistan**, these properties were declared '**enemy property**'.

→ Enemy property refers to assets (movable and immovable) left behind in India by individuals who migrated to Pakistan or China during conflicts (1962, 1965, 1971) and took citizenship of Pakistan or China. These properties are held by the **Custodian of Enemy Property for India (CEPI)**- under Ministry of Home Affairs.

→ The CEPI is a statutory authority under the **Enemy Property Act, 1968**, responsible for the preservation, management, control, and sale of properties declared as enemy property. The Act, amended over time, empowers the Custodian to hold and manage all rights, titles, and interests related to such properties.

North Eastern Region District SDG Index (2023-24)

NITI Aayog released the second edition of the North Eastern Region (NER) District SDG Index (2023-24).

About NER District SDG Index

- This index is released by NITI Aayog and the Ministry of Development of NER (MoDoNER) with UNDP's support.
- It measures Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) performance across 121 districts out of 131 (92%) of the eight North Eastern States. It was first launched in 2021.

Scoring Categories: Districts are classified into four categories based on their composite scores:

Achiever (Score = 100)	Front Runner (65–99)	Performer (50–64)	Aspirant (<50)
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Key Findings from 2023-24 Edition of the Index

- **Range of scores:** 58.71- lowest (Longding, Arunachal Pradesh) to 81.43- highest (Hnahthial, Mizoram).
- **No district** achieved the "Achiever" or fell in "Aspirant" category.
- **All districts in Mizoram, Sikkim, and Tripura are Front Runners.**
- **Top-performing Districts: Hnahthial (Mizoram), Champhai (Mizoram), Gomati (Tripura) and Mokokchung (Nagaland).**
- **State-wise Highlights:**
 - **Sikkim:** Most consistent scores (range of only 5.5).
 - **Tripura:** High performing with minimal intra-state variation (6.5).
 - **Mizoram & Nagaland:** High scores but more variation within districts.

Significance of the Index:

- ◆ **Enables Evidence-Based Policy Planning:** It provides a data-driven framework to help policy makers identify development gaps and strengths across districts for informed decision-making aligning with India's broader Viksit Bharat @2047 vision.
- ◆ **Supports Targeted investments & Resource Allocation** where they are most needed, ensuring efficient and impactful development efforts.
- ◆ **Tracks district-wise Progress Towards SDGs**
- ◆ **Captures Impact of National and Local Initiatives:** It reflects the outcomes of flagship programmes like the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) and efforts to localize the SDG agenda.
 - ▶ The ADP was launched 2018 to rapidly transform 112 under-developed districts across the country through "3Cs"- Convergence of schemes, Collaboration among stakeholders, and Competition via monthly rankings- driven by a mass movement.

TALASH Initiative

The National Education Society for Tribal Students (NESTS) in collaboration with UNICEF India, launched TALASH (Tribal Aptitude, Life Skills and Self-Esteem Hub) initiative.

- ✓ NESTS is an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, dedicated to providing quality education to tribal students through *Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs)* across India.
- ✓ UNICEF works in over 190 countries to promote the rights and well-being of every child, with a focus on education, health, and protection for the most vulnerable communities.
- ✓ **EMRS** is a flagship scheme *launched in 1997-98* to provide quality education to Scheduled Tribe (ST) students **from Class VI to XII** in residential setups.

Significance: Digital tools and evidence-based practices used under TALASH will help ensure even students in remote areas can access quality support. It reflects a strong commitment to **bridging educational gaps** and **empowering tribal youth** as future leaders.

What is TALASH?

It is India's first dedicated initiative for the holistic development of tribal students enrolled in EMRSs aiming to benefit over 1.38 lakh students across 28 States and 8 UTs.

Key Objectives of TALASH:

- ◆ Promote **self-awareness, life skills, and career clarity** among tribal youth.
- ◆ Prepare students for real-world challenges through both academic and personal development.
- ◆ Align with the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** goals of inclusive and holistic education.
- ◆ Strive for India's commitment to **SDG-4: Quality Education**.

Main Components of TALASH:

- ◆ **Psychometric Assessments:** Inspired by NCERT's Tamanna, it will help students identify their strengths and interests and provide **Career Cards** suggesting suitable career paths.
 - ✓ **Tamanna** (Try and Measure Aptitude and Natural Abilities) is an aptitude test developed by **CBSE and NCERT** under the Ministry of Education to assess the strengths of **Class IX and X students**. It helps students, parents, and teachers understand students' natural abilities and interests.
 - ✓ Tamanna aptitude test is voluntary, has no pass or fail, and is meant to guide rather than impose subject choices.
- ◆ **Career Counselling:** It will guide students to make **informed decisions** based on aptitude and aspiration.
- ◆ **Life Skills & Self-Esteem Modules:** It focuses on communication, problem-solving, and emotional well-being to help build **confidence and self-worth** in students.
- ◆ **Teacher Training & E-Learning:** It has a special portal for educators. 189 teachers from 75 EMRSs already trained to mentor students.

SC Guidelines for the Management of DNA Evidence

In Kattavellai @ Devakar vs State of Tamil Nadu 2025 case, the Supreme Court (SC) recently issued procedural guidelines to standardize DNA evidence management in criminal cases.

Background: The case involved a man sentenced to death for a 2011 double murder and rape in Tamil Nadu. The SC acquitted him, citing unreliable DNA evidence due to procedural lapses like an open-air post-mortem and poor *chain of custody documentation* of samples.

- ✓ Investigation agencies usually collect DNA samples from a crime scene to carry out DNA sampling to identify individuals by matching their genetic profiles with biological evidence (e.g., blood, semen, saliva, hair) found at crime scenes. A match between crime scene and reference samples can serve as crucial court evidence.

<p>What are the Guidelines on DNA Evidence Laid Down by SC?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper Documentation: DNA samples must be collected by <i>trained personnel</i> equipped with protective gear, sealed in tamper-proof containers and clearly labeled with FIR number, date, relevant legal sections, details of Investigating Officer (IO), Requisite serial number for documentation and police station details. • The collection document must bear signatures and designations of the medical professional present, IO, and independent witnesses. • Independent Witness: Lack of an independent witness won't invalidate evidence, but efforts to involve one must be recorded. • Transport & Timeline: IO must transport samples to the forensic lab within 48 hours. Delays must be justified in the case diary. • Storage & Access: Samples must not be opened, altered, or resealed without trial court approval and medical advice. • Chain of Custody Register: A detailed log of each stage of evidence handling (right from the point of collection to the logical end, i.e., conviction or acquittal of the accused) must be maintained and submitted to the trial court. Any failure to maintain it will require the IO to explain the lapse. • Training & Implementation: State DGPs (Directors General of Police) must prepare sample forms for the Chain of Custody Register and related documents and ensure their distribution with necessary instructions to all districts. • Dissemination and Accountability: The SC Registry was directed to send the judgment to all High Courts and state DGPs to ensure compliance. IOs are accountable for lapses in maintaining the chain of custody or adhering to these protocols. 	<p>Significance of SC Guidelines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures Scientific Integrity: Mandating a robust process for DNA evidence handling- collection, storage, and testing- minimizes risks of contamination, degradation, or tampering. • Protection of Article 21: The guidelines uphold the right to a fair trial and due process. • Promotes Uniformity Across States: by establishing a standardized procedure nationwide and eliminating inconsistencies in forensic analysis and reporting. • Strengthens Judicial Fairness: by emphasizing on the need for reliable forensic processes to prevent wrongful convictions. • Technological Integration: Advances like Touch DNA analysis and STR (Short Tandem Repeat) testing can be leveraged to enhance the precision of DNA evidence.
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Nominated Members of Rajya Sabha

The President nominated four new members to the Rajya Sabha (RS) namely- public prosecutor Ujjwal Deora, former foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla, Kerala-based social worker and educationist C Sadanandan Master and noted historian Dr. Meenakshi Jain.

Importance of Rajya Sabha Strength

Though RS cannot amend Money Bills, its numerical strength matters in:

- Influencing debates, bringing domain-specific knowledge, enriching lawmaking with a non-political, expert voice, Representing of Cultural & Social Diversity.
- Passing critical resolutions (e.g., laws on State List matters, creation of All India Services),
- Approving Emergency Proclamations (under Articles 352, 356, 360).



Nominated Members of the RS are individuals who are **appointed by the President of India (not elected)** under **Article 80(1)(a)** of the Constitution read with its **clause (3)** which empowers the President to nominate up to **12 members** to the RS for their **special knowledge or practical experience** in one or more of the following fields- Literature; Science; Arts; and Social Service.

Purpose of Nomination: To include **distinguished individuals** who may not be active in politics but can contribute meaningfully to parliamentary debates through their **expertise and diverse perspectives**.

Rights and Restrictions of Nominated Members:

- ➔ Nominated members enjoy **all rights and privileges** like elected MPs.
- ➔ They can **join a political party within six months** of assuming the office.
- ➔ They **cannot vote in Presidential elections** but **can vote** in Vice-Presidential elections (also vote during impeachment of the President).
- ➔ They can take part in the proceedings of the House in the normal manner.

Concerns Raised Regarding Nominated Members Over Time: Though intended to bring intellectual and cultural depth, the **spirit of nomination has weakened**, with governments often using it to: **Reward loyalty; Increase strength in the House, Promote partisan interests.**

Why Is Maharashtra Debating Over Hindi?

Recently, the Hindi imposition debate resurfaced in Maharashtra after the state government **withdrew** its resolution mandating Hindi as a third language in primary schools.

What Sparked the Issue?

In 2024, the Maharashtra government issued an order making **Hindi mandatory as a third language** from Grades 1 to 5 in Marathi and English medium State Board schools, citing the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**.

Earlier, the third language was introduced only from Grade 5 onwards.

- ✓ **The Official Languages Act, 1963**, and **the Three-Language Formula** (introduced by the Kothari Commission, 1966) sought to balance linguistic diversity by promoting the regional language, Hindi, and English.

Why the Backlash?

- Critics, including **linguists, civil society, and political parties**, opposed the **early introduction** of a third language in primary school. The move was seen as **Hindi imposition** and an assault on **Marathi linguistic identity**. The **state's Language Advisory Committee** objected, recommending no third language be introduced before Class 5.
- **Government's response:** It initially revised the order, allowing **opt-out from Hindi** if 20 students requested another Indian language but eventually **withdrew its orders** amid mounting protests and has now formed a **committee led by Dr. Narendra Jadhav** to review the three-language policy.
- **Public fallout:** The debate spilled onto the streets, sparking **language-based confrontations**, protests, and detentions. Traders and vendors reported **pressure to speak in Marathi**, prompting warnings from the government.

Ordinarily Resident

The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in Bihar by the Election Commission of India (ECI) has reignited the debate over the definition of the term 'ordinarily resident' in the context of **voter eligibility** for inclusion in a constituency's electoral rolls.

Who is an 'Ordinarily Resident'?

The term 'ordinarily resident' is defined under the Representation of the People Act, 1950 (RP Act), primarily in Sections 19 and 20.

- ✓ The "ordinarily resident" criterion, though not explicitly mentioned in Indian Constitution, is operationalized through the RPA.
- **Section 19 of the RP Act** mandates ordinarily resident in a constituency be entitled to be registered in the electoral roll for that constituency.
- **Section 20** clarifies the meaning by laying out following conditions:

'Ordinarily Resident' Requirement: It's required in a Constituency for inclusion in its electoral roll to:

- ✓ Ensure **genuine connection** with the constituency.
- ✓ **Maintain representative accountability.**
- ✓ **Prevent fraudulent or duplicate registrations.**

Potential Issues with the Term 'Ordinarily Resident':

- **Strict Interpretation vs. Practical Reality:** The **Gauhati High Court** (Manmohan Singh case, 1999) interpreted "ordinarily resident" as someone with a **habitual and permanent intention to reside**. It excludes people who live in a place **temporarily or casually**.
- **Impact on Migrant Workers:** According to the **Periodic Labour Force Survey (2020-21)**, **~11% of India's population migrates** for work (**~15 crore voters**).-These migrants often:
 - Live in **temporary shacks or hostels** at worksites.
 - Move frequently between locations and states.
 - Return to their **native homes seasonally**, where families, property, and community ties remain.

Though they may not reside **permanently** at their native place, their **emotional, familial, and legal connections** reflect the intent behind the "ordinarily resident" criterion.

- **Risk of Disenfranchisement:** If **local officials apply a rigid interpretation**, migrant workers risk **removal from the electoral rolls** of their native constituency. While they **can register** in their temporary place of work, **most do not** due to:
 - Frequent relocations.
 - Lack of acceptance by local communities.
 - Preference for voting in their **home state**, where they feel politically and socially invested.
- **Threat to Democratic Participation:** Excluding migrants from rolls in their home constituencies without realistic alternatives leads to:
 - Reduced voter turnout.
 - Undermining democratic representation.
 - Voicelessness of a major workforce segment.

- Merely owning or possessing a house in a constituency does not qualify someone as an ordinarily resident.
- A person who is temporarily absent from their residence is still considered ordinarily resident at that place.
- Special categories considered as ordinarily resident in their home constituency (even if physically elsewhere) include:
 - Members of the armed forces of the Union.
 - Members of a State armed police force serving outside the state.
 - Government of India employees posted outside India
 - Persons holding a constitutional office
 - Their spouses are also included under the same provision if she be ordinarily residing with such person.
- **For Non-Resident Indians (NRIs):** Section 20A, introduced in 2010, allows NRIs to register and vote from abroad based on the address in their passport, even if they have been away for a long period.

The **Registration of Electors Rules (RER), 1960**, framed by the Central Government in consultation with the EC, guide the inclusion/exclusion of names in the electoral rolls as per the RP Act.

Way Forward

- **Amend RP Act/RER:** to introduce provisions that **formally recognize migrant labourers' right to retain their vote** in their original constituency, similar to service voters and NRIs.
- **Enable Flexible Participation:** Develop **mechanisms to facilitate voting** for migrants, such as postal ballots, proxy voting, or mobile polling booths at work sites.
- **Preserve Electoral Choice:** Allow migrants the **option to choose** between registering at their native place or current location, without pressure to shift.
- **Prevent Duplicate Enrolment:** Use **Aadhaar seeding** and technological verification to **prevent multiple registrations** across constituencies.
- **Stakeholder Consultation:** Ensure changes are made in consultation with **workers, employers, civil society, and state governments** for smooth implementation.

Mohinder Singh Gill Vs. The Chief Election Commissioner, 1978

The Supreme Court (SC) agreed to hear pleas challenging the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar and referred to the **Mohinder Singh Gill** ruling on ECI's powers. Petitioners questioned the Election Commission of India's (ECI) authority to conduct SIR.

SC's Ruling in the case: The **five-judge Bench** of the SC made the following major points:

- **Plenary Powers Under Article 324:** Article 324 gives the ECI wide, plenary powers over elections- including superintendence, direction, and control. These powers are not just administrative, but quasi-judicial and proactive, enabling the ECI to act decisively to protect electoral integrity.
- **Where the Law is Silent, ECI Has Residual Power:** When a valid election law exists, the ECI must act in

About Mohinder Singh Gill vs The Chief Election Commissioner (1978):

This landmark case is a foundational judgment on the **powers of the ECI** under **Article 324** of the Constitution (Superintendence, direction, and control of the preparation of electoral rolls and conduct of elections to Parliament, State Legislatures, President, and Vice-President is vested in the ECI).

Case Background:

- ⊕ After the **1977 post-Emergency Lok Sabha elections**, violence and destruction of ballot papers occurred during counting in the **Ferozepore (Firozpur) constituency**.
- ⊕ The ECI **cancelled the entire election process** in that constituency and ordered a **re-election**.
- ⊕ **Mohinder Singh Gill**, who was leading at the time, challenged this order in the **Punjab and Haryana High Court (HC)** under **Article 226** (power to issue writs for the enforcement of fundamental rights and provide legal remedies for violations of law), arguing:
 - The ECI had **no authority** to order a re-poll.
 - The decision **violated natural justice** (no hearing was granted).
 - The HC could intervene as a **writ petition** was maintainable.

Key Legal Questions Before the Courts

1. Does the ECI have the power to order a re-poll for the Entire Constituency?
2. Was the ECI's decision arbitrary and against natural justice?
3. Can courts intervene in election matters under Article 226 despite Article 329(b)?

Article 329(b)- No election to Parliament or a State Legislature can be challenged **except through an election petition** filed before the designated authority, and **only in the manner prescribed by law** made by the appropriate legislature.

conformity with it; but where the law is silent, Article 324 empowers the Commission to act independently to ensure free and fair elections.

- **Re-Polling Power is Valid:** The SC held that the ECI’s decision to order a re-poll was valid and within its powers. The ECI is competent to order a repoll for an entire constituency if necessary to maintain electoral integrity, even if the Representation of the People Act, 1950 (RPA), specifies repolls for individual polling stations (Sections 58 and 58A).
 - ✓ The Court interpreted **“a polling station”** to include multiple stations or an entire constituency when circumstances warrant.
- **Natural Justice Is Not Rigid:** Though natural justice is important, it must be applied flexibly, especially in urgent electoral matters.
- **Limited Judicial Review Under Article 329(b):** Article 329(b) bars judicial interference in ongoing election processes. Courts can only review election-related decisions after the election is complete.

Conclusion

The **Mohinder Singh Gill judgment** remains the **cornerstone precedent** defining the **constitutional autonomy and accountability** of ECI as it balances two principles:

- **Empowering** the ECI to act freely where laws are silent.
- **Restraining** the ECI within the limits of law where statutes exist.
 - ✓ These powers operate in areas **“unoccupied”** by legislation, acting as a **“reservoir of power”** to ensure free and fair elections.

Meri Panchayat App

The “Meri Panchayat” mobile app won the **World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS- Geneva, Switzerland) Prizes 2025 Champion Award** for promoting cultural & linguistic diversity through local content.

About Meri Panchayat App (Launched in August, 2023)

- *Meri Panchayat App* is a mobile and web-based m-Governance platform developed by the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** and the **National Informatics Centre (NIC)** under the Ministry of Electronics & IT.
 - ✓ This app is a part of the larger thrust on *Digital Governance* and the realization of **e-Panchayat Mission Mode Project**.
- It aims to digitally empower **2.65 lakh Gram Panchayats, 25+ lakh elected representatives, and 950 million rural citizens** across India.

Key Objectives

- Promote **transparency, accountability, and public participation**.
- Enable **real-time access** to Panchayat-level data and services.
- Strengthen **participatory democracy** and digital inclusion.

Key Features

Citizen Services	Transparency & Accountability	Inclusive & Seamless Governance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View Panchayat budgets, receipts, payments, and development plans • Access details of elected representatives and Panchayat functionaries. • Track Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GDPs) and project proposals. • Check weather forecasts at the Panchayat level. • Receive push notifications and access Gram Sabha agendas and decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to fund utilization data and audit status. • Monitor asset registers, EPayment orders, and bank account details. • Integrated social audit tools and grievance redressal mechanisms. • Geo-tagged and geo-fenced service tracking for better monitoring. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports 12+ Indian languages for wider accessibility. • Integrated with eGram Swaraj and various government portals. • Enables citizen feedback: propose, review, and rate Panchayat works.

Pratibha Setu

PRATIBHA Setu (*Professional Resource And Talent Integration- Bridge for Hiring Aspirants*), formerly known as the **Public Disclosure Scheme (PDS)**, is a **first-of-its-kind strategic and interactive recruitment platform launched by the UPSC**, to connect highly qualified candidates (who cleared all stages of UPSC examinations but didn't make it to the final merit list) with verified employers (including **ministries, PSUs, autonomous bodies, and private organizations**) to access and engage with this pool of well-assessed talent.

Why PRATIBHA Setu? ("Bridge of Talent")

- **Leverages the potential** of aspirants who cleared rigorous written exams and interviews but missed final selection.
- Offers a **second gateway** for UPSC aspirants to pursue meaningful careers beyond the civil services.
- Helps **bridge the gap** between untapped human capital and institutions seeking high-caliber professionals.

What Sets PRATIBHA Setu Apart?

- Moves from passive publication of data (under PDS) to **active engagement and selection**.
- Makes **government-grade talent** accessible to a wide range of employers.
- Promotes **efficiency, transparency, and optimal resource utilization** in India's recruitment ecosystem.
 - ✓ Its significance lies in the **2nd Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC)**'s emphasis on efficient talent utilization.



Key Features of Pratibha Setu:

- ✓ **Diverse Exam Coverage:** Non-recommended willing candidates of the following Examinations are included under this scheme- Civil Services, Indian Forest Service Examination (IFoS), Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF-ACs) Examination, Engineering Services Examination (ESEs), Geo-Scientist, CDS, Indian Economic Service/Indian Statistical Service Examination, and Combined Medical Services (CMS) Examination (Excludes NDA, NA (Naval Academy), departmental exams).
- ✓ **Verified Access:** Only **registered and verified organizations** get login credentials to access candidate data.
- ✓ **Soft Biodata Access:** Employers can view candidates' **educational background and contact details**.
- ✓ **Simple Dashboard:** Streamlined tools for **wishlisting, shortlisting, hiring, or rejection**, plus notification updates.
- ✓ **Large Talent Pool:** Over **10,000 willing, highly qualified candidates** available for recruitment.
- ✓ **Trusted by Employers:** Already **113 organizations onboarded** and more showing interest.
- ✓ **Easy Registration:** Organizations can sign up using their **Corporate Identification Number (CIN)** via Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) API.
- ✓ **Excellent Support:** Full documentation, user manuals, and a helpdesk ticketing system for ease of use.

The Vice-President Resigns Mid-term

Vice President (VP) Jagdeep Dhankhar's resignation citing health reasons created a rare mid-term vacancy in India's second-highest constitutional office.

- ✓ This is the first mid-term resignation by a VP in last 38 years and only the third after V.V. Giri (1969) and R. Venkataraman (1987) who resigned to contest Presidential elections. Former VP Dhankhar is the only one among the three who did not resign to contest for President (as of now).
- ✓ Article 63-71 of the Constitution are related to the VP.

Constitutional Provisions Related to the Removal & Resignation of VP

Resignation- Article 67(a): "The Vice-President may resign his/her office by writing under his hand addressed to the President."

- ✓ No formal procedure needed; the resignation takes effect **once accepted** by the President.
- ✓ No constitutional requirement of approval by Parliament or any authority.

Removal- Article 67(b): "The Vice-President may be removed from his/her office by a resolution of the Council of States (Rajya Sabha (RS)) passed by a majority of all the **then members** (effective majority) of the Council and agreed to by the House of the People (Lok Sabha (LS))."

- ✓ **No impeachment procedure** (unlike the President under Article 61).
- ✓ Resolution **must originate in the RS**.
- ✓ **14 days' notice** must be given before moving the resolution.
- ✓ Grounds for removal of VP are **not specified** in the Constitution (subject to political discretion).

What Happens After VP's Resignation?

Immediate Vacancy: As of Dhankhar's resignation, the **Vice President's post is vacant**. This also affects the **Chairmanship of the Rajya Sabha**, which is held ex-officio by the VP.

Who Performs the VP's Duties Now?

The Constitution **does not provide for an acting VP**. However, under **Article 91** the **Deputy Chairman of RS** (currently **Harivansh Narayan Singh**), **presides** over the House in the absence of the Chairman (VP) of the RS.

When Will the Next Election Be Held?

As per Article 68(2), an election to fill a vacancy in the office of VP occurring due to **death, resignation, removal, or otherwise**, the election must be held "**as soon as possible**", and the new Vice President will serve a **full five-year term** from the date of assuming office.

- ✓ The Election Commission (EC) under Article 324 conducts the elections of VP.
- ✓ Election to the office of VP of India is governed by the Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Act, 1952 and the rules made under the Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Rules, 1974.
- ✓ Election disputes are resolved by the Supreme Court under Article 71.

According to Article 66(1), the VP is elected by an **electoral college of both Houses of Parliament** (both elected and nominated members) through **proportional representation by single transferable vote**, and the voting is conducted by **secret ballot**.

- ✓ State Legislatures are not involved in VP's election unlike Presidential election.
- ✓ Unlike the Presidential election, where the value of votes cast by the Members of Parliament and of the various State Legislative Assemblies is different, every vote cast in the Vice-Presidential election has the same value.

Ex-CJIs Flag Key Concerns Over One Nation, One Election Bill

Former Chief Justices of India (CJIs), D Y Chandrachud and JS Khehar while appearing before a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on 'One Nation, One Election' (ONOE) Bill raised concerns over the sweeping powers granted to the Election Commission of India (ECI) in the bill but rejected the suggestion that the idea falls foul of the Constitution.

- ✓ They asserted that the ONOE Bill does **not contravene the basic structure of the Constitution**.
- ✓ The ONOE Bill (129th Constitution Amendment Bill) proposes to hold simultaneous elections for Lok Sabha as well as State Assemblies, by synchronizing the tenures of Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections. The bill was referred to JPC for wider consultations.
- ✓ Earlier, former CJIs Ranjan Gogoi and UU Lalit had also raised similar concerns.

Key Concerns Raised by Former CJIs Regarding the Bill

- **Concerns Over ECI's Powers:** A common concern among all former CJIs appearing before JPC was the "sweeping and unbounded powers" granted to the ECI in the proposed Bill. They warned that the ECI's power to defer or advance elections (under proposed Article 82A(5)) if not clearly defined could breach constitutional safeguards under Article 14. They advocated for structured, legally bound criteria under which the ECI may invoke such powers, along with parliamentary oversight.

Under Article 82A(5), if the Election Commission finds simultaneous Assembly and Lok Sabha elections unfeasible, it may recommend to the President to defer the Assembly polls.

- **Legal and Operational Gaps in the Bill:** They flagged vague drafting in the Bill, particularly around:
 - Situations of Emergency at the state or national level.
 - Whether elections should be held for very short residual Assembly terms (e.g., 2–3 months).They advised the Bill be redrafted to address such scenarios.
- **Political Fairness and Federal Balance:** Justice Chandrachud expressed concern that ONOE might tilt the playing field in favour of well-funded national parties, to the disadvantage of regional and smaller parties. He stressed the need to reform campaign finance rules to limit party-level expenditure, which currently remains unregulated under the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
- **Midterm Polls and Governance Concerns:** The Bill proposes that Assemblies elected through midterm polls will serve only the remaining part of the original five-year term. Justice Chandrachud noted this could weaken the ability of short-term governments to implement substantive policies, particularly with the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) kicking in six months before the next polls.

Recommendations for Improvement by Former CJIs

- Redraft vague provisions to ensure constitutional clarity.
- Restrict ECI's discretion to defer elections only on clear grounds like public order or national security.
- Introduce rule-based checks, such as reforming the no-confidence motion process to enhance political stability (which can be done through House rules without amending the Constitution).

National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD&PR)

A parliamentary panel (chaired by Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka) has strongly recommended an immediate overhaul of the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD&PR), a thinktank under the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) citing centralized control and mismanagement.

Historical Context of NIRD&PR

- NIRD&PR traces its origins to the *Central Institute of Study and Research in Community Development and the Trainers' Training Institute*, established in 1958 in Mussoorie and Rajpur (Dehradun), respectively.
- Merged in 1962 as the *National Institute of Community Development (NICD)*, it relocated to Hyderabad in 1964–65 and was renamed NIRD in 1977.

- In 2014, it became NIRD&PR, reflecting its expanded focus on strengthening the Panchayati Raj system, following the **73rd Constitutional Amendment (1992)**, which empowered local governance.

What is NIRD&PR?

It is an **autonomous organization** located in **Hyderabad**, with a regional centre in **Guwahati**. It is a premier **national and international centre of excellence** in the field of rural development and decentralized governance. It is also recognized by the **United Nations ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific)** as a **Centre of Excellence**, serving as a “**think tank**” for the government on rural development policies and practices.

Objectives of NIRD&PR

- **Capacity Building & Training:** of rural development officials, elected representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), NGOs, and other stakeholders by improving their knowledge, skills, and attitudes for effective rural governance and development.
 - ✓ Organizes Induction Training for **Block Development Officers** and capacity-building programs for **State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD) trainers**.
- **Research & Policy Support:** Conduct and promote research on rural development, decentralization, and poverty alleviation. Support evidence-based policymaking for the Ministry of Rural Development.
 - ✓ NIRD&PR’s role in shaping policies like the **National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM)** is integral to India’s rural governance framework.
- **Technology Transfer & Innovation:** Promote rural technologies through **Technology Parks** and **social laboratories**. Disseminate information and innovations for sustainable rural development.
 - ✓ NIRD&PR developed **e-GramSwaraj and AuditOnline training modules**, crucial for enhancing transparency and accountability in local self-governance.
- **Consultancy & Advisory Services:** Offer consultancy to national and international agencies on rural development strategies and programme implementation.
- **Knowledge Dissemination:** Develop training modules, publications, e-content, and periodicals to spread best practices and learnings in rural development.

Key Issues Faced by NIRD&PR:

- ⊕ **Massive Budget Cut:** The institute is struggling after its budget was drastically slashed from ₹73.68 crore in 2024-25 to just ₹1 lakh for 2025-26 causing financial instability.
- ⊕ **Operational Mismanagement:** Internal panic due to delays in **salary payments, medical reimbursements, and vendor dues** affecting Self Help Groups (SHGs) and contractual staff.
- ⊕ **Leadership Vacuum:** No strategic direction from current administration, pressure on faculty to **generate income for their own salaries** and centralized control undermining institutional functioning and staff morale.

Parliamentary Committee Observations & Recommendations:

- ⊕ **Immediate replacement** of current leadership due to failed governance and lack of trust.
- ⊕ Formation of a **MoRD-supervised committee** to oversee administration and governance.
- ⊕ Urges the **Finance Ministry to halt disengagement** process and restore adequate budget support.
- ⊕ Advocates for **structural reforms, decentralization, and greater autonomy** for NIRD&PR.
- ⊕ Suggests MoRD draft a **new roadmap or strategic plan** to revive and sustain the institute.

Bills of Lading Act, 2025

The President gave her assent to the Bills of Lading Act, 2025 issued by the Ministry of Law and Justice which seeks to repeal the Bills of Lading Act, 1856.

*Carrier is the entity (company or person) that is responsible for physically transporting goods from one location to another. A **shipper**, also known as the consignor, is the individual or company that owns the goods and initiates the shipping process*

What is a Bill of Lading?

A **bill of lading (BoL)** is a crucial shipping document issued by a carrier to a shipper. It acknowledges receipt of goods; details quantity, condition, and destination; acts as evidence of a **contract of carriage**; and is **transferable by endorsement**, passing ownership of goods. It plays a vital role in **international trade and logistics**.

Why Was This Law Needed?

The **Indian Bills of Lading Act, 1856** was a **colonial-era law**, drafted in outdated language. It **lacked clarity**, did not support **digital trade**, and posed **legal ambiguities**. Therefore, India needed a **modern, streamlined, and internationally aligned framework** for shipping documents.

Objective: To harmonize India’s shipping documentation with global practices, providing greater efficiency and legal clarity to the sector.

Key Features of the Bills of Lading Act, 2025

- **Simplified & Modern Legal Language:** Old, technical, colonial-era terms are replaced with **clear, accessible, and business-friendly** language.
- **Transfer of Rights and Liabilities:** The **consignee** or any **endorsee** to whom goods are transferred acquires all rights and liabilities under the contract. This ensures **legal clarity** for all parties in the trade chain.
- **Protection of Shipper’s Rights:** Maintains the **original shipper’s right to stop goods in transit**, claim freight, or impose liabilities.
- **Conclusive Evidence of Shipment:** A **bill of lading in the hands of a bona fide holder** is treated as **conclusive evidence of shipment**, even if goods were not actually loaded- unless fraud or prior knowledge is proven.
- **Recognition of Digital Bills (eBLs):** Sets the stage for **electronic Bills of Lading**, a transformative move for **digital trade and port automation**.
- **Central Government Empowered:** Government can issue **rules and directions** to ensure **effective implementation** and adaptability.
- **Repeal and Saving Clause:** Ensures **continuity of rights and obligations** from the old Act, maintaining legal consistency.

Significance of the Act	Concerns Raised
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease of Doing Business (EODB): It will help reduce disputes, lower transaction costs, ensure faster documentation and simplify trade for SMEs, exporters, freight forwarders, and digital platforms. • Support for Digital Trade: It enables secure, paperless documentation and encourages innovations like blockchain-based document verification. • Global Alignment: It brings Indian maritime trade laws in sync with global shipping norms. • Strategic Move under 'Viksit Bharat 2047' Vision: It aims to make India one of the top 5 shipbuilding nations by 2047 and strengthens maritime sector reforms under initiatives like Sagarmala and PM GatiShakti. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation Uncertainty: No detailed rules yet for rollout, especially for digital processes. • Digital Readiness Issues: Ports and small exporters may lack infrastructure for electronic Bills of Lading (eBLs). • Legal Gaps: No clear dispute resolution or enforcement mechanisms. • Stakeholder Resistance: Traditional players may resist change. • Low Awareness: Limited outreach may hinder effective adoption across the logistics sector.

Debate Grows Over Nagaland Internal ST Quota Policy

Nagaland's five-decade-old reservation policy is under debate, with some groups demanding an end to quotas for "backward tribes," while others seek an increase in the quota.

Reservation History of Nagaland

Introduced in **1967**, Nagaland’s reservation policy reserves 80% of vacancies in the Nagaland State Services and 100% of non-technical Grade-III and IV posts for **Scheduled Tribes (STs)**.

- Nagaland’s reservation policy is rooted in the state’s unique socio-political fabric, protected under **Article 371A of the Indian Constitution**, which grants special provisions to safeguard Naga customary laws, social practices, and land ownership.
- Internal reservations were introduced in 1977, allotting 25% of posts to seven backward tribes (who were

Who Wants What? The Two Sides of the Debate

Demand to Review or Scrap Internal Quotas	Demand to Increase Reservation for Backward Tribes
<p>Led by: CORRP (Committee on Review of Reservation Policy)- a collective of five relatively advanced tribes: Ao, Angami, Sumi, Lotha, Rengma.</p> <p>✓ The five advanced tribes, constituting nearly 55% of Nagaland’s ST population, claim that the internal quota disproportionately benefits backward tribes</p> <p>Demands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The internal reservation meant for 10 years has continued for 48 years. Tribes like Chakhesang and Zeliang have progressed but are still considered "backward". • A "creamy layer" system (as in OBC reservations) should be introduced to exclude economically better-off individuals from availing quota benefits. • Reservation should now be re-evaluated based on economic and regional disparity, and not on rigid caste-like structures (which don’t exist in Naga society). <p>✓ The CoRRP contends that unutilized reserved posts should be reallocated to advanced tribes, who face economic challenges despite their “advanced” label.</p>	<p>Led by: Eastern Naga tribes and organizations like the Eastern Naga Students’ Federation (ENSF).</p> <p>Demands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call for increasing quota for their tribes to 45% in Eastern Nagaland which still remains underdeveloped and underrepresented despite the policy. • The existing quota is not adequately enforced in offices, and the reservation hasn't effectively translated into real inclusion or upliftment; structural backwardness in remote districts is still a major issue.

under-represented in services and economically disadvantaged) for 10 years. However, in 1989, the policy was extended indefinitely.

- ✓ The seven tribes included- Konyak, Chakhesang, Sangtam, Phom, Chang, Yimchunger and Khamniungan.

Current Quota Structure in Nagaland

- **25%** of all posts are reserved for six tribes from **Eastern Nagaland**- Konyak, Phom, Sangtam, Yimchunger, Chang, and Khamniungan.
- **12%** for Chakhesang, Pochury, Zeliang, and Sumis from Kiphire district.
- **37% reservation** for “Indigenous Scheduled Tribes of Nagaland” identified as “backward tribes”.

Nagaland Government’s Response: No review until the national Census is completed, as accurate data is essential for the purpose of providing reservation.

Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR)

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed an Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) against 29 celebrities, influencers, and YouTubers for promoting illegal betting apps like Junglee Rummy, A23, and Lotus365.

- ✓ The case, under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 follows FIRs across Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. These apps, disguised as skill-based games, are suspected of enabling gambling and money laundering.

What is an ECIR?

It is an internal report (a formal record), based on the **predicate offence** (schedule offence), registered by the ED when it begins investigating a case under the PMLA, 2002.

- ✓ ED is tasked with enforcing the **PMLA** and the **Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA)** to combat economic crimes.

Key Characteristics

- It is the **starting point** of ED’s proceedings in money laundering investigations.
- It is **not defined** in the PMLA or its Rules- hence, it is a **non-statutory document**.
- It is analogous to an **FIR (First Information Report)** in police investigations but **not equivalent** in law.

Role in ED Proceedings: Once an ECIR is filed, ED may:

- Attach properties suspected to be proceeds of crime;
- Conduct searches and seizures;
- Arrest persons under Section 19 of PMLA (power of arrest for offenses under the Act);

However, **ED can arrest without providing the ECIR** raising concerns over **transparency and fair trial rights**.

Legal Nature of ECIR vs FIR

Feature	ECIR	FIR
Statutory Basis	Not mentioned in PMLA.	–Section 173 of BNSS
Copy to Accused	Not mandatory.	Must be provided to accused.
Purpose	Internal ED document to start proceedings.	Complaint lodged to police on cognizable offence.
Disclosure Obligation	No legal obligation to furnish to accused.	Mandatory.

Judicial Precedents Related to ECIR:

- **Vijay Madanlal Choudhary v. Union of India (2022):** The Supreme Court (SC) ruled that **ECIR is not required to be furnished** to the accused and **cannot be equated** with an FIR (as ED officers are not police officers).
- **Pankaj Bansal vs Union of India (2023):** SC held that the accused must be given written grounds of arrest and ECIR (with sensitive info redacted).

- **Ram Kishore Arora vs ED (2023):** Held *Pankaj Bansal* per incuriam (*lack of care*); *Vijay Madanlal* remains binding.
- ** There remains legal **uncertainty regarding ECIR** as SC's larger bench ruling (*Vijay Madanlal*) is binding, but lower courts are increasingly leaning toward greater rights for accused.

Criticism of ECIR & PMLA Process:

- **Lack of Transparency:** Accused are not given a copy of ECIR, making it difficult to prepare legal defense or seek bail. Grounds of arrest are often **communicated orally**, which is insufficient.
 - ✓ Legal scholars argue that this erodes **the principle of natural justice and right to be informed of charges.**
- **Reverse Burden of Proof:** Section 24 of PMLA shifts the burden of proving innocence on the accused, compounding the effect of **non-disclosure of ECIR.**
- **Stringent Bail Conditions:** Under Section 45 of PLMA, bail requires meeting the **twin conditions:** before granting bail, the court must be satisfied that the accused is prima facie not guilty and unlikely to reoffend while on bail. But non-disclosure of ECIR, makes this difficult.
- **Violates Right to Fair Trial:** under Article 21, as the accused lacks key case details.
- **Prevents Anticipatory Bail** due to lack of clear charges.
- **Blocks Legal Remedies:** like quashing proceedings under Sec. 482 CrPC (*Section 528 BNSS*).
- **Enables Misuse of Power:** by ED and may suppress dissent or target selectively.

International Comparison

Country	Practice
USA	Accused must be informed of charges and provided all exculpatory evidence (Brady Rule).
UK	Detention without arrest under Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA); all investigation records must be disclosed before trial.
Australia	"Brief of evidence" must be supplied during pre-trial stages for fair defence.

Contrast with India: In these democracies, **money laundering is treated like any other crime** with full procedural safeguards, including disclosure of charges and evidence to the accused.

Way Forward

- **Judicial Clarity:** A Constitution Bench should resolve the **ECIR vs FIR debate** conclusively.
- **Disclosure Reform:** If ECIR isn't supplied, provide a **"Statement of Grounds"** including legal and factual basis of the case. Define ECIR and its procedure under the Act to ensure legal consistency.
 - ✓ **Statutory Recognition:** Amend the PMLA to define the ECIR's scope, registration process, and disclosure norms, ensuring alignment with **Articles 21 and 22 of Constitution.**
- **Balance Security with Rights:** Adopt **international best practices** to ensure both effective law enforcement and protection of rights.
- **Independent Oversight Mechanism:** Create a judicial or parliamentary oversight for ED actions to curb misuse.

National Crisis Management Committee (NMC)

The Centre constituted the National Crisis Management Committee (NMC), headed by the **Cabinet Secretary**, to handle major disasters with national impact, under **Section 8A(2)** of the **Disaster Management Act, 2005.**

- ✓ The move comes shortly after heavy monsoon rains triggered floods and landslides in Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Manipur, and other affected states.

About NMC

Established under the **Disaster Management Act, 2005** by the Central Government, the committee shall be the apex body for dealing with the **situation arising out of a major disaster.**

Leadership & Composition of NCMC	Role & Functions of NCMC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Chairperson: Cabinet Secretary. ● Members: Union Home Secretary, Defence Secretary, Secretary (Coordination) – Cabinet Secretariat, and Member & Head of Department – National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Union Home Secretary: Represents the Ministry of Home Affairs, the nodal ministry for disaster management. ● Chairperson may co-opt experts or officials from Centre, States, or relevant organizations based on crisis needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assess Preparedness: Evaluate readiness for any impending or ongoing disaster. ● Issue Directions: Guide measures to enhance disaster preparedness and response. ● Coordinate Efforts: Monitor and coordinate actions of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Central & State Governments ▪ National and State Disaster Management Authorities ▪ NGOs and other stakeholders ● Ensure Unified Response: Provide necessary directions for smooth national-level disaster response coordination. ● The NCMC contributes to developing disaster management strategies, aligning with frameworks like the <i>Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030)</i>.

Draft National Telecom Policy 2025

The Government of India, through the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), has released the draft National Telecom Policy 2025 for public comment, **seven years after the 2018 National Digital Communications Policy (NDCP)**. The draft outlines a **strategic vision to transform India into a “telecom product nation”**, focusing on connectivity, cybersecurity, indigenous manufacturing, sustainability, and employment generation.

Key Focus Areas and Policy Highlights of the 2025 Policy:

- **Universal and meaningful connectivity:**
 - **5G coverage:** Target to cover 90% of population with 5G by 2030.
 - **4G coverage:** Achieve 100% 4G coverage nationwide.
 - **Fiber-connected towers:** Increase from 46% to 80% to improve reliability and speed.
 - **Wi-Fi hotspots:** 1 million new hotspots to be established (revised target from 10 million in 2018).
 - **Satellite internet:** Promoting satellite-based connectivity in remote areas.
- **Telecom sector employment and skilling:**
 - **Job creation:** Create 10 lakh new jobs in the telecom sector.
 - **Upskilling:** Reskill another 10 lakh existing workers.
- **Strengthening domestic telecom ecosystem:**
 - **Domestic manufacturing:** Aim for 150% increase in domestic telecom manufacturing by 2030.
 - **Telecom manufacturing zone (TMZ):** Establish dedicated zones with integrated infrastructure.
 - **R&D promotion:** Support local R&D and incentivize global standardization participation, including in 6G technologies.
 - **CSR recognition:** Telecom R&D and standardization efforts may be included under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).
- **Cybersecurity and Artificial Intelligence (AI):**
 - **AI for cybersecurity:**
 - **Defensive use:** AI-enabled systems to detect and prevent cyberattacks.
 - **Offensive threats:** Address risks from generative AI-based attacks.
 - **AI in governance:** Use AI chatbots for consumer complaint resolution via a unified grievance portal.
 - **Cross-border security:** Enhance monitoring of border telecom signals and foreign satellites to reduce interference.
- **Green telecom and circular economy:**
 - **Carbon footprint:** Reduce telecom sector’s emissions by 30%.
 - **Material recycling:** Promote circular economy by recycling telecom hardware and equipment.

- **Technological advancements:**
 - **Quantum-secure communications:** Focus on quantum encryption technologies for secure communication.
 - **Lawful interception:** Removed from current policy draft, indicating a shift towards **privacy-centric security mechanisms**.
 - **Mobile number validation:** Support for services enabling mobile identity verification; draft regulations already released.

Comparison Between 2018 NDCP and Draft 2025 Telecom Policy

	2018 NDCP	2025 Draft Policy
Terminology	Named as National Digital Communications Policy (NDCP).	Termed as National Telecom Policy with a more sector-specific focus
Employment target	Aimed to create 40 lakh jobs in the broader digital communications sector.	Targets 10 lakh new jobs specifically in the telecom sector
Wi-Fi Hotspot target	Targeted 10 million Wi-Fi hotspots across the country	Scaled down to 1 million hotspots, with a more realistic and focused approach
Focus on domestic manufacturing	Had a moderate emphasis on promoting domestic manufacturing	Aims for a 150% increase in domestic manufacturing by 2030, including establishment of Telecom Manufacturing Zones (TMZs).
Use of AI and cybersecurity	Limited mention of AI in telecom operations	comprehensive strategy for using AI in cybersecurity, complaint redressal, and network security.
Environmental sustainability	Sustainability measures were not clearly quantified	Aims for a 30% reduction in the sector's carbon footprint & promotes circular economy practices.

National Cooperative Policy 2025

Union Home and Cooperation Minister has unveiled a new national cooperative policy, replacing one in place for the past 23 years (last policy in 2002).

National Cooperative Policy 2025

- The policy aims to strengthen the cooperative sector's institutional capacity, expand its reach into new areas, and align its role with India's broader development goals.
- Anchored in the vision of **Sahkar se Samridhi** (Prosperity through Cooperation), the policy outlines a roadmap for the sector's growth over the next 20 years, focusing on inclusivity, transparency, technological adoption, and village-level economic empowerment.

Political and Historical Context

- The Union government's decision to create a separate **Ministry of Cooperation** in 2021 signalled a renewed commitment to revitalising this sector.
- With over **8.4 lakh cooperative societies** (target to increase this by 30%), the sector reaches over 31 crore people, especially in states like Maharashtra and Gujarat.
- The policy also seeks to expand this network into other states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, thereby decentralising political and economic benefits.

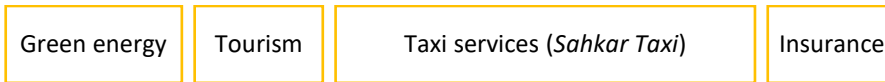
Key Features of the Policy

- The new policy is structured around six pillars:
 - **Strengthening foundational systems**
 - **Promoting vibrancy in existing cooperatives**
 - **Preparing for future challenges through digitalisation and innovation**
 - **Enhancing inclusivity and outreach**

- Expanding into emerging sectors
- Engaging youth and building capacity for future generations
- It aims to increase the sector's contribution to GDP threefold by 2034, establish at least one cooperative society in every village, and bring 50 crore citizens into active cooperative participation.

Expanding into New Sectors

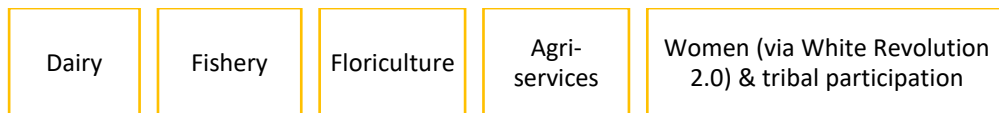
- Under the new policy, cooperatives will now be supported in **non-traditional sectors**, including:



- PACS (Primary Agricultural Credit Societies) are being enabled to undertake diversified activities like managing fuel outlets, LPG distribution, Jan Aushadhi Kendras, CSCs, and even implementing schemes such as *Har Ghar Jal* and *PM Surya Ghar Yojana*.
- A dedicated roadmap has been prepared for sector-specific cooperative development, particularly in rural India.

Model Cooperative Villages and Rural Integration

- A major highlight is the **Model Cooperative Village** initiative. Every tehsil will host five such villages, implemented in coordination with state cooperative banks and NABARD.
- These villages will be centres of excellence in cooperative-led development, integrating:



- The goal is to localise economic activity while fostering inclusive growth and community ownership.

Institutional Strengthening and Reforms

- To ensure efficiency and transparency, the policy mandates:
 - Full computerisation of PACS operations
 - Technology-driven governance for all types of cooperatives
 - Cluster monitoring systems for institutional tracking
 - Legal reviews every 10 years to keep policy aligned with evolving needs
- As of 2025, over 83 intervention points have been identified for reform, 58 implemented, three completed, and others underway.
- Additionally, a nationwide cooperative university (**Tribhuvan Sahkari University**) has been established for professional training and capacity building.

Economic Impact and Inclusive Vision

- The cooperative sector currently contributes significantly to India's rural economy:
 - 20% of the total agricultural credit
 - 35% of fertiliser distribution
 - Over 30% of sugar and 10% of milk production
 - Over 21% of fishing sector
 - Over 13% of wheat and 20% of paddy procurement
- With these foundations, the policy envisions a **member-centric model** where even the smallest cooperative units become self-reliant and future-ready, contributing to employment generation, income stability, and social dignity.

Employment Linked Incentive Scheme

The Union Cabinet has approved an Employment-Linked Incentive (ELI) scheme with an allocation of Rs. 99,446 crore to support employment generation.

India Launches ELI Scheme to Boost Job Creation and Formal Workforce

This ambitious scheme was announced in the **Union Budget 2024-25** as part of a Rs. 2 lakh crore employment and skilling package **aimed at supporting 4.1 crore youth** through a combination of direct incentives, skilling initiatives, and social security expansion.

Objectives and Scope of the ELI Scheme

- **Goal:** Create over 3.5 crore jobs in two years
- The scheme is applicable to jobs created between August 1, 2025, and July 31, 2027.

ELI SCHEME has Two Core Components

- **Part A: Incentives for First-Time Employees**
 - Part A of the scheme is designed for first-time employees registering with the **Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)**.
 - Under this component:
 - Employees with monthly salaries up to Rs. 1 lakh will be eligible.
 - Each eligible employee will receive one month's EPF wage (up to Rs. 15,000) in two instalments:
 - ✓ 1st instalment will be disbursed after six months of continuous service.
 - ✓ 2nd instalment will be released after 12 months and the completion of a mandatory financial literacy programme.
 - A portion of the incentive will be held in a savings instrument or deposit account to encourage long-term financial planning.
 - This part of the scheme is expected to benefit 1.92 crore first-time workers.
- **Part B: Incentives for Employers to Generate Jobs**
 - The second component of the scheme targets employers to boost job creation across sectors, with a significant thrust on manufacturing.
 - Incentives will be disbursed to employers who create additional employment and retain those employees for at least six months.
 - Key highlights include:
 - Employers will receive monthly incentives for every new employee hired:
 - ✓ Rs. 1,000 for salaries up to Rs. 10,000
 - ✓ Rs. 2,000 for salaries between Rs. 10,001 and Rs. 20,000
 - ✓ Rs. 3,000 for salaries above Rs. 20,000 (up to Rs. 1 lakh)
 - To qualify, employers must add:
 - ✓ At least 2 new employees (if total staff <50)
 - ✓ At least 5 new employees (if total staff ≥50)
 - Incentives will be provided for 2 years across all sectors, and up to 4 years for the manufacturing sector.
 - This part is projected to support the creation of around 2.60 crore new jobs.

Implementation and Payment Mechanism

- All disbursements under the ELI Scheme will follow a **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** model for transparency and efficiency:
 - Payments to employees (Part A) will be routed through **Aadhaar Bridge Payment System (ABPS)**.
 - Employer incentives (Part B) will be credited directly into PAN-linked accounts.

Financial Fraud Risk Indicator

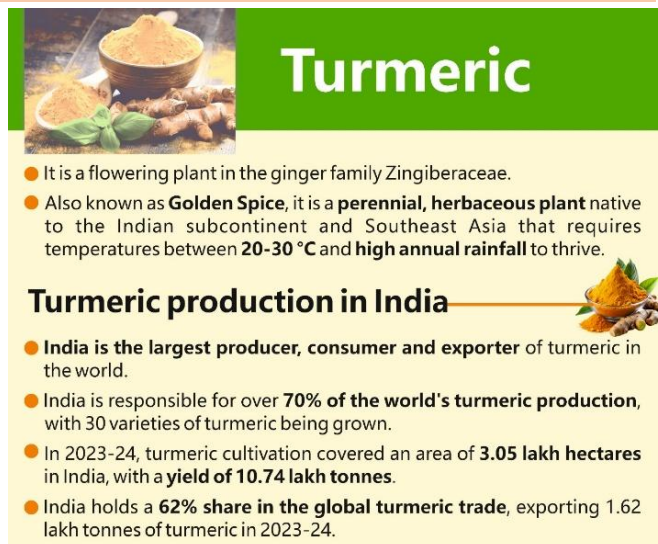
- The RBI has directed all Scheduled Commercial Banks, Small Finance Banks, Payments Banks, and Co-operative Banks to integrate the Financial Fraud Risk Indicator (**FRI**) into their systems.
- Developed by **Department of Telecommunications' Digital Intelligence Unit (DIU)**, the FRI is a classification system that **evaluates and assigns risk levels**—Medium, High, or Very High—to **mobile numbers** based on their association with financial fraud.
- The risk assessment takes inputs from Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C's) National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP), DoT's Chakshu platform, and intelligence shared by banks and financial institutions.
- The FRI allows for swift, targeted, and collaborative action against suspected frauds in both telecom and financial domains. It empowers banks, NBFCs, and UPI service providers to take preemptive steps for customer protection.
- Financial institutions can enhance fraud prevention efforts by blocking or delaying suspicious transactions or issuing alerts or warnings to customers of potential risks.
 - It emphasizes the critical role of automated, API-based data exchange between banking institutions and the DIP (*Digital Intelligence Platform*), facilitating real-time fraud detection and ongoing refinement of risk models.

RailOne App

- The Ministry of Railway launched the **RailOne** app focussed on improving the passenger interface with Railways.
- Conceived by the Railways' public sector undertaking (PSU), the **Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS)**, it is a comprehensive, **all-in-one application**.
- The app integrates all passenger services, unreserved tickets and platform tickets; live train tracking; grievance redressal; e-catering; porter booking; and last-mile taxi services.
- Reserved tickets will continue to be offered on IRCTC (the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation, the PSU providing ticketing, catering, and tourism services for the Railways).
- The RailOne app has also been authorised by the IRCTC, just like many other commercial apps that have partnered with the IRCTC.
- It also supports existing RailConnect and UTS credentials. UTS (*Unreserved Ticketing System*) is the Indian Railways' mobile ticketing application, which allows daily train travellers to book unreserved tickets.

National Turmeric Board

- The headquarters of the National Turmeric Board (NTB) was inaugurated in **Nizamabad, Telangana**.
- NTB will focus on the overall development and growth of the turmeric sector in the country.
- The Board will promote R&D of new turmeric products, provide value addition of turmeric related products for marketing abroad and promote awareness of its medicinal and essential properties.
- It will work on improving turmeric yield, enhancing logistics and supply chains, and exploring new international markets.
- It will also ensure quality and safety standards of turmeric production and exports.
- The Board will include representatives from various ministries, exporters, and producers' bodies to ensure a comprehensive approach to the growth of the turmeric industry.



Turmeric

It is a flowering plant in the ginger family Zingiberaceae.

Also known as **Golden Spice**, it is a **perennial, herbaceous plant** native to the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia that requires temperatures between **20-30 °C** and **high annual rainfall** to thrive.

Turmeric production in India

- **India is the largest producer, consumer and exporter** of turmeric in the world.
- India is responsible for over **70% of the world's turmeric production**, with 30 varieties of turmeric being grown.
- In 2023-24, turmeric cultivation covered an area of **3.05 lakh hectares** in India, with a **yield of 10.74 lakh tonnes**.
- India holds a **62% share in the global turmeric trade**, exporting 1.62 lakh tonnes of turmeric in 2023-24.

Fugitive Economic Offender

- Accepting an application moved by the Enforcement Directorate, a Delhi Court has declared UK-based arms consultant Sanjay Bhandari a fugitive economic offender (FEO).
- With this, the Central agency can confiscate the assets of Bhandari worth crores of rupees. The order comes after a UK court had ruled against Bhandari's extradition to India.

Fugitive Economic Offender

- An FEO is defined under **The Fugitive Economic Offenders (FEO) Act, 2018**.
- As per the act an FEO is any individual against whom a warrant for arrest in relation to a scheduled offence has been issued by any court in India and:
 - The person has **left India so as to avoid criminal prosecution** or
 - While being abroad, **refuses to return to India to face criminal prosecution**

Need for the FEO law

- In 2017, Finance Ministry released a draft Bill to address cases of high-value economic offenders fleeing the country to avoid prosecution.
- It observed that existing civil and criminal laws did not contain specific provisions to deal with such offenders, and that a new legal framework was needed to prosecute them.
- The ministry also argued that procedures under these laws were time-consuming, led to roadblocks in investigation and impacted the financial health of banks.
- The Act replaced '*The Fugitive Economic Offenders Ordinance, 2018*', which was promulgated in April 2018.

Process for declaring an individual an FEO

- ✓ Under the Act, **an application must be filed in the special court** asking that a particular individual may be declared an FEO.
- ✓ The application must be accompanied by:
 - ✓ **Reasons for the belief** that an individual is an FEO;
 - ✓ Any information available regarding the whereabouts of the FEO;
 - ✓ A list of properties or the value of such properties believed to be the proceeds of crime.
- ✓ The special court may then issue notice to the individual to appear at a specified place, and drop the proceedings if the individual complies.
- ✓ If, however, the special court is satisfied that an individual is an FEO, it may, declare the person an FEO. The court may then **order the confiscation of the properties** of the accused individual in India or abroad.

Other provisions for Economic offences

- ✓ Economic offences relate to fraud, counterfeiting, money-laundering, tax evasion, etc.
- ✓ Among the laws available for prosecuting these offences are The Prevention of Money-Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, The Benami Properties Transactions Act, 1988, and The Companies Act, 2013.

Enforcement Directorate (ED)

- ✓ It is a law enforcement agency and economic intelligence agency responsible for enforcing economic laws and fighting economic crime in India.
- ✓ It comes under the **Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance**.
- ✓ The prime objective of the ED is the enforcement of two key Acts namely, the Foreign Exchange Management Act 1999 (FEMA) and the Prevention of Money Laundering Act 2002.

ADEETIE Scheme

- The Ministry of Power has launched the Assistance in Deploying Energy Efficient Technologies in Industries & Establishments (ADEETIE) scheme.
- The scheme is a step toward India's transition to a low-carbon economy by enabling Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to **upgrade to energy-efficient technologies** through comprehensive financial and technical support.
- The scheme will be implemented by the **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)**, over **three years from FY 2025-26 to FY 2027-28**, with a **budgetary outlay of Rs 1000 crore**.
- It will follow a **phased roll-out**, beginning with 60 industrial clusters in the first phase, followed by an additional 100 clusters in the second phase.
- It covers **14 energy-intensive sectors**: Brass, Bricks, Ceramics, Chemicals, Fishery, Food Processing, Forging, Foundry, Glass, Leather, Paper, Pharma, Steel Re-rolling, and Textiles.
- It will provide **interest subvention** of 5% for Micro and Small Enterprises, and 3% for Medium Enterprises on loans for adopting energy-efficient technologies, ensuring accessibility and affordability for MSMEs.

- It is structured to provide end-to-end hand holding through subvention on loans, Investment Grade Energy Audits (IGEA), Detailed Project Reports (DPRs), and post-implementation Monitoring and Verification (M&V).

Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)

- BEE was set up in 2002 under the provisions of the **Energy Conservation Act, 2001**.
- Its mission is to assist in developing policies and strategies with a focus on self-regulation and market principles, to reduce the energy intensity of the Indian economy.

SPREE 2025

- The Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) has approved the **re-launch of SPREE 2025 (Scheme for Promotion of Registration of Employers and Employees)** with the objective of expanding Employees' State Insurance coverage across the country.
- Originally **introduced in 2016**, the scheme successfully facilitated the registration of over 88,000 employers and 1.02 crore employees.
- The scheme will be active from **1st July to 31st December 2025** and provides a one-time opportunity for **unregistered** employers and employees—including contractual and temporary workers.
- Employers can register their units and employees digitally through the ESIC portal, Shram Suvidha and MCA portal.
- **No inspection or demand for past records** will be made for the pre-registration period. Thus, the scheme encourages voluntary compliance by **removing the fear of retrospective penalties** and easing the registration process.
- Prior to SPREE, non-registration within specified timeframes could result in legal action and a demand for backdated dues.
- The scheme marks a progressive step towards inclusive and accessible social security and realising the vision of a welfare-centric labour ecosystem in the country.

Amnesty Scheme – 2025

- ⊗ ESIC has also approved the Amnesty Scheme – 2025, a **one-time dispute resolution window** from 1st October 2025 to 30th September 2026.
- ⊗ It aims to **reduce the number of litigations** by providing a mechanism for the resolution of disputes outside the court, offering employers an opportunity to come forward for a mutual settlement to promote ease of doing business.
- ⊗ For the first time, disputes along with cases involving damages and interest regarding ESI coverage are included.
- ⊗ Regional Directors have been empowered to withdraw cases where contributions and interest have been paid.

Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC)

- ⊗ Established in **1952** under the **Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948**, ESIC is a **statutory organisation** under the **Ministry of Labour and Employment**.
- ⊗ It administers the **Employees' State Insurance (ESI) scheme**, a social security and health insurance scheme for workers in the organised sector in the country.
- ⊗ ESIC can set up hospitals either independently or in collaboration with state governments.

BIND Scheme

- The government has announced that a new Akashvani Kendra would be established in Ujjain, supported under the Centre's Broadcasting Infrastructure and Network Development (BIND) scheme.
 - The new Kendra is aimed at strengthening regional broadcasting, preserving cultural heritage, and disseminating timely information to the people of Madhya Pradesh.
- BIND is a scheme of **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting**, which focuses on infrastructure development of Prasar Bharati, including All India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan (DD).

Prasar Bharati

- **Headquartered in New Delhi**, Prasar Bharati is India's **state-owned public broadcaster**.
- It is a **statutory autonomous body** set up by an Act of Parliament and comprises the **Doordarshan Television Network** and **Akashvani All India Radio**.
- It is the most important vehicle of information, education, entertainment and engagement for the people especially in the remote areas of the country.
- It played a significant role in communicating public health messages and awareness during the Covid pandemic.



- The scheme **provides financial support to Prasar Bharati** for expenses related to expansion and upgradation of its broadcasting infrastructure, content development, and civil work.
- A key priority is the **development of high-quality content** for both domestic and international audience, including **capacity upgradation of the DTH platform** to accommodate more channels.
- It aims to **increase coverage of AIR FM (frequency modulation) transmitters** in the country to 66% by geographical area and 80% by population up from 59% and 68% respectively.
- It also intends to **freely distribute over 8 lakh DD Free Dish Set-Top Boxes (STBs)** to people living in remote, tribal, Left-Wing Extremist and border areas.

Digital Nomad Village

- **Yakten**, a village in **Sikkim's Pakyong district**, has been officially declared **India's first digital nomad village**.
 - A digital nomad is a person who uses technology to work remotely, earning a living online while moving between different locations of their choice.
- It is a collaboration between the district administration and NGO Sarvahitey under the **Nomad Sikkim initiative**.
- The project aims to transform strategic locations in the Himalayan State into year-round hubs for digital professionals across India and abroad, while ensuring sustainable income opportunities for homestay owners.
- It is designed for professionals seeking a balance between remote work and a peaceful lifestyle.
- The village is equipped with high-speed Wi-Fi networks to ensure reliable connectivity, while also promoting eco-friendly practices and facilitating a sustainable remote work environment.
- The State holds the distinction of being India's first fully organic state (2016), the first state to introduce organic aquaculture, and the first state to achieve 100% Open Defecation Free (ODF) status (2016).

RoRo Ferry

- The Goa government has launched two Roll on-Roll off (RoRo) ferry boats – 'Gangotri' and 'Dwarka' – on the Chora-Ribandar route on the Mandovi river.
- A RoRo ferry is a type of vessel that is specifically designed to transport vehicles, such as cars, trucks, trailers etc. The name "roll-on roll-off" refers to the method of loading and unloading the ship, where the vehicles drive on and off the ship via ramps.
- The RoRo ferries in Goa, with a higher capacity, will replace the conventional boats.
- With a running speed of 10 knots – twice that of conventional ferries – the new vessels will ensure faster travel and reduced waiting time for commuters. It will benefit the local commuters and also boost tourism.
- Each RoRo ferry can accommodate up to 100 passengers, at least 15 four wheelers and 30-40 two wheelers, significantly easing the load on traditional ferry services.
- The ferries have been commissioned at zero cost to the government and will operate on a **Built-Own-Operate-Transfer (BOOT) basis**.

Build-Own-Operate-Transfer

- **BOOT** is a model used usually for large-scale projects in public private partnership.
- In this model, a private entity receives a concession (grant of right) from the public sector to finance, design, construct, *own and operate* a project stated in the contract.
- The private entity is given the right to operate it for a set period of time, after which it is transferred back to the public entity. This enables the private entity to recover its investment.


Incentive Scheme for e-Trucks

- The **Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI)** has launched a scheme to provide financial incentives for electric trucks (e-trucks) under the **PM E-DRIVE** initiative.

- Diesel trucks, though constituting only 3% of the total vehicle population, contribute to 42% of transport-related greenhouse gas emissions and significantly worsen air pollution.
- To address this, it is the first time the Government is extending direct support for electric trucks, aiming to accelerate the country's transition to clean, efficient, and sustainable freight mobility.
- A sum of **Rs 500 crore** will be provided within the total outlay of Rs 10,900 crore for the PM E-drive scheme.
- The scheme for e-trucks offers a maximum incentive set at **Rs 9.6 lakh per vehicle**. It is expected to support the deployment of around **5,600 e-trucks** across the country.
- A dedicated provision for **1,100 e-trucks registered in Delhi** has been made, at an estimated cost of **Rs 100 crore**, to address the capital's air quality challenges.
- Key sectors set to benefit include the cement industry, ports, steel, and the logistics sector.
- The **incentive will depend on the gross vehicle weight of the electric truck** and will cover those between 3.5-12 tonnes of weight (N2 category), and trucks weighing between 12- 55 tonnes (N3 category).
- These incentives will be offered as an **upfront reduction in the purchase price** and reimbursed to Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs).
- To receive the incentive, the **manufacturer will have to provide warranties for battery** for a period of five years or 5 lakh kilometres, **and for the vehicle and motor** for a period of five years and 2.5 lakh kilometres.
- To qualify for the incentives, the **scrapping of old, polluting trucks is also mandatory**, ensuring a dual benefit of modernising vehicle fleets and reducing emissions.
- The scheme will reduce operational costs for transporters, encourage clean energy adoption in the heavy vehicle segment, and enhance air quality in urban and industrial regions bringing India closer to a sustainable, low-carbon future.

PM E-DRIVE


- PM E-DRIVE was launched in October 2024, for the **promotion of electric mobility** in the country for a **period of two years**.
- Its primary objective is to accelerate the adoption of EVs by providing **upfront incentives** for their purchase, as well as by facilitating the **establishment of essential charging infrastructure for EVs**.
- It **offers subsidies/demand incentives** worth Rs 3,679 crore to incentivise adoption of electric two-wheelers, electric three-wheelers, e-ambulances, e-trucks and other emerging EVs.
- It will support 24.79 lakh electric two-wheelers, 3.15 lakh e-three wheelers, and 14,028 e-buses.
- For **e-ambulances**, a total of **Rs 500 crore** has been allocated. In addition, Rs 4,391 crore has been provided for the procurement of 14,028 e-buses by state transport units and public transport agencies.



Indian Railways Test First Hydrogen Powered Coach

- Indian Railways (IR) has successfully tested the first hydrogen-powered coach or driving power car at its Integral Coach Factory (ICF) in Chennai.
- This marks a key milestone in IR's efforts to build India's first hydrogen-powered train, something only a few railways in the world have tried, with a bulk of the projects still in the trial phase.
- The hydrogen coach is part of a broader vision by IR to deploy 35 hydrogen-powered trains under the **Hydrogen for Heritage initiative**. These trains are intended to operate on **heritage and hill routes** across the country.

Project details



- ▶ The project began in 2020-21 under the **Northern Railway zone** with a total project cost of Rs 136 crore and has two major components.
 - First, the conversion of two conventional 1600 Horse Power (HP) diesel power cars into hydrogen fuel cell-powered traction system, and
 - Second, setting up a hydrogen storage and fuelling facility at Jind in Haryana.
- ▶ With a train length of 10 coaches, it will have a capacity to carry more than 2,600 passengers. The train will run between **Jind and Sonapat stations** of Haryana.
- ▶ The primary design, validation, and testing is being undertaken by **Indian Railways' Research Design & Standards Organisation (RDSO)**.
- ▶ The 3,000-kg hydrogen fuelling facility at Jind will provide the required hydrogen for the operation of the hydrogen-powered train.
- ▶ The facility will be operated and maintained in accordance with the standards and specification of **Petroleum Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO)**, a nodal agency under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

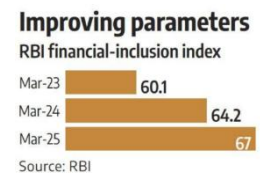
Safety

- ▶ Hydrogen fuel technology is still an emerging field in Railways.
- ▶ Hydrogen is the lightest element. It is colourless, odourless, tasteless, and highly **flammable**.
- ▶ The hydrogen train will include safety features such as pressure relief valves, leak detection, flame detection sensors, temperature detection systems, and scientifically designed ventilation.

- The project is significant for the IR, as it is one of the key players in India’s mission to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase the share of renewable energy in its energy mix.
- An increased use of hydrogen (cleaner fuel) will further reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index) 2025

- The FI-Index, which captures the extent of usage of financial services across the country, has **increased to 67** in the financial year ending March 2025 (FY25), compared to 64.2 in March 2024.
- **First published in 2021**, the index is **published annually in July** every year.
- The index has been **conceptualised by RBI** as a comprehensive index incorporating details of banking, investments, insurance, postal as well as the pension sector in consultation with government and respective sectoral regulators.
- It helps to determine and assess the extent of financial inclusion in India.
- The index captures information on various aspects of financial inclusion in a single value ranging **between 0 and 100**, where **0 represents complete financial exclusion** and **100 indicates full financial inclusion**.
- The index comprises of **three broad parameters: Access (weight 35%), Usage (45%), and Quality (20%)** with each of these consisting of various dimensions, which are computed based on **97 indicators**.
- A unique feature of the index is the quality parameter which captures the quality aspect of financial inclusion as reflected by financial literacy, consumer protection and inequalities and deficiencies in services.
- It has been constructed **without any base year** and thus reflects cumulative efforts of all stakeholders over the years towards financial inclusion.
- Improvement in the index in FY25 is contributed by **usage** and **quality** dimensions, reflecting deepening of financial inclusion, and sustained financial literacy initiatives.



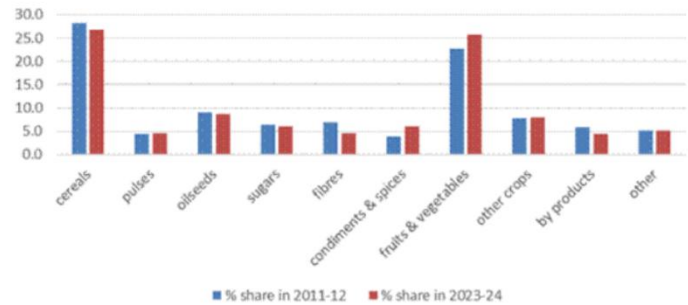
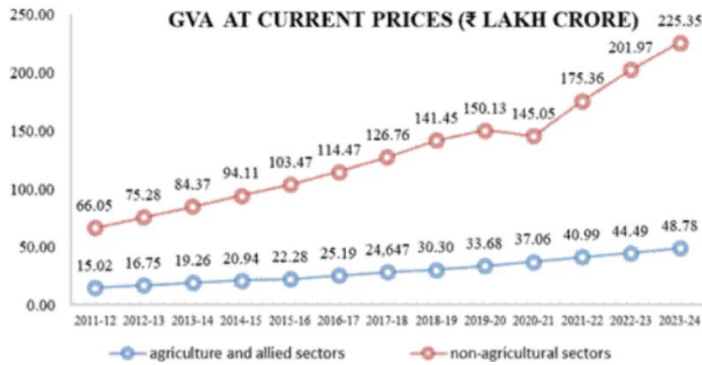
Sanchar Mitra Scheme

- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) expanded its Sanchar Mitra scheme across India, transforming it from a pilot project into a national programme to empower youth as digital ambassadors.
- Initially piloted in select institutions the scheme will now engage **student volunteers — called Sanchar Mitras** — to spread awareness on **digital safety, cyber fraud prevention, EMF (Electric and magnetic fields) radiation, and responsible mobile use**.
- Students from telecom, electronics, computer science, and cyber security streams will be nominated through local DoT offices.
- Volunteers will receive training from the **National Communications Academy–Technology (NCA-T)** and DoT’s Media Wing, gaining exposure to advanced telecom technologies like 5G, 6G, AI, and cyber security.
- Through structured training, project participation, and engagement with real-world telecom initiatives, the scheme seeks to build a digitally aware, skilled, and research-oriented youth workforce.
- Sanchar Mitras will carry out grassroots-level awareness drives, engage with communities and NGOs, and act as catalysts for informed digital behaviour.
- To encourage excellence, participants will be assessed periodically based on innovation, consistency, and outreach impact.
- Outstanding performers may be offered opportunities including internships, involvement in national telecom projects, participation in high-level forums like India Mobile Congress, and engagements with International Telecom Union (ITU) standards and policy work.

Statistical Report on Output from Agriculture & Allied Sectors

- The National Statistics Office (NSO) under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has released its **annual publication**, Statistical Report on Value of Output from Agriculture and Allied Sectors (2011-12 to 2023-24).

- The report details the value of output from crop, livestock, forestry, logging, and fishing and aquaculture sectors at both current and constant (2011-12) prices.



Highlights of the Report

- The **Gross Value Added (GVA)** of agriculture and allied sectors at current prices **rose by approximately 225%**, rising from Rs 1,502 thousand crore in 2011-12 to Rs 4,878 thousand crore in 2023-24.
- At constant prices, the **Gross Value of Output (GVO)** from these sectors grew steadily from Rs 1,908 thousand crore in 2011-12 to **Rs 2,949 thousand crore** in 2023-24, reflecting a **54.6% increase**.
 - The **crop sector**, contributing Rs 1,595 thousand crore, remains the **largest component of the total GVO** at constant prices, accounting for 54.1% in 2023-24.
 - Within this sector, **cereals and fruits & vegetables together made up 52.5%** of the crop GVO. **Among cereals, paddy and wheat dominated**, constituting about 85% of the cereal GVO in 2023-24.
- Five states—Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Telangana, and Haryana—contributed nearly 53% of the cereal GVO** at constant price, with Uttar Pradesh retaining its top position.
- In the **fruit category, banana overtook mango** in 2023-24, recording a GVO of Rs 47 thousand crore compared to mango's Rs 46.1 thousand crore. Mango had been the leading fruit contributor from 2011-12 to 2021-22.
- Potato continued to lead the vegetable group**, with its GVO rising from Rs 21.3 thousand crore in 2011-12 to Rs 37.2 thousand crore in 2023-24.
- Floriculture** saw significant growth, nearly **doubling from Rs 17.4 thousand crore to Rs 28.1 thousand crore** over the same period, signaling increased commercial interest and diversification in horticulture.
- State-wise contributions to the GVO of *fruits, vegetables, and floriculture* have shifted noticeably in the period, reflecting changes in production dynamics and regional agricultural growth.
- In the **condiments and spices category, Madhya Pradesh emerged as the top contributor** in 2023-24 with a 19.2% share, followed by Karnataka (16.6%) and Gujarat (15.5%).
- The **livestock sector** recorded strong growth, with its GVO increasing from Rs 488 thousand crore in 2011-12 to Rs 919 thousand crore in 2023-24.
- Milk remained the dominant component**, though its share slightly **decreased** from 67.2% to 65.9% over the period, while the meat group's share rose from 19.7% to 24.1%.
- The **forestry and logging sector** showed consistent growth, with its GVO rising from Rs 149 thousand crore in 2011-12 to Rs 227 thousand crore in 2023-24.
- The **fishing and aquaculture** sub-sector grew in importance, with its contribution to agricultural GVO increasing from 4.2% in 2011-12 to 7.0% in 2023-24.
 - The share of inland fish decreased from 57.7% to 50.2%, while marine fish increased from 42.3% to 49.8%.
 - West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh remained key contributors to the fisheries GVO, with significant shifts observed between 2011-12 and 2022-23.

Genius Act for Stablecoins

The United States passed the Guiding and Establishing National Innovation for U.S. Stablecoins Act (Genius Act) - a landmark legislation for the stablecoin industry.

Details of the Act

- It primarily aims to create a comprehensive regulatory framework for “payment stablecoins” in the US. It has several goals:
 - Making the US the leader in digital assets;
 - Protecting consumers in the digital market;
 - Ensuring the dollar’s global reserve currency status;
 - Combatting illegal activity in the digital assets space; and
 - Stepping towards making the US the crypto capital of the world.
- The Act creates the first-ever Federal regulatory system for stablecoins, **ensuring their stability and trust** through strong reserve requirements.
- This will be done by **mandating 100% reserve backing with liquid assets** such as the dollar or US Treasury Bills, as well as **monthly public disclosures of the composition of reserves**.
- It also requires stablecoin issuers to **comply with strict marketing rules**, forbidding them from making misleading claims such as stablecoins being government-backed.
- It also streamlines state and federal regulation and brings issuers under the ambit of the Bank Secrecy Act.

Stablecoins and Cryptocurrency

- ❑ A cryptocurrency uses cryptography for security and operates on a decentralised network known as a blockchain, which is independent of a central bank or government.
- ❑ However, cryptocurrencies are subject to volatility as it can be affected by supply and demand, news, market sentiment, etc., and their value is based on the utility of their networks.
- ❑ On the other hand, stablecoins are cryptocurrencies designed to, as the name suggests, be stable in value, by pegging them to a real asset such as a fiat currency like US dollar.
- ❑ Issuers thus aim to keep the stablecoin’s value close to the chosen real asset, resulting in low volatility.

Implications of the Act

- ❑ It is also speculated that with this legitimacy boost, many private players that are crypto-friendly such as Meta, Amazon, Visa, Walmart, etc., will join the stablecoin race.
- ❑ As these cryptocurrencies are meant as alternative modes of payment, they have the potential for broader adoption when tied to well-known retail brands, and this could signal a significance shift towards mainstream adoption of dollar-backed cryptocurrency in the US.
- ❑ Furthermore, traditional payments firms like Visa and Mastercard are looking to adopt stablecoins as complementary, rather than competitive, tools, which means that the industry could diversify with the legitimization of stablecoins.
- ❑ With more trust in stablecoins, more companies might look to pay in crypto – a decision likely to attract the younger workforce crypto payroll options.
- ❑ However, there are concerns that stablecoins under state control may function like a surveillance tool.

Trade Connect ePlatform

To boost MSME participation in global trade, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) showcased its **Trade Connect ePlatform** at two major B2B trade exhibitions - the India International Garment Fair (IIGF) and the Toy Biz International B2B Expo 2025.

- Trade Connect ePlatform, an initiative of the DGFT under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, is a digital gateway that serves as a **comprehensive hub of information and services on international trade** for all stakeholders.
- The platform has onboarded Indian Missions, Export Promotion Councils and Commodity Boards, officials from Department of Commerce and DGFT as well as other stakeholders to provide comprehensive support to Indian exporters.
- It provides updated information on tariffs, certifications, trade events, eCommerce, and buyers in a simplified manner to MSMEs.
- Interactive courses to introduce MSMEs to exports & related procedures across multiple languages are also provided.
- It also serves a single point of issuance and validation for *preferential and non-preferential certificates of origin* through a secure, electronic, paperless issuance process.

Rise in Claim Defaults Under PMFBY

State defaults under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) have crossed Rs 6,450 crore over five years. This has impacted the timely settlement of farmer claims and eroded trust in the scheme.

- Andhra Pradesh (Rs 2565 crore), Rajasthan (Rs 1525 crore), Madhya Pradesh (Rs 1468 crore), Tamil Nadu (Rs 124 crore) and Uttar Pradesh (Rs 121 crore) have been the major defaulters.

PMFBY

- Launched in 2016, PMFBY is an **insurance service for farmers** for their yields. It insures farmers against all non-preventable natural risks from **pre-sowing to post-harvest**.
- Farmers have to pay a maximum of 2% of the total premium of the insured amount for kharif crops, 1.5% for rabi food crops and oilseeds as well as 5% for



ISSUES WITH PMFBY

- However, farm leaders have criticised the scheme for various reasons. One of the main arguments against it is that it helps insurance companies more than the farmers.
 - High claim ratios have deterred some insurance companies from active participation.
- It is claimed that insurance companies have made huge gains at the cost of the public exchequer and farmers.
- Delayed payouts and denial of claims are the most common complaints against insurance companies.
- Insurance companies are also blamed for not conducting enough crop cutting experiments (CCE), which measure the total loss experienced by the farmers.
- Moreover, insurance companies have not established taluka-level offices or call centres, and have also failed to educate farmers on the correct methodology for reporting claims.

EFFORTS TO MINIMIZE DEFAULTS

- To reduce delays in claim settlement, the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has made it **mandatory for states to open escrow accounts** for deposit of their premium share in advance from the current kharif season (2025-26).
- In addition, the ministry has made a provision of a **12% penalty on delay in payment of claims by insurance companies**, which is automatically calculated on the National Crop Insurance Portal (NCIP)
- For ensuring robust crop yield assessment, the ministry has asked states to ensure **at least 50% weightage** is given to yield derived by **Yes-Tech, a technology-based crop yield estimates system**.
- Delinking of central government share of premium subsidy from that of state governments has been implemented so that farmers can get proportionate claims relating to the Central Government share.

commercial/horticultural crops.

- The balance premium is shared by the Union and state governments on a 50:50 basis and on a 90:10 basis in the case of northeastern states.
- Prior to 2020, the scheme was mandatory for farmers who availed institutional finance, but that was changed and made voluntary for all farmers.

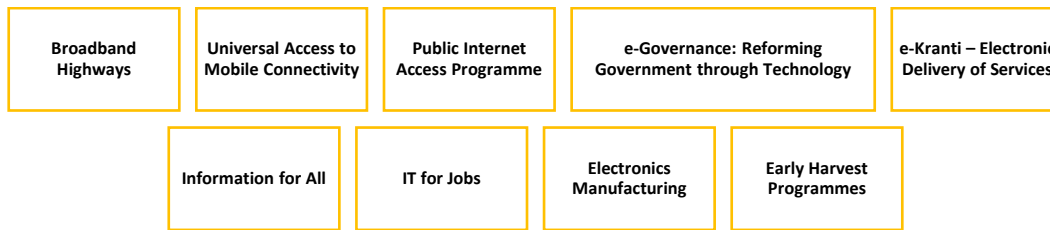
Current Status

- Currently the scheme is being implemented across **23 states and UTs**. In terms of premium payment, the **Centre, states and farmers have had a share of 40%, 48% and 12% respectively** since the launch of the scheme.
- Meanwhile, the **number of farmers enrolled** has increased from 3.17 crore in 2022-23 to **4.19 crore in 2024-25, an increase of 32%**.
- Out of the total farmers enrolled under PMFBY in 2024-25, 6.5%, 17.6% and **48%** are tenant, marginal and **loanee** farmers categories respectively.
- **Over Rs 1.78 lakh crore has been paid** to farmers under PMFBY since its launch, as compensation which was five times of total premiums of Rs 35,666 crore paid by them under the scheme.

Digital India Completes 10 Years

- The Digital India programme completed 10 years. It was launched as a flagship programme on July 1, 2015, to transform India into a **digitally empowered society and knowledge economy**,
- The digital economy contributed **11.74%** to the national income in 2022–23 and is expected to reach **13.42%** by 2024–25.
- According to the **State of India's Digital Economy Report 2024**, India now ranks **third** in the world for digitalisation of the economy.
- By **2030**, India's digital economy is projected to **contribute nearly one-fifth of the country's overall economy**, outpacing the growth of traditional sectors.

- Digital India is built upon **9 key pillars**, each focusing on a specific aspect of transforming India into a digitally empowered nation. These pillars are:



Key Achievements

From bringing internet access to remote corners of the country to making government services available online, the initiative has truly bridged the digital divide. Today, people can access healthcare, education, banking, and other services with just a few clicks.

Telecom Penetration

- Total telephone connections in India rose from **93.3 crore** in March 2014 to over **120 crores** in April 2025, with tele-density increasing from **75.23% to 84.49% by October 2024**.
- Urban connections grew from **555.23 million to 661.36 million**, and rural connections from **377.78 million to 527.34 million**, between March 2014 and October 2024.

Internet & Broadband penetration

- Internet connections jumped from **25.15 crore in March 2014 to 96.96 crore in June 2024**, registering a growth of **285.5%**.
- **Broadband connections** rose from 6.1 crore in March, 2014 to 94.92 crore in August, 2024 growing by 1452%.
- Out of 6,44,131 villages, **6,15,836 villages** have 4G mobile connectivity in the country, as of December 2024. Further, **4.74 lakh 5G towers**, covering **99.6% of districts** have been installed.
- Internet users have grown by 285% in 11 years. At the same time, data costs dropped from Rs 308 per GB in 2014 to just Rs 9.34 in 2022, making the internet more affordable for everyone.
- As of January 2025, BharatNet has connected over **2.18 lakh** Gram Panchayats with high-speed internet. Nearly 6.92 lakh km of optical fibre cable has been laid, bringing internet to many villages.

Unified Payments Interface (UPI)

- In April 2025, over 1,867.7 crore UPI transactions worth **Rs. 24.77 lakh crore** were made in one month. Nearly 460 million people and **65 million** merchants use UPI.
- According to the **ACI Worldwide Report 2024**, India handled **49%** of global real-time transactions in 2023.
- UPI is now live in over seven countries, boosting global digital payments and financial inclusion.

Direct Benefits Transfer (DBT)

- DBT uses Aadhaar to deliver welfare payments directly and remove fake beneficiaries. It saved the government over **Rs 3.48 lakh crore** between 2015 and March 2023.
- Over **5.87 crore** ineligible ration cards and **4.23 crore** duplicate LPG connections were cancelled making the welfare system more targeted and transparent.

Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)

Launched in 2022, ONDC is a government-backed initiative to create a national e-commerce network. By January 2025, it covered **616+** cities and has registered more than **7.64 lakh** sellers and service providers.

Government e-Marketplace (GeM)

- Launched in 2016, Government e-Marketplace (GeM) enables online purchase of goods and services by government departments.

- It has over **1.6 lakh** government buyers and **22.5 lakh+** sellers and service providers.
- As of January 2025, GeM recorded a Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) of **Rs 4.09 lakh crore** in just 10 months of FY 2024–25, showing nearly 50% growth over the same period last year.

Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA)

Launched in 2018, it seeks to usher digital literacy in rural India for covering six crore rural households (one person per household).

Digital India BHASHINI

Launched in 2022, it seeks to enable easy access to the internet and digital services in Indian languages, including voice-based access, and help the creation of content in Indian languages.

IndiaAI Mission

Approved in 2024, the IndiaAI Mission aims to build a strong and inclusive AI ecosystem over five years. It focuses on enabling access to computing, supporting innovation, improving datasets, funding startups, and ensuring ethical AI use.

E-Governance

DigiLocker has 53.92 crore users; UMANG offers 2,300 services in 23 languages.

Way Ahead

- In just a decade, Digital India has reshaped the nation's digital landscape and has built a digital ecosystem that is inclusive, scalable, and future-ready.
- The next decade promises not just faster growth, but deeper transformation, where technology becomes the backbone of a stronger, smarter, and more self-reliant India.

Rise in IP Filings

- Intellectual Property (IP) filings in the last 5 years have **increased by 44%**, rising to 6,89,991 in 2024–25.
- The highest growth was observed in Geographical Indications (GI) with a 380% increase, followed by Designs (266%), Patents (180%), Copyright (83%), Trademarks (28%), and Semiconductor Integrated Circuits Layout-Designs (SICLD) (20%).
- The rise is primarily driven by strategic policy reforms and extensive digitisation initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry.

KEY REFORMS

- These include the simplification of IP laws and rules, the mandatory electronic submission of patent documents, and a 10% fee reduction for online patent filings.
- The examination period for patents has been reduced to 31 months from 48 months.
- The frequency for filing 'working statements of patents' has been reduced from once in a year to once in every three years.
- Significant fee concessions have been introduced for Startups, MSMEs, and Educational Institutions, including an 80% fee reduction for Patents.
- The 'Certificate of Inventorship' has been introduced in Patents to formally recognize the contributions of inventors in patented inventions and to incentivize innovation.
- The IP Offices have been modernised with a comprehensive e-filing system, enabling over 95% of applications to be filed online.
- Initiatives like the 'IP Sarthi Chatbot' and the National Intellectual Property Awareness Mission (NIPAM) have further strengthened IP awareness and accessibility across the nation.
- Grievance redressal has been strengthened to ensure prompt, fair, and transparent resolution of complaints and concerns.

Status of Youth in Agrifood Systems

- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has released a report titled The Status of Youth in Agrifood Systems.
- It examines the crucial role of youth (**1.3 billion individuals aged 15 to 24 globally**) in transforming agrifood systems to improve food security, nutrition and economic opportunities.
- It highlights youth as key change agents in the agricultural sector, positioning them as the next generation of producers, processors, service providers, and consumers.

Key Highlights

- More than 20% of the world's 1.3 billion young people were currently *Not in employment, education or training (NEET)*.
- The report warns of a looming labour shortage in agrifood systems as rural youth numbers fall.
- The share of working youth in agrifood systems has **decreased from 54% in 2005 to 44% in 2021**. Thus, 44% of working youth rely on agrifood systems for employment compared to 38% for working adults.
- However, that global average covers a large span ranging from 82% in crisis affected agrifood systems to just 23% in industrialised agrifood systems.
- **Industrial agrifood systems:** Today, **54% of youth lived in urban areas**, especially in Eastern Asia. On the contrary, **rural youth made up just 5% of the population in industrial agrifood systems**, signaling potential labor shortages if agricultural careers are not made more attractive.
 - Many rural youths reside in areas with high agricultural productivity potential, presenting significant investment opportunities in market access and infrastructure.
- **Lower-middle-income countries:** Meanwhile, ~85% of global youth lived in low- and lower-middle-income countries, where agrifood systems were essential for livelihoods.
- Alarming, **food insecurity among youth has risen from 16.7% to 24.4%** between 2014-16 and 2021-23, especially affecting young people in Africa.
- **Climate shocks and extreme weather events** driven by climate change also posed a significant threat.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Eliminating youth unemployment could generate a 1.4% boost in global GDP (\$1.5 trillion in additional value-added activity), with about 45% of that increase driven by agrifood systems.
- **Expanding Economic Opportunities:** Implement targeted strategies to equip youth with the skills and resources needed for agrifood systems.
- **Investing in Modernization:** Prioritize infrastructure investments to make agrifood careers more appealing.
- **Facilitating Access to Resources:** Develop youth-targeted land and credit schemes to enhance engagement in agrifood systems.
- **Promoting Orderly Youth Migration:** Support safe and youth-responsive migration pathways to address labor shortages.
- **Enhancing Digital Access:** Expand digital technology access, enabling young farmers to modernize practices and connect with markets.

India Energy Stack

- The Ministry of Power has constituted a 17-member task force led by Infosys co-founder **Nandan Nilekani** for designing and charting a roadmap for the nationwide rollout of the India Energy Stack (IES).
- The proposed IES will be enabled by a **digital public infrastructure (DPI)**, for a digitally integrated future for India's power sector.
- It aims to do for the power sector what Aadhaar did for identity, and UPI for finance.

Need for a DPI-style Intervention

- As **electricity is a concurrent subject** in India, both the Union and state governments share responsibility for its governance.

SIGNIFICANCE

It will **digitally integrate India's fragmented power ecosystem** — from producers and grid operators to consumers, exchanges, and regulators.

Beyond enabling unique identification, full integration, and interoperability, the IES can help unlock an entirely new ecosystem — one where energy fintech, virtual power plants, and peer-to-peer trading can grow on a standardised, interoperable digital infrastructure.


Consumers and producer-consumers (prosumers) – **could instantly buy surplus energy to store in batteries or sell rooftop solar output at peak prices.**

IES would deepen the decentralisation of electricity and allow prosumers to manage their assets more actively and efficiently.

Grid operators could make far more precise load-balancing and dispatch decisions, while energy producers could reduce curtailment or track carbon offsets using transparent performance data.

The utility of IES is based on its ability to maintain the integrity of data, processes, and settlements across the board.

A key component of this architecture is the Utility Intelligence Platform (UIP) – a primary application layer built on the IES foundation that would enable all of these services.



- This has contributed to a **highly fragmented sector**, leading to **isolated digital islands rather than an integrated national platform**.
- This fragmentation creates **significant operational challenges** that limit the energy sector's ability to meet India's growing energy demands efficiently. The **four key challenges** facing the power sector are:
 - There is **no unique identifier** for consumers, assets, or stakeholders.
 - Decision-making is hampered by the **lack of access to harmonised, real-time data**.
 - Those seeking to offer solutions in this space **struggle to scale**, as they depend on various proprietary digital platforms.
 - There is **no interoperability** between these digital systems, which prevents cross-regional data sharing and cross-discom transactions.
- Hence, the challenges faced by India's energy sector are similar to those faced by the identity and financial sectors prior to the introduction of Aadhaar and UPI.

PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana

- The Union Cabinet has approved the Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana (PMDDKY) aimed at **benefitting 1.7 crore farmers** across the country.
- The Centre has **merged 36 schemes of 11 Ministries into the PMDDKY**, which will have an outlay of **Rs 24,000 crore per year for six years** beginning 2025-26.
- PMDDKY is designed on the lines of the **Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP)** launched in 2018, in the country's 112 most underdeveloped districts, to transform them quickly and effectively.
- The **NITI Aayog**, which plays an important role in the implementation and monitoring of the ADP, will also provide overall guidance and capacity building support to PMDDKY.

Objective

- Enhancing agricultural productivity;
- Adopting crop diversification and sustainable agriculture practices;
- Augmenting post-harvest storage at the panchayat and block level;
- Improving irrigation facilities; and
- Facilitating availability of long-term and short-term credit.

Implementation

- PMDDKY will cover 100 districts based on **three broad parameters: low productivity, low crop intensity, and below-average credit parameters**.
 - However, a minimum of one district from each state is to be selected, ensuring balanced geographic inclusion.
- **Cropping intensity** is a measure of how efficiently land is used, and it is defined as the **percentage of the gross cropped area to the net area sown**.
- In simple terms, cropping intensity indicates the number of crops grown on a piece of land in an agricultural year (July-June).
- At the all India level, the cropping intensity was recorded at **155% in 2021-22**, although the figure greatly varied from state to state. Cropping intensity was only **111% in 1950-51**.
- The Ministry of Finance has also requested the Department of Financial Services and NABARD to share the data on district wise farm credit.
- This **District Agriculture and Allied Activities Plan (DAAAP)** will be prepared by the **District Dhan Dhaanya Samiti headed by the Collector**, and will have progressive farmers as members.
- The District Plans will be aligned to the national goals of crop diversification, conservation of water and soil health, self-sufficiency in agriculture and allied sectors as well as expansion of natural and organic farming.
- The scheme will be governed through a three-tier implementation structure:
 - **District-level committees**

- **State-level steering groups:** Teams similar to the ones at the district level will also be formed at the state level, with the responsibility of ensuring effective convergence of schemes in districts.
- **National-level oversight bodies:** Two teams will be formed at the central level: one under Union Ministers, and another under Secretaries and department officers.
 - Central Nodal Officers (CNOs) will be appointed for field visits, review and monitoring.
- Each level will ensure strategic planning, execution, and issue resolution.
- PMDDKY districts will be **ranked based on their performance**. The progress of the scheme in each district will be monitored on a monthly basis on **117 performance indicators**.
- Every district will have central and state agriculture universities as technical knowledge partners.

OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2025-2034

- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has released the OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2025-2034.
- It provides a comprehensive assessment of the ten-year prospects for **agricultural commodity and fish markets** at national, regional, and global levels. It serves as a forward-looking reference to support **evidence-based policy planning**.

Key Highlights

- **Total consumption** of agricultural and fish commodities is **projected to grow by 13%** from current levels by 2034.
- Nearly all the increase is expected to occur in low- and middle-income countries, reflecting expanding and increasingly affluent populations in these regions.
- However, while half of the consumption growth in **middle-income** countries is **attributed to per-capita increases**, 75% of the growth in **low-income countries** is based on **population growth**.
- **Rising disposable incomes and urbanisation**, particularly in middle-income countries, are expected to lead to shifts in dietary patterns toward more diverse and nutritious foods, including livestock and fish products.
- The share of total calories in diets contributed by livestock and fish products is projected to rise by 6% globally by 2034.
- In **lower-middle-income countries**, a higher 25% growth in the availability of nutrient-rich food will bring the **average daily per capita intake of nutrient-rich food in these regions to 364 kcal**.
- This surpasses the **300 kcal** included in the **Healthy Diet Basket (HDB)** used by the FAO to compute the cost and affordability of a healthy diet.
- In **low-income countries**, the situation is more severe, as average daily per capita intake of nutrient-rich animal foods is expected to **remain at 143 kcal**, significantly lower than the HDB.

Growth in Production

- To support growing demand, global **agricultural and fish production is projected to expand by 14%** over the next decade, with middle-income countries expected to remain the principal sources of global agricultural expansion.
- These structural shifts in production will be driven by adoption of innovative and improved technologies, capital investments, more intensive use of fertilisers, feeds and other inputs in middle-income countries.

Agricultural GHG Emissions

- Direct agricultural greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are projected to **increase by 6% by 2034**.
- Innovations such as precision farming, improved nutrient and water management, feed enhancements in livestock systems, and low-cost scalable practices such as crop rotations, intercropping and compost-based nutrient management could support such emission reductions.

Trade Flow

- Trade flows between net-exporting and net-importing regions are expected to increase.

- By 2034, **22% of calories consumed** globally are expected **to be traded across borders**. Twenty years ago, this share was 17% but has remained stable at around 22% over the last ten years.

Woolah Tea

- Assam's first bagless tea brand, Woolah Tea, has been granted a 20-year patent.
- The patent has been granted for its innovative 'compressed true whole leaf tea dips and method' (patent name).
- Woolah's tea is made from a compressed bundle of eti koli duti paat (one bud and two leaves), bound by a natural string —eliminating the need for conventional tea bags.
- This helps to eliminate micro plastics that leach into tea from standard bags. This leads to eco-friendly brewing and zero plastic use.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

US Remittance Tax on India

- The United States has enacted a 1% tax on certain outbound remittances under the **One Big Beautiful Bill Act**, raising concerns about its impact on India's remittance inflows.
 - The tax, effective from **January 1, 2026**, is expected to marginally affect India, the world's largest recipient of remittances, primarily through higher costs rather than a significant decline in remittance volumes.

Key Features and Exemptions

- Originally proposed as a **5% tax**, the remittance levy was later reduced to **1%** after bipartisan negotiations. However, key exemptions in the Senate-passed version limit its reach:
 - **Applies only to physical modes of transfer** like cash, money orders, and cashier's checks.
 - **Bank account transfers or payments through US-issued debit/credit cards are exempt.**
 - **Transfers under \$15 are not taxed.**
- **US citizens sending remittances are not subject to the tax.**
- These exclusions will mitigate the adverse impact for a large portion of Indian-origin remitters using digital channels.

Implications for India's Remittance Economy

- According to the experts, India may lose just under **\$500 million in formal remittance inflows**, second only to Mexico, which could lose over \$1.5 billion.
- Although this is a small portion of the \$124.31 billion India received in **net remittances during 2024-25**, the tax is a symbolic reminder of increasing policy barriers to international money flows.
- Moreover, **remittances from the US account for nearly 27.7%** of India's total, approximately **\$32 billion** in 2023-24.
- While the proportion of cash-based transfers is low, even a slight disruption can impact rural households relying on such inflows.
- The overall **long-term impact will remain limited** and primarily felt in transaction costs rather than volume reductions.

Broader Trends in Remittance Flows

India's remittance receipts have been growing steadily:

- **Net remittances in FY2024-25:** \$124.31 billion (up 16% from 2023-24)
 - **Gross inflows:** \$132.07 billion (up 14%)
 - **US share of remittances:** Grew from 22.9% in 2016-17 to 27.7% in 2023-24
- Notably, in FY2024-25, **net remittances not only covered India's entire trade deficit of \$98.39 billion** but also left a **\$26 billion surplus**, underlining their macroeconomic significance.

Growing Costs of Cross-Border Transfers

Even before this new tax, sending money to India has involved significant transaction costs.

As per **World Bank data**, the average cost of sending \$200 to India in Q4 2024 was **5.3%**, compared to the **global average of 6.6%**.

The tax could push these costs further up, particularly in channels involving multiple intermediaries or non-bank methods.

Moreover, **delays and fees from correspondent banking chains** are an ongoing concern, making remittance infrastructure innovation all the more essential.

India's Payment Infrastructure as a Cushion

India has proactively worked on **reducing frictions in cross-border payments**:

- **UPI-PayNow Link:** Seamless money transfer between India and Singapore
- **RBI participation in Project Nexus** (by Bank for International Settlements): Aims to enable "cheaper, faster, more transparent" global transfers

Such efforts will be critical in **mitigating the impact of policy changes abroad** and improving the ease of formal remittance channels for the Indian diaspora.

Global Momentum Builds for Palestinian State Recognition

- 147 out of 193 UN member states currently recognise Palestine as a sovereign state.
- France, Britain, and Canada — key US allies — plan to extend recognition soon, increasing diplomatic pressure on Israel.
- **Changing Dynamics in NATO and G20**
 - Among Nato's 32 member countries, 14 already recognise a Palestinian state. If Britain, France and Canada follow through, that number will rise to 17.

- In the **G20**, recognition will increase from 10 to 13 nations with upcoming announcements.
- **India's Long-standing Support for Palestine**
 - India recognised the **State of Palestine in 1988** and the **PLO in 1974** as the sole representative of Palestinians.
 - India will participate in a UN high-level conference on peaceful settlement and two-state solution, co-chaired by France and Saudi Arabia.
- **UN Security Council Divide on Palestine Recognition**
 - France and Britain moving towards recognition will leave the US as the only P5 member opposing Palestinian statehood.
 - China and Russia already recognise Palestine.
- **The New York Declaration: A New Peace Roadmap**
 - The **UN conference (co-sponsored by France and Saudi Arabia)** produced a **New York Declaration** outlining a **phased roadmap** to resolve the conflict.
 - UN member states have until the **General Assembly session in September** to endorse it.

ED Crackdown in U.S. Donkey Route Case

- The Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the National Investigation Agency (NIA) are intensifying probes into human trafficking via the "Donkey Route," an illegal immigration path used by Indians to reach the US.
- Investigations expose a complex network of traffickers, agents, fake visa consultancies, and international links, raising concerns over national security, human rights, and foreign relations.

Implications for India

- The rise in illegal migration has serious national security, diplomatic, and human rights implications.
- **Transnational crime networks** linked to human trafficking could facilitate terror infiltration and financial crimes.
- India's global image suffers, especially in relations with the US and Canada. Migrants face extreme conditions, risking death, assault, and exploitation.

Policy Recommendations

- India needs a comprehensive strategy involving stronger emigration laws, regulation of private visa consultancies, and enhanced international cooperation.
- Tackling illegal migration requires not just enforcement but addressing underlying socio-economic drivers, public awareness, and systemic reforms.

The "Donkey Route" highlights deep socio-economic desperation and regulatory gaps. A policy-driven response is essential to address the scale and complexity of this challenge.

The "Donkey Route" and India's Human Trafficking Challenge



- ⊕ Popularised by the 2023 film *Dunki*, this route typically starts from India, moving through UAE and Latin American countries like Ecuador, Guyana, and Bolivia, before reaching Mexico and crossing into the US.
- ⊕ Migrants face life-threatening hazards, including dense forests like the **Darién Gap**, criminal cartel extortion, and dangerous tunnels at the US-Mexico border.
- ⊕ Cartels now reportedly charge over \$6,000 per person for human trafficking.
- ⊕ **Economic Dimensions and Agent Networks**
 - ➔ Migrants pay agents between ₹30–60 lakh per person, sometimes going up to ₹1.25 crore for Nicaragua-bound flights.
 - ➔ Local agents in India operate in coordination with international kingpins, forging visas and documents.
 - ➔ The business is not limited to the "Donkey Route"; similar illegal immigration occurs via Canada, where dummy college admissions facilitate crossings into the US, costing around ₹50–60 lakh per migrant.
 - ➔ A tragic case involved a Gujarati family freezing to death at the US-Canada border, sparking further ED investigations.

India's Global Position in Illegal Migration

- ⊕ In 2023, nearly 97,000 Indians were caught or expelled at the US border, a sharp rise from 30,662 in 2021.
- ⊕ According to Pew Research, over 700,000 undocumented Indians live in the US—the third-highest group after Mexicans and Hondurans.
- ⊕ Between 2009 -2025, over 15,700 individuals involved in illegal migration were deported to India, with 2,042 deported in 2019 alone.

Border Dispute Between Thailand & Cambodia

Thailand Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra was suspended by the Constitutional Court after a leaked phone call revealed her referring to former Cambodian Premier Hun Sen as “uncle” while discussing a border dispute.

Thai-Cambodian Border Tensions

- At the core of Thai-Cambodian tensions lies the **Preah Vihear temple (Phra Wihan in Thai)**, situated on a disputed section of the 800-km border.
- Though historically significant to both nations, its formal placement on Cambodian territory continues to evoke nationalist sentiments and border disputes.
- **From Cordiality to Conquest**
 - Historically, relations between the Siamese (Thais) and the Khmers (Cambodians) were friendly, marked by trade, intermarriage, and cultural exchange.
 - However, by the 1400s, the power dynamic shifted as the Ayutthaya kingdom of Siam capitalized on a declining Khmer empire, capturing its capital Angkor.
 - In retaliation, the Khmers launched attacks, leading to a cycle of conflict that continued into the 16th century.
- **Colonial Era and Shifting Borders**
 - The colonial arrival changed the geopolitical landscape. Cambodia fell under French Indochina, and the 1904 border map demarcated the Preah Vihear temple as Cambodian territory.
 - In 1907, under pressure from colonial France, Siam signed a treaty ceding Battambang, Sisophon, and Siem Reap to Cambodia.
 - According to experts, Siam’s decades-long silence following these treaties weakened its later claims over Preah Vihear.
- **Post-Independence Tensions**
 - After Cambodia’s independence in 1953 from France, the country discovered Thai troops occupying the Preah Vihear temple.
 - Frustrated, Cambodia severed diplomatic ties twice—in 1958 and 1961—before taking the dispute to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 1962.
 - The ICJ ruled by a 9-3 majority that the Preah Vihear temple lies within Cambodian territory.

US Hits India with 25% Tariff Plus a Russia Penalty

- Donald Trump’s imposition of a **25% tariff on Indian imports**, along with *potential penalty* for India’s continued purchase of Russian oil and defense equipment, comes just ahead of the August 1 deadline to finalize a bilateral trade deal.
- As a result, India-U.S. trade standoff escalates, **putting ongoing trade negotiations at risk**, and **complicating India’s trade positioning** vis-à-vis its global competitors, especially China.

Background - U.S.-India Trade Relations:

- **Ongoing negotiations:** India and the U.S. have been in talks since February 2025 to finalize a Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) aimed at establishing a mutually beneficial trade framework.
- **Mini-deal attempts:**
 - Alongside the broader BTA, efforts were underway to create a “mini-deal” to roll back retaliatory tariffs.
 - However, this deal has not materialized before the U.S.-imposed deadline of August 1.

New Tariff Measures

- **Announcement by U.S. President:** Trump declared a 25% tariff and an unspecified “penalty” on Indian imports, effective August 1, 2025.
- **Reasons Cited:**
 - High Indian tariffs and non-tariff barriers.

- India's continued defense and energy purchases from Russia (India is the second-largest buyer of Russian oil after China).
- Geopolitical concerns over India's ties with Russia during the Ukraine conflict.
- Penalty tied to Trump's pressure campaign to force countries to reduce dependence on sanctioned Russian oil and arms.

Key Concerns for India

- **Strategic autonomy vs. trade realpolitik:** The case underscores challenges India faces in balancing strategic autonomy (especially defense and energy ties with Russia) and economic pragmatism in dealing with major powers.
- **China's first-mover advantage:**
 - China has already concluded advanced-stage negotiations and could secure better terms, including waivers on secondary tariffs.
 - China cut tariffs on U.S. goods from 125% to 10%; the U.S. reciprocated by cutting tariffs from 145% to 30%.
- **Impact on MSMEs and agriculture:** Heightened tariffs may affect exports from India's MSME sector and agricultural goods, which are highly price-sensitive.
- **Growing trend of bilateralism:** This episode highlights the growing trend of bilateralism in global trade and the declining relevance of multilateral platforms like the WTO.

UAE's Golden Visa Scheme

- Recently, the UAE government officially **refuted** media reports claiming the launch of a nomination-based golden visa programme specifically for Indian and Bangladeshi residents.
- The alleged scheme suggested lifetime residency for AED 100,000 (approx ₹23.3 lakh) without investment requirements. The UAE clarified that no such country-specific policy exists.

India Resumes Tourist Visas for Chinese

- India announced the **resumption of tourist visas for Chinese nationals** from August 1, 2025 — ending a five-year suspension since the COVID-19 outbreak and the LAC standoff.
- The Indian Embassy in Beijing issued detailed visa application procedures, reopening visa centres in **Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou.**
- The decision follows several confidence-building initiatives:
 - Kailash Mansarovar Yatra resumed on June 30, 2025.
 - Plans to restart direct flights between India and China.
- **Visa Trends and People-to-People Exchanges**
 - In 2019, 2 lakh tourist visas were issued to Chinese nationals.

What Are Golden Visas?

- Golden visas are long-term residency permits granted in exchange for significant financial contributions.
- Unlike traditional immigration routes that require education qualifications, job offers, or sponsorship, golden visas offer expedited access based on the individual's ability to invest in the host country through real estate, bonds, or business ventures.

UAE's Golden Visa Explained

- Launched by the Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs & Port Security, the UAE golden visa allows foreign nationals and their families to live, work, and study in the country without a local sponsor.
- Residency is granted for 5 or 10 years and is renewable.

Eligibility Criteria

- **Investors and Entrepreneurs**
 - **Real Estate or Business Investment:** Minimum investment of AED 2 million (approx ₹4.67 crore)
 - **Startups:** New ventures must be valued at no less than AED 500,000 (approx ₹1.17 crore)
- **Outstanding Special Talents:** Applicants in the following categories may qualify:
 - Doctors and scientists
 - Creative professionals in culture, arts, or innovation
 - Executive directors
 - Recognized athletes and specialists in priority scientific fields
 - PhD holders in engineering or science
 - Outstanding students (high school and university)

Only Residency

- The UAE's golden visa provides long-term residency, not citizenship. In contrast, some countries offer "golden passports" — citizenship through investment — which is not applicable in the UAE.



- In 2025, China issued over 85,000 visas to Indians by April 9, reflecting growing cross-border interest.
- However, China is not among the top sources of foreign tourists in India.
- **Review of Border Situation at WMCC Meeting**
 - India and China held the 34th meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination (WMCC) on border affairs in New Delhi.
 - Both sides reviewed the situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and expressed satisfaction over the general peace and gradual normalisation in border areas.

India Becomes Key Player in U.S. Smartphone Market

- India's share in U.S. smartphone imports rose from 11% in 2024 to nearly 36% in Jan–May 2025.
 - This surge is largely driven by Apple iPhones made in India.
 - Apple now manufactures **all iPhone models, including the Pro range**, in India.
 - India now accounts for **20% of Apple's global iPhone production**.
- China's share dropped sharply from 82% to 49% during the same period.
- **Apple's Supplier Shift: China to India**
 - In 2023, Apple had only 14 in India. The number of Indian suppliers has now grown to 64, reflecting a gradual shift of Apple's supply chain to India.
 - Apple's contract manufacturer Foxconn is investing \$1.49 billion in its India unit, Yuzhan Technologies.
 - A new iPhone production plant is planned in Tamil Nadu, strengthening India's manufacturing base.
- **Government Data on India's Mobile Manufacturing Growth**
 - Production value increased 28x to ₹5.45 lakh crore; exports rose 127x to ₹2 lakh crore.
 - Total FDI in electronics manufacturing since FY21 is \$4.07 billion, with \$2.8 billion from PLI beneficiaries.

US Sends Deported Criminals to Eswatini

- The United States has deported five immigrants—from Vietnam, Jamaica, Cuba, Yemen, and Laos—to **Eswatini**, a small southern African kingdom.
- Eswatini is **Africa's only absolute monarchy**, where King **Mswati III** holds total control over governance.
- He assumed the throne in **1986** at age 18, succeeding his father **Sobhuza II**. The king rules by **decree** and is not subject to any democratic checks or balances.
- Since 1973, political parties have been banned. While some exist now, they are excluded from elections and the formal political process.
- The country was known as **Swaziland** during British colonial rule, which ended in 1968.
- In **2018, King Mswati III changed the name to Eswatini**, meaning "land of the Swazis," to reflect its traditional identity.

One In, One Out Scheme

- It is a bilateral agreement between the UK and France to tackle illegal Channel crossings by migrants in small boats.
- Under the deal, France will take back asylum seekers who crossed into the UK without a family connection in UK.
- For every migrant France takes back, the UK will accept one migrant from France who can prove a family connection to the UK.
- A pilot phase will begin with the UK returning 50 migrants per week to France, with a maximum annual cap of 2,600 migrants.
- It is aimed at dismantling human smuggling networks and deterring dangerous Channel crossings.

Australia & India Strengthen Ties with 2025 Maitri Grants

- Australia and India are enhancing their partnership across critical sectors through the **2025 Maitri Grants, Fellowships, and Scholarships**.
- Administered by the **Centre for Australia-India Relations**, the initiative supports innovative projects across sectors such as **innovation, enterprise, education, culture, and strategic research**.
- The initiative reflects a broader goal of bringing India to the center of Australia's public and policy discourse.
- The Maitri program aims to unlock the full potential of people-to-people bonds, fostering long-term collaboration and mutual understanding.

Russia Officially Recognised Taliban Government in Afghanistan

- Russia formally recognised the Taliban-led government in Afghanistan, **becoming the first country** to do so since the Taliban's takeover in 2021.
- Russia removed the Taliban from its list of outlawed organisations and accepted credentials from Afghan Ambassador.
- Russia stated the move aims to foster productive bilateral cooperation.

Continuation of Dalai Lama Institution & Role of Gaden Phodrang Trust

- Just before his 90th birthday, the **14th Dalai Lama** declared that the institution of the Dalai Lama will continue.
- He affirmed that only the **Gaden Phodrang Trust** holds the sole authority to recognize his future reincarnation, rejecting interference from any external entity. This aligns with his earlier 2011 statement assigning this role to the Trust.



Gaden Phodrang Trust

Name Origin: "Gaden Phodrang" originally referred to the Dalai Lama's residential quarters at Drepung Monastery in Lhasa.

Historical Context: The Dalai Lamas later moved to the Potala Palace and Norbulingka, until the 14th Dalai Lama fled to India in 1959.

Established: Registered in Dharamshala in 2011, the Trust is based at the Dalai Lama's office and led by senior monk and advisor Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche.

Mandate: The Trust is responsible for recognizing the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama and upholding the traditions of Tibetan Buddhism.

SUMMITS AND ORGANISATIONS

Quad Foreign Ministers Meet

- The second Quad foreign ministers' meeting took place in Washington, DC.
- During the meeting, members reaffirmed its commitment to four key areas: **maritime and transnational security, economic prosperity and security, critical and emerging technologies, and humanitarian assistance.**
- The ministers strongly condemned the Pahalgam terror attack, urging that the perpetrators, organisers, and financiers be brought to justice promptly.
- **Launch of Quad Critical Minerals Initiative**
 - The ministers launched the Quad Critical Minerals Initiative to secure supply chains and reduce dependency on China for essential resources.
- **Focus on Maritime and Logistics Cooperation:** The participating ministers also announced:
 - The first Quad Indo-Pacific Logistics Network field training exercise to be held this year.
 - The launch of the Quad "Ports of the Future" Partnership in Mumbai later this year.

QUAD Launches First-Ever 'At Sea' Observer Mission to Strengthen Indo-Pacific

- The coast guards of QUAD nations have initiated the 'QUAD at Sea Ship Observer Mission', marking the first collaborative observer-at-sea engagement among QUAD nations.
- The initiative promotes interoperability, joint readiness, and maritime governance.
- Rooted in the **Wilmington Declaration (2024)**, it underscores India's SAGAR vision and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), reinforcing a collective commitment to a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific.
- It sets the stage for a future 'QUAD Coast Guard Handshake,' signaling deeper coordination to address regional maritime challenges.

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD)

- QUAD is a strategic forum comprising **India, the United States, Japan, and Australia**. It aims to promote a free, open, inclusive, and rules-based Indo-Pacific region.
- Initially conceptualized in 2007 and later revived in 2017, QUAD focuses on maritime security, counterterrorism, cyber security, climate change, infrastructure development, and vaccine delivery.
- Though **not a formal military alliance**, QUAD enhances diplomatic and defense cooperation through joint exercises like Malabar, high-level summits, and initiatives such as the QUAD at Sea Observer Mission.
- It serves as a platform to counterbalance rising regional challenges.

Quad Critical Minerals Initiative

- To enhance cooperation on securing & diversifying supply chains, recovering critical minerals from e-waste, and boosting private sector investment to strengthen supply chain resilience.
- Quad members expressed serious concerns about the growing dependency on China for processing and refining critical minerals, warning of risks like economic coercion, price manipulation, and supply disruptions.
 - China dominates the production of neodymium-iron-boron (NdFeB) magnets, which are vital for EV motors, power steering, braking, and more.
 - Though rare earth metals are globally available, China leads in efficient processing—a position once held by the US and Japan.

7th BRICS Media & Think Tank Forum

- Held in Rio de Janeiro, the Forum gathered 250+ representatives from 36 countries, including media, think tanks, government bodies, and enterprises.
- Focused on fostering South-South cooperation, with special emphasis on joint AI R&D, co-established standards, and equitable AI benefit-sharing.
- **Key Initiatives Launched**
 - Global South Joint Communication Partnership Program launched with 700+ institutions to promote dialogue and sectoral cooperation.
 - Xinhua's report 'The Rise of the Global South' released, highlighting political and economic resurgence in post-colonial societies.

- **Key Concerns & Recommendations**

- Warned against AI capabilities being concentrated in a few countries, leading to dependencies for Global South nations.
- Advocated for open-source AI development and Global South collaboration in AI governance frameworks.
- Emphasized the need for “regulatory autonomy” to balance sovereignty and multilateralism.
- Called for building a multilingual and multimodal corpus to train AI models that serve journalism and think tank research, amplifying “Global South Stories”.

Understanding Admiralty Suits

- The Kerala High Court has **conditionally arrested the Liberian ship** MSC Akiteta II at Vizhinjam port after the Kerala government filed an admiralty suit seeking ₹9,531 crore compensation.
- The case concerns environmental damage from the May 25 sinking of MSC Elsa III near Alappuzha, which carried over 600 containers with hazardous materials, polluting Kerala’s marine ecosystem. Both vessels are linked to the **Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC)**
- *This Admiralty Act 2017 aligns India with international conventions such as the International Convention on Arrest of Ships, 1999*
- **Landmark Case: MV Elisabeth v. Harwan Investment (1993)** – SC held that Indian High Courts have jurisdiction even if the ship is foreign, expanding admiralty reach.

Law Governing Maritime Disputes in India

- The **Admiralty (Jurisdiction and Settlement of Maritime Claims) Act, 2017** governs maritime disputes in India.
- It allows admiralty suits for claims involving ship damage, ownership, wage disputes, environmental harm, and loss of life.
- This Act replaced outdated colonial laws — the Admiralty Court Act, 1861 and the Colonial Courts of Admiralty Act, 1890.
- While earlier jurisdiction was limited to the High Courts of Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras, the 2017 law extends it to the High Courts of **Gujarat, Kerala, Karnataka, Odisha, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh**.
- These courts have **authority over maritime disputes within 12 nautical miles** from the coast, including the seabed, subsoil, and airspace above.

Legal Provisions for Environmental Damage Claims from Ships

- Under **Section 4 of the Admiralty Act, 2017**, High Courts can hear maritime claims for environmental damage caused by vessels, including claims for compensation and damage removal measures.
- In addition to the Admiralty Act:
 - ▶ The **Merchant Shipping Act, 1958** holds shipowners liable for oil pollution due to leaks.
 - ▶ The **Environment Protection Act, 1986** empowers authorities to act against environmental polluters.
 - ▶ The **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** also addresses such claims.
 - ▶ In 2016, it ordered a Panama-based firm to pay ₹100 crore for an oil spill after M V Rak sank near Mumbai.

CIMMYT Turns to India for Support

- William S. Gaud of USAID coined the term “Green Revolution” in 1968, recognizing efforts like India’s adoption of high-yield wheat varieties.
- With USAID now shut down by the Trump administration, institutions like CIMMYT—central to India’s Green Revolution—face funding gaps.
- Heavily reliant on USAID, CIMMYT is now looking to India, its key beneficiary, for future support.

CIMMYT



Mexico-headquartered International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center or CIMMYT is a major centre for maize and wheat research. CIMMYT is to wheat what the Philippines-based International Rice Research Institute (**IRRI**) — established by the Ford and Rockefeller foundations in 1960 — has been to the other big cereal grain crop.

It developed semi-dwarf wheat varieties like **Lerma Rojo 64A** and **Sonora 63**, first sown in India in 1964–65, sparking the Green Revolution.

➔ Renowned agricultural scientist Norman Borlaug was closely associated with CIMMYT.

It originated from a Mexican government and Rockefeller Foundation initiative in the 1940s–50s.

USAID later became CIMMYT’s main funder, contributing \$83 million of its \$211 million grant revenues in 2024.

Digital Platforms Becoming New Frontline in Terror Financing & Operations

- Financial Action Task Force (FATF), in a report, highlighted that digital platforms—including online payments, VPNs, social media, and e-commerce—were misused in Pulwama and Gorakhnath Temple terror attacks.
- The report, titled '**Comprehensive Update on Terrorist Financing Risks**', serves as a global alert on the evolving and increasingly complex methods of terrorist financing. It warned that such platforms are increasingly being exploited for terror financing.

Key Findings from FATF's Report

- **Digital Platforms in Terror Operations**
 - Online payments, VPNs, social media, and e-commerce platforms exploited in Pulwama (2019) and Gorakhnath Temple (2022) attacks.
 - Crowdfunding sites and messaging apps identified as growing channels for terror financing.
- **State-Sponsored Terror Financing**
 - Some governments allegedly provide direct financial, logistical, and training support to terrorist groups.
 - Sanctions circumvention through trade and smuggling noted.
- **Complex Financial Schemes**
 - Commodity-based methods (e.g., oil-to-gold-to-cash transactions) used to move funds across jurisdictions undetected.
- **Decentralisation of Terror Networks**
 - Shift towards decentralised cells and regional financial hubs.
 - Self-financed cells using criminal proceeds, business investments, and local resources.
- **Storage and Trade-Based Financing**
 - Gold, jewellery, and trade-based schemes used for storing small amounts of funds by ISIL- and Al-Qaeda-linked individuals.
 - AQIS flagged for decentralised financing strategies.
- **Other Channels of Terror Financing**
 - Methods include:
 - Human trafficking, wildlife smuggling, drug trade, virtual assets.
 - Shell entities, mobile apps, donations, non-profit misuse.
 - Hawala routes, crowdfunding, extortion, ransom collection.
- **Case Studies Highlighted:**
 - **Pulwama Attack (2019):**
 - Aluminum powder for IED sourced via Amazon.
 - Linked to Jaish-i-Mohammed; cross-border explosives movement noted.
 - **Gorakhnath Temple Attack (2022):**
 - ISIL-inspired attacker used VPNs to mask identity.



Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

FATF is an intergovernmental policy-making body established in 1989 at the G7 Summit in Paris.

Its primary objective is to develop policies to combat money laundering (ML), terrorist financing (TF), and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.

Headquarters: Paris, France

Members

- ✓ FATF comprises 39 members, including 37 jurisdictions and 2 regional organizations (European Commission and Gulf Cooperation Council).
- ✓ India became a full member of the FATF in 2010, which enhanced its global financial credibility.

Key Functions & Roles

- ✓ Setting International Standards for combating Money Laundering and Terror Financing through its famous 40 Recommendations.
- ✓ Monitoring Compliance of member and non-member countries with those standards.
- ✓ Conducting Mutual Evaluations to assess effectiveness of anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing measures.
- ✓ Issuing Public Statements to identify high-risk and non-cooperative jurisdictions (also known as the FATF Grey List and Black List).
- ✓ Encouraging Legal, Regulatory, and Operational Reforms in financial systems globally.

- Transferred ₹6.69 lakh internationally via PayPal, which later suspended the account.

Maharashtra's Urban Maoism Bill

- The Maharashtra Assembly has passed the Special Public Security Bill, 2024, aimed at curbing urban Maoism and left-wing extremism. The Bill awaits approval from the Legislative Council and the Governor.
- It criminalises actions like disturbing public order and promoting law disobedience, and permits property forfeiture before conviction. Critics raise concerns over vague definitions and possible misuse.

Terrorist Designation of 'The Resistance Front'

- The United States designated ***The Resistance Front (TRF)*** as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) and a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT).
 - TRF had claimed responsibility for the April 22 Pahalgam attack in South Kashmir, which killed 26 people.
 - Formed post-Article 370 abrogation in 2019, TRF is a proxy of Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), disguised as a local resistance group in Jammu and Kashmir.
 - Led by Sheikh Sajjad Gul, it conducts terror attacks and spreads propaganda via digital platforms.
 - India banned TRF in 2023 under UAPA and flagged it to the UN's 1267 Sanctions Committee.
- The designation strengthens efforts to isolate the group globally by freezing its assets and restricting its international operations.
- **Implications of US Designation of TRF as a Terror Group**
 - The United States designates foreign groups as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) under **Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act** to disrupt their activities and funding.
 - This designation criminalizes U.S.-based support and requires financial institutions to block related transactions.
 - The Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) may also label them as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs), imposing asset freezes and financial bans.
 - These actions aim to isolate the group globally and may trigger secondary sanctions against foreign entities that continue supporting them.

Urban Maoism



- ❏ Urban Maoism refers to the CPI (Maoist) strategy of expanding its influence in cities by mobilising students, intellectuals, professionals, and religious minorities.
- ❏ These supporters may not be armed insurgents but are accused of aiding the movement through intellectual, financial, or logistical help, including media campaigns, legal defence, or resource mobilisation.
- ❏ **The Strategy Document: STIR**
 - The 2004 document titled Strategies and Tactics of Indian Revolution (STIR) guides CPI (Maoist) activities. It specifically directs cadres to:
 - ✓ Build urban bases to support armed struggle in rural areas.
 - ✓ Mobilise intellectuals, students, professionals, and minorities by spreading a sense of victimhood.
 - ✓ Form secret alliances with political parties, civil society groups, and other anti-state organisations.
 - ✓ Infiltrate mass organisations while maintaining secrecy.
- ❏ **Real-World Examples and Allegations**
 - Official communications reveal alleged links between Maoists and groups like Popular Front of India (PFI).
 - **Elgar Parishad Case (2018):** Several activists and intellectuals were arrested in connection with alleged Maoist links following violence during the Bhima Koregaon event in Maharashtra.
- ❏ **Threats and Challenges**
 - **Expansion Beyond Forest Areas:** While traditional Maoist activity is concentrated in rural belts like Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, urban support networks help sustain it.
 - **Disruption of Law and Order:** Their methods include creating NGOs, using protests, media campaigns, using legal platforms and infiltrating political and civil society organisations to weaken the state from within
 - **Difficult to Identify:** Unlike armed insurgents, urban supporters operate under legal covers like academia, activism, or journalism, making legal action complex.
- ❏ **A New Kind of Warfare**
 - Urban Naxalism is described as Naxalism minus AK-47.
 - Instead of guns, it uses propaganda, protests, and alliances to destabilise the Indian state.
 - It represents a form of **Fifth Generation Warfare (5GW)**, where the battlefield includes media, politics, and public perception.

Southeast Asia-Based Cyber Scams

- MHA has estimated that over half of ₹7,000 crore lost to cyber scams from January to May 2025 originated from networks based in Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand.

- The scams are reportedly operated from high-security compounds controlled by Chinese operators, where trafficked individuals, including over 5,000 Indians, are forced to work.
 - People from Africa, East and Southeast Asia, Central Asia, West Asia, Europe, and the America have also been identified in these centres.
- **Major Types of Cyber Frauds Identified**
 - Investigations revealed three primary scam categories:
 - Stock trading & investment scams
 - Digital arrest scams
 - Task-based scams
- **Agents Recruiting Indians for Cyber Scam Work**
 - The Indian government has tracked down several agents hiring Indians for these operations.
 - These agents are from Maharashtra; Tamil Nadu; Jammu & Kashmir; Uttar Pradesh; Delhi.
- **Human Trafficking Routes Traced**
 - Rescued victims revealed various international travel routes used to traffic Indians to scam centres, including:
 - Dubai → China → Cambodia
 - Tamil Nadu → Cambodia
 - Maharashtra → Thailand → Cambodia
 - Delhi → Bangkok → Cambodia
 - Kerala → Singapore/Vietnam → Cambodia
 - Kolkata → Vietnam → Cambodia (by road)
- **Government Response**
 - The Centre formed an inter-ministerial panel, identifying loopholes in banking, immigration, and telecom systems.
 - The CBI has registered FIRs against PoS agents for issuing ghost SIM cards linked to these scams.

Stock Trading and Investment Scams

- These scams promise high returns on stock market investments, cryptocurrency, or other financial products.
- Victims are contacted through social media, WhatsApp, or fake investment apps.
- Scammers pose as financial advisors or representatives from trading firms. They convince people to deposit money in fake accounts or platforms showing fake profits.
- Once a large amount is invested, the scammer disappears.



Digital Arrest Scams

- In these scams, people are tricked into believing they are under investigation by government agencies like the CBI, Income Tax Department, or Police.
- Victims receive fake calls or video calls where scammers, often wearing uniforms, say the person's identity or bank account is linked to crimes like money laundering or drugs.
- They are threatened with arrest unless they pay a fine or security deposit immediately.



Task-Based and Investment-Based Scams

- These scams involve fake job offers or freelance work, where the victim is asked to complete small tasks and gets paid at first, building trust.
- The scam starts with simple tasks like liking YouTube videos or rating apps. Victims are paid small amounts at first.
- Later, they are asked to invest money to get larger commissions. Once a big investment is made, the scammer vanishes.

DRDO's Successful Test Flights of Pralay Missile


- DRDO conducted consecutive test flights of the Pralay missile from Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Island, Odisha.
- The tests were part of user evaluation trials to validate maximum and minimum range capabilities.
- **Features of Pralay Missile:**
 - Indigenously developed **solid propellant quasi-ballistic missile**.
 - Equipped with advanced guidance and navigation systems for high precision.
 - Capable of carrying multiple warhead types against varied targets.
 - Developed by **Research Centre Imarat** (under DRDO) with support from BDL, BEL, and various industries, including MSMEs.
 - **Range:** 150-500 km and can be launched from a mobile launcher.
 - **Payload capacity:** 500-1,000 kg.

Army's AI Roadmap for Ops by 2026-27

- The Indian Army has formulated a comprehensive roadmap to integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), and Big Data Analytics by **2026–27**.
- Key focus areas include drone swarming, real-time battlefield surveillance, combat simulations for troop training, information warfare, and data-driven decision-making—aimed at enhancing operational efficiency and strategic capabilities.

Formation of AI Task Force

- An AI Task Force under the **DGIS** is being established.
- This body, comprising representatives from other Army directorates, will oversee:

Indian Army's AI Roadmap Transforming Warfare by 2026–27

- The push for rapid AI integration was accelerated by lessons from Operation Sindoor, a cross-border strike in May 2025 on terror targets in Pakistan and PoK.
- Immediate Priorities: Enhanced Battlefield Awareness**
 - Improving real-time battlefield awareness using AI tools that can process vast amounts of data rapidly.
 - These tools include:
 - Text summarisers** powered by Large Language Models (LLMs)
 - AI-driven chatbots and voice-to-text systems**
 - Facial recognition and anomaly detection algorithms**
 - Data fusion tools** that analyse and integrate feeds from drones, satellites, aircraft, and ground sensors for real-time insights
- Wide-Ranging Applications of AI**
The roadmap outlines tactical, operational, and strategic objectives for AI use, including:
 - Combat and surveillance:** Counter-intelligence, adversary mapping, and drone-based monitoring
 - Decision support systems:** Operational planning, threat detection, and wargaming simulations
 - Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) and social media analysis:** Monitoring public sentiment and adversary movements
 - Logistics and maintenance:** AI-based supply chain optimisation, predictive maintenance, and GPS-denied navigation
- Modernisation of Equipment and Collaboration**
 - To ensure long-term integration, AI features will be embedded in the General Staff Qualitative Requirements—technical benchmarks for all new equipment.
 - The Army also plans to retrofit AI into select legacy platforms.
 - An **AI lab** is being established at **DGIS** (Directorate General of Information Systems) for model development and will coordinate efforts with the Navy and Air Force.

8th National Security Strategies Conference

- The 8th National Security Strategies Conference (N)SSC was held in New Delhi. It concluded with the address of the Union Home Minister.
- The Conference was held in hybrid format, combining physical and virtual modes. Around 800 officers participated from across the country who deliberated on various subjects related to national security.
- During the conference, the minister highlighted that:
 - India is now 4th largest economy and a leader in emerging technologies, start-ups, green energy, and innovations. Rising stature will increase national security challenges.
- He emphasized use of national databases like NATGRID (National Intelligence Grid), NIDAAN (National Integrated Database on Arrested Narco Offenders), iMoT (*Integrated Monitoring of Terrorism*), and CBI's fugitive database.
- He also Stressed the creation of a real-time data-sharing ecosystem reaching up to Police Station level.
- In 2016, during the DGsP/IGsP Conference, PM Modi directed to hold the **National Security Strategies Conference (NSSC) annually to find solutions to major national security challenges**.
- Since 2021, the conference is held in hybrid mode to ensure wider participation.

INS Nistar & INS Nipun

India has commissioned two indigenously built **Diving Support Vessels (DSVs)**, *INS Nistar* and *INS Nipun*, developed by Hindustan Shipyard Limited (Visakhapatnam).

- DSVs are specialized ships designed to support underwater diving operations, particularly for military, commercial, or rescue purposes.

First Woman in Naval Fighter Stream

- Sub Lieutenant Aastha Poonia has become the first woman to be streamed into the fighter pilot stream of Indian Naval.
- Upon completing her year-long advanced training, she will qualify to fly MiG-29K or Rafale M fighter jets from Navy's aircraft carriers.
- Previously, women officers have been inducted as pilots and air operations officers for maritime reconnaissance aircraft and helicopters.

Australia Hosts Largest-ever Military War Games

- Exercise Talisman Sabre 2025 was the largest war drills ever held in Australia.
- Originating in 2005 as a U.S.-Australia biennial exercise, this year's edition includes over 35,000 military personnel from 19 nations, including India, Japan, UK, and others. Malaysia and Vietnam are participating as observers.
- India, Singapore, Thailand, the Netherlands and Norway joined the exercise for the first time.
- For the first time, activities were also be conducted outside of Australia in Papua New Guinea.

Operation Mahadev

- Operation Mahadev was conducted by the Indian Army and J&K Police near Dachigam National Park, eliminating the mastermind of the Pahalgam attack (April 22) and two Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorists.
- One of the killed terrorists was also involved in the Sonamarg Tunnel attack.
- During the operation, security forces recovered 3 mobile phones and 2 **LoRa (Long Range)** communication sets from the Pahalgam attackers.
 - LoRa sets enable secure long-distance communication without cellular networks or satellites, reducing interception risks.

Key Features and Capabilities of INS Nistar and INS Nipun



Indigenous Design and Construction

- ➔ Developed under the **Ministry of Defence's 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' initiative**, these ships represent India's growing capability in shipbuilding and maritime technology.

Diving and Rescue Capabilities

- ➔ **Integrated Saturation Diving System (ISDS):** Enables diver deployment at depths up to 300 meters, supporting underwater repairs, salvage, and rescue operations.
- ➔ **Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs):** These can be deployed for underwater surveillance and recovery missions in deep waters.
- ➔ **Side Scan Sonar and Integrated Platform Management System (IPMS):** Aid in locating submerged vessels/ wreckage and managing onboard systems, respectively.
- ➔ **Submarine Rescue System:** Especially crucial for **submarine emergencies**, allowing the timely and safe recovery of personnel from disabled submarines.

Humanitarian and Strategic Utility

- ➔ Disaster relief operations during maritime calamities.
- ➔ **Search and Rescue (SAR)** operations during shipwrecks or aircraft crashes at sea.
- ➔ Offshore resource exploration support and underwater inspections of strategic infrastructure.

ENVIRONMENT AND GEOGRAPHY

Environment Protection Rules to Address Chemically Contaminated Sites

The Environment Ministry has **notified** the Environment Protection (Management of Contaminated Sites) Rules, 2025 under the Environment Protection Act (1986)

- For the first time, India has codified the procedures to identify, assess, and remediate sites where historical dumping of hazardous chemicals and other waste has polluted soil, groundwater, or surface water, posing long-term risks to public health and ecosystems.

Understanding Contaminated Sites

- Such sites typically include:
 - Defunct industrial landfills
 - Waste storage and chemical spill sites
 - Abandoned chemical handling facilities
- India has identified **103 such sites**, but remedial operations have been initiated in only seven.
- Many polluters have ceased operations or lack the resources for clean-up, leaving local communities and environments exposed to toxic hazards.

Key Features of Environment Protection Rules

The **Environment Protection (Management of Contaminated Sites) Rules, 2025** provide a legally binding, time-bound framework for the entire remediation process:

- **Step 1: Identification and Reporting**
 - **District administrations** must prepare half-yearly reports listing “*suspected contaminated sites.*”
 - These reports are sent to the **State Pollution Control Board (SPCB)** or a designated *reference organisation*.
- **Step 2: Preliminary Assessment**
 - The Board or organisation must carry out a **preliminary assessment within 90 days** to ascertain the likelihood of contamination.
- **Step 3: Detailed Site Survey**
 - If contamination is likely, a detailed survey must be completed within the **next 90 days**, checking for any of the **189 hazardous chemicals** listed under the Hazardous and Other Wastes (Management and Transboundary Movement) Rules, 2016.
 - Sites found to be contaminated will be publicly notified and access restricted.
- **Step 4: Remediation Planning**
 - A **reference organisation** comprising scientific experts will propose a remediation plan.
 - The **State Board** must also identify the **person(s) responsible for the contamination** within 90 days.
- **Step 5: Cost Recovery and Liability**
 - Those responsible must bear the cost of remediation.
 - If the polluter is unavailable or unable to pay, the Centre and State will split the cost under a prescribed arrangement.
 - **Criminal liability**, if proven to involve loss of life or severe damage, will be addressed under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) **2023**

Scope and Exemptions

- While comprehensive, the rules exclude certain categories already covered by other legislation:
 - **Radioactive waste** (under the Atomic Energy Act)

- **Mining-related contamination** (governed separately)
- **Marine oil pollution**
- **Municipal solid waste dump sites**
- This ensures that regulatory overlap is avoided, and specialised agencies continue to govern complex waste streams.

Significance of the Rules

- The notification marks a **paradigm shift from fragmented enforcement to structured environmental remediation**.
- Previously, there was no **legally codified** framework for addressing contaminated sites, leading to regulatory inaction and long delays in clean-up.

Challenges in Implementation

- While the rules provide a legal foundation, successful implementation will hinge on:
 - **Scientific capacity** for hazardous chemical assessment
 - **Institutional coordination** between the State Boards, CPCB, and district administrations
 - **Funding support**, especially where no liable party is available
 - **Public awareness** and community participation in reporting pollution
- Capacity-building at the district and state levels will be critical to make the framework actionable.

Reforming the UNFCCC Process

There is an **ongoing credibility crisis in international climate negotiations** under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Despite repeated conferences and global commitments, **progress on climate action has been limited**, especially regarding **climate justice** for developing nations.

Background - UNFCCC Credibility Crisis:

- **Failure to deliver climate justice:**
 - **Developed countries** have failed to meet emission targets and financial commitments.
 - **Developing nations**, especially small islands and vulnerable states, feel ignored in negotiations. Complaints include being left out of decision-making and **lack of accountability for developed nations**.
- **US withdrawal impact:**
 - The withdrawal of the United States under Trump's administration **eroded trust** in climate negotiations. Led to a perception that the **process** of climate negotiations is **ineffective and increasingly irrelevant**.

Bonn Climate Meeting and the Road to COP30:

- **Bonn (Germany) climate meet (June 2025):**
 - It is held **annually** to prepare for COP summits.
 - This year's focus is on rebuilding confidence in the process before COP30 in Brazil.
- **Brazil's leadership role:** As COP30 host, Brazil is proactively seeking reforms by floating a **30-point ideas list**, aiming to make negotiations more inclusive and efficient.

Key Reform Proposals:

- **Structural streamlining:** To -
 - Eliminate overlapping agenda items.
 - Shorten negotiation time.
 - Limit delegation sizes to avoid crowding and dominance by wealthier nations.
- **Limit on host countries:**
 - Proposals to bar countries with poor climate action records (like fossil fuel dependency) from hosting COPs.
 - Backlash against hosting COPs in oil-dependent states like the UAE (Dubai, COP28) and Azerbaijan (Baku, COP29).

- **Mainstreaming UNFCCC:**
 - Brazil's idea to hold discussions in other multilateral forums (e.g., UN agencies, financial institutions).
 - Proposal for **alternate mechanisms** that complement UNFCCC and speed up implementation.

Developing Nations' Demand - More Climate Finance:

- **Finance deficit:**
 - The biggest hurdle for developing countries is the lack of adequate climate finance.
 - To fulfill the **2015 Paris Agreement**, developed countries are required to collectively mobilize at least **\$100 billion annually (starting in 2020)** to assist developing nations in climate action.
 - However, their recent pledge at the Baku meeting fell short, **offering only \$300 billion per year starting from 2035**, while the actual needs of developing countries are estimated at **\$1.3 trillion annually**.
- **Bonn meeting outcome:**
 - Developing nations (like **BRICS**) have demanded more urgent and increased financial support, calling on developed countries to honor their UNFCCC and Paris Agreement financial commitments.
 - They demanded a decision on a new climate finance goal, emphasizing the urgent need for **accessible, predictable, and sustained finance flows**.

Civil Society and Observers' Role:

- Civil society groups must **push for more transparent, inclusive negotiations**.
- Demand for a **restructured format of the COP meetings** that limits the influence of fossil-fuel-dependent entities/ companies.

Despite strong proposals and Brazil's leadership, major structural reforms to the UNFCCC process are unlikely to be adopted soon due to **lack of consensus and entrenched interests**. However, these efforts represent an important push **to make global climate governance more accountable, inclusive, and action-oriented**.

C-FLOOD System

Union Minister Jal Shakti inaugurated **C-FLOOD**, a Unified Inundation Forecasting System.

About C-FLOOD Platform (Centralized Flood Observation and Decision-support)

- **Real-Time Forecasting:** C-FLOOD is a **web-based platform** that provides **two-days advance inundation forecasts** up to village level using **2-D hydrodynamic modeling** to simulate flood scenarios.
- **Unified Inundation Forecasting System:** The platform will integrate flood modelling outputs from national and regional agencies.
 - ✓ At present, the system covers the Mahanadi, Godavari, and Tapi river basins, with more river basins to be incorporated in the future
- **Comprehensive Data Integration:** Combines meteorological (rainfall forecasts from IMD), hydrological, and topographical data (High-Resolution Digital Elevation Models from National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC)) for accurate predictions.
- **Developed By:** The Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), Pune and Central Water Commission (CWC-Ministry of Jal Shakti).
- **Executed under:** National Supercomputing Mission (NSM) jointly steered by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and Department of Science & Technology (DST).

Rare Roll Cloud

A rare meteorological phenomenon known as **a roll cloud** appeared across Portugal's northern and central coast.

About Roll Cloud

- A roll cloud (also known by its formal name **volutus**) is a **rare, low-level, tube-shaped arcus cloud**, entirely detached from other cloud formations. It appears to **"roll" around a horizontal axis**, propelled by wind shear.
 - ✓ An arcus cloud is a low, horizontal cloud formation that typically forms along the leading edge of a thunderstorm outflow or cold front.

- **Appearance:** A long, horizontal tube—often solitary—below other clouds, typically between 2,000–7,000 m altitude for **altocumulus volutus** and <2,000 m for **stratocumulus volutus**.
- **Formation Mechanisms:** Cold outflow from thunderstorms or cold fronts pushes cooler air under warm, moist air. The uplift condenses into a roll cloud, detached from parent cumulonimbus.
 - ✓ Coastal or lake breezes create density currents that form wave disturbance —most famously in Australia’s Gulf of Carpentaria (aka “**Morning Glory**”)
- **Behavior & Impact:** Moves *steadily* ($\approx 30\text{--}55\text{ km/h}$), maintaining shape as a solitary wave (soliton).
 - ✓ Though they can be mistaken for tornadoes, they never produce one—they rotate only horizontally

Comparison with Other Clouds

Feature	Roll Cloud	Shelf Cloud	Tornado
Shape	Tube-like	Wedge-shaped	Funnel
Attachment	Detached	Attached to storm	Storm-based
Danger	Low turbulence	Severe storms	Extremely destructive

EPR Framework for Non-Ferrous Metals

MoEF&CC has notified the **Hazardous and Other Wastes (Management and Transboundary Movement) Amendment Rules, 2025**

- ✓ The legislation, which will come into force **from April 1, 2026**, introduces a comprehensive **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** framework for non-ferrous metals, including aluminum, copper and zinc and its alloys.

Key Features of the 2025 Amendment Rules

Environmental potential of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework

- **Recycling Targets:** The new rules establish an ambitious recycling target structure that progressively increases from 10% in 2026-2027 to 75% by 2032-2033 for products made of non-ferrous metals.
- **Product List:** The framework covers an extensive range of products, from beverage cans and packaging foils to electrical fittings and furniture, demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of non-ferrous metal applications in the Indian economy.
- **Recycled Content Requirement:** From FY 2028, products must contain at least 5% recycled content, rising to 10% by FY 2029, with specific targets by FY 2031 (10% for aluminum, 20% for copper, 25% for zinc).

Institutional Mechanisms

- **The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)** oversees implementation through an online portal for registration, annual returns, and EPR certificate management. Certificates, valid for two years from the end of the financial year, can be traded among producers to meet recycling targets.
- **The Jawaharlal Nehru Aluminium Research Development and Design Centre (JNARDDC)** supports formalization through its Recycling Promotion Division, focusing on technology upgradation and capacity building.
- **A Steering Committee**, chaired by the CPCB chairperson, monitors compliance, resolves disputes, and recommends target revisions.
- **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)** is tasked with revising standards within six months to ensure quality and safety in recycling processes.

Responsibilities Across the Value Chain

- **Producers** must register with the CPCB, meet recycling targets, and incorporate recycled materials.
- **Bulk Consumers** (using over 1,000 tonnes of non-ferrous metals annually) must establish collection points and transfer scrap to registered entities.
- **Refurbishers and recyclers** must register and use environmentally sound technologies, with refurbishers issuing certificates to defer producers’ EPR obligations.
- **Report Filing:** Entities must file half-yearly and annual reports on production, collection, recycling, etc.

- **EPR Certificates:** Producers can meet their EPR targets by purchasing these certificates from registered recyclers through the online platform.
- **Environmental Compensation** is imposed for non-compliance, with CPCB setting price ranges for *EPR certificates* (100% to 30% of compensation).

Extra Mile: Background and Evolution of Hazardous Waste Management in India

- The Hazardous and Other Wastes (Management and Transboundary Movement) Rules were first **enacted in 1989 under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**, to regulate the safe handling, treatment, storage, transportation, and disposal of hazardous wastes.
- Subsequent **amendments in 2000, 2003, 2008, and 2016 expanded the scope** to address emerging environmental challenges, including e-waste, plastic waste, and transboundary movement of hazardous materials, aligning with international agreements like the **Basel Convention (1989)**.
- **The 2025 Amendment Rules**, building on the Second Amendment Rules, 2024 (notified in August 2024), introduce a pioneering EPR framework for non-ferrous metals, reflecting India's shift towards sustainable industrial practices and circular economy principles.

Model Rules for Promotion of Agroforestry

MoEF&CC has issued the '**Model Rules for Felling of Trees in Agricultural Lands**', with the objective of supporting States and UTs in simplifying regulatory frameworks and promoting agroforestry.

- ✓ The initiative aligns with India's **National Agroforestry Policy (2014)**

Objectives of the Model Rules

- **Simplifying Regulatory Frameworks:** The rules **aim to harmonize** varying state-specific regulations on tree felling and timber transit, which often create procedural hurdles for farmers.
- **Promoting Agroforestry:** Agroforestry integrates trees with agricultural systems, such as **agrisilviculture** (crops + trees), **silvopasture** (trees + livestock), and **agrisilvopastoral** systems (trees + crops + livestock).
- **Reducing Pressure on Natural Forests:** Promoting timber production on agricultural lands reduces reliance on natural forests and supporting India's forest conservation goals.
- **Supporting Climate Goals:** Agroforestry enhances carbon sequestration, contributing to India's Nationally Determined Contributions (**NDCs under the Paris Agreement**), which include creating an additional carbon sink of 2.5–3 billion tonnes of CO₂-equivalent by 2030.

Mechanisms of the Model Rules

The Model Rules introduce a structured framework to regulate tree felling and timber transit while ensuring transparency and traceability. Key mechanisms include:

- **National Timber Management System (NTMS) Portal:** Farmers must register their plantation lands on the NTMS portal, providing *land ownership details, plantation data* (species, planting date, average height), and geotagged images.
 - ✓ **For felling more than 10 trees**, farmers apply online, and empanelled verifying agencies conduct site inspections to issue felling permits.
 - ✓ **For 10 or fewer trees**, a No Objection Certificate (NOC) is issued automatically upon uploading tree photos, with post-felling stump photos required for compliance.
- **State-Level Committees (SLCs):** established under the *Wood-Based Industries (Establishment and Regulation) Guidelines, 2016*, oversee rule implementation.
 - ✓ They now include officials from *revenue and agriculture departments* to ensure multidisciplinary coordination.
- **Role of Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs):** DFOs monitor verifying agencies through periodic supervision and quarterly performance reports, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Global Wetland Outlook 2025

The Global Wetland Outlook (GWO) 2025, released by the Ramsar Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), *right before 15th Meeting of Conference of the Contracting Parties COP15 (Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe)*.

- ✓ GWO is the **most comprehensive assessment** of global wetland status, trends, and policy responses to date.
- ✓ Aligns with the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF)**, especially Target 3: conserving/restoring 30% of land and water by 2030.

Key Findings of GWO 2025

- **Extent:** Wetlands (*Seagrass, Kelp Forests, Coral Reefs, Estuarine Waters, Salt Marshes, Mangroves, Tidal Flats, Lakes, Rivers and Streams, Inland Marshes and Swamps, and Peatlands*) cover over **1,800 million hectares globally**, including inland freshwater, coastal, and marine ecosystems.
 - ✓ The two previous Global Wetland Outlooks, reported that global wetland extent was in excess of 1,210 million ha in 2018 & between 1,500 to 1,600 million ha in 2021
- **Loss:** Since 1970, 411 million hectares (22% of global wetlands) have been lost, at an annual rate of **0.52%**, **three times faster than forest loss** (Wetland Extent Trends index).
- **Regional Trends & Drivers:** In Africa & Latin America, rapid urbanisation, industrialisation, and infrastructure are key drivers of degradation.
 - ✓ In North America & Oceania, invasive species dominate threats; in Europe, prolonged drought is a major factor.
 - ✓ Wetland health correlates strongly with national income level—least developed countries report more wetlands in poor condition, whereas developed countries show better wetland status
- **Value of Wetlands:** Wetlands provide **USD 39.01 trillion annually in ecosystem services** (~7.5% of global GDP), including flood control, water purification, carbon storage, and livelihoods.
- **Strategic Pathways & Recommendations:** *Integrate wetland value into policy and land-use decisions (treat wetlands as essential infrastructure); Recognise wetlands' role in the global water cycle for climate resilience.*

First-ever Grassland Bird Census

Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNPTR), Assam, released its *First Grassland Bird Survey Report*.

- ✓ Different names are used in the world to refer to grasslands. According to WWF, it is known as '**savannah**' in Africa, '**cerrado**' in South America, '**prairie**' in North America, '**steppe**' in central Asia, and 'meadow' in UK.

Key Takeaways

- **Species Recorded:** 43 grassland species, including **1 critically endangered** (Bengal Florican), **2 endangered** (Finn's Weaver, Swamp Grass Babbler), **6 vulnerable** (Black-breasted Parrotbill, Marsh Babbler, Swamp Francolin, Jerdon's Babbler, Slender-billed Babbler, Bristled Grassbird), and **1 near-threatened** (Indian Grassbird), per IUCN Red List.
- **Highlight:** Discovery of a breeding colony of the **endangered Finn's Weaver** indicating robust grassland health.
- **Methodology:** Combined traditional point counts with AI-powered **PAM (passive acoustic monitoring)**, enabling non-invasive monitoring.
- **Wetland-Grassland Synergy:** Kaziranga's floodplain grasslands, part of the Brahmaputra ecosystem, complement its wetlands (e.g., *Sohola Beel*).

RhoDIS India Programme

Under the RhoDIS India Programme, genetic analysis of 2,573 rhino horn samples at Kaziranga National Park (Assam) has been initiated.

About Rhino DNA Index System (RhoDIS) India Programme

- The RhoDIS India Programme, launched in 2016, is a pioneering initiative aimed at conserving the greater one-horned rhinoceros through DNA-based forensic tools.

- The RhoDIS India Programme has two primary objectives:
 1. **Wildlife Crime Investigation:** By creating unique DNA profiles for each rhino, the programme enables forensic tracking of seized horns, linking them to specific poaching incidents.
 2. **Scientific Population Management:** The DNA database helps monitor genetic diversity, track changes in short tandem repeat (STR) allele frequencies, and inform conservation strategies like translocations and habitat management.

What is a Rhino Horn?

- It is made of keratin. It is chemically complex and contains large quantities of sulphur-containing amino acids, particularly cysteine, as well as tyrosine, histidine, lysine, and arginine, and the salts calcium carbonate and calcium phosphate.
- Rhino horns are similar in structure to horses' hooves, turtle beaks, and cockatoo bills

Silicon-Perovskite Tandem Solar Cells

The National Centre for Photovoltaic Research and Education (NCPRE) at IIT Bombay has emerged as a cornerstone of India's renewable energy innovation, particularly through its groundbreaking work on *Silicon-Perovskite Tandem Solar Cells (PSTSCs)*.

Overview of NCPRE

- **Establishment:** *Founded in 2010* under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission (JNNSM) at IIT Bombay, NCPRE is **a premier research center** focused on advancing photovoltaic technologies.
- **Funding:** Supported by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)

Silicon-Perovskite Tandem Solar Cells (PSTSCs): Technical Insights

- **PSTSCs** are advanced photovoltaic (PV) technology that combines perovskite materials with conventional silicon solar cells to significantly improve solar energy conversion efficiency.
 - ✓ Tandem solar cells stack two or more light-absorbing layers to capture different parts of the solar spectrum.

Layer	Material	Function
Top Layer	Perovskite	Captures blue & green light (higher energy)
Bottom Layer	Crystalline Silicon	Captures red & infrared light (lower energy)
Combined	Tandem Effect	Broader spectrum absorption → more power output

- **Efficiency Boost:** Tandem cells (Perovskite-Silicon): Already reached >33% efficiency in lab settings.
 - ✓ **Single-junction silicon cells:** ~26.7% efficiency (theoretical max ~29.4%)

Animal Discoveries & Plant Discoveries 2024

The Animal Discoveries and Plant Discoveries 2024 reports, published by the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) and Botanical Survey of India (BSI) respectively, document India's remarkable biodiversity additions in 2024.





Key Highlights of the Reports

(Hotspots: Western Ghats and Northeast India contributed 35% of total discoveries, reflecting their status as global biodiversity hotspots.)

Faunal Discoveries (ZSI)	Floral Discoveries (BSI)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total: 683 additions, including 459 new species and 224 species new records. • Top State: Kerala with 101 discoveries (80 new species, 21 new records), followed by Karnataka (82), Arunachal Pradesh (72), Tamil Nadu (63), and West Bengal (56). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total: 433 taxa, including 410 new species and 23 infra-specific taxa. • Top State: Kerala with 58 discoveries, followed by Maharashtra (45) and Uttarakhand (40).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taxonomic Breakdown: Insects dominated, particularly Hymenoptera (bees, wasps) and Lepidoptera (butterflies, moths). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new plant discoveries for 2024 record 154 angiosperms, 4 pteridophytes, 15 bryophytes, 63 lichens, 156 fungi, 32 algae and 9 microbes
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Species in News

<p>Begonia Nyishiorum</p> 	<p>A new flowering plant species, <i>Begonia nyishiorum</i>, has been discovered in the East Kameng district (endemic) of Arunachal Pradesh. This region is part of the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot, known for its high endemism and species diversity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name Origin: The species name honors the Nyishi tribe, the largest indigenous community in Arunachal Pradesh. • It is characterized by its distinctive, crimson-fringed petioles, a unique feature not observed in any other Asian Begonia species. • Unique Ecosystem: Its adaptation to <i>sub-zero conditions and steep slopes</i> underscores the resilience of species in extreme environments. • Conservation Status: "Data Deficient" on the IUCN Red List
<p>Kharai Camel</p> 	<p>A herd of 33 rare Kharai camels was rescued after being caught in a rising sea tide near Vadinar Jetty, off the coast of Jamnagar.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique Adaptation: The Kharai camel, <i>native to the Kutch region</i> of Gujarat, is a rare breed known for its <i>ability to swim</i> and thrive in coastal and marshy ecosystems. • Unlike typical camels adapted to arid deserts, Kharai camels feed on <i>saline mangroves and swim up to 3–5 km in seawater</i> to reach grazing islands. • Rabari Community: The Kharai camels are primarily reared by the <i>Rabari, a pastoralist community</i> in Kutch. • The camels' milk and wool are used by the Rabari for sustenance and handicrafts.
<p>Zographetus mathewi</p> 	<p>The new butterfly species, <i>Zographetus mathewi</i>, was discovered in the Western Ghats. (Named after George Mathew for his contributions to Indian entomology.) ** Its proposed common name is Sahyadri Spotted Flitter in reference to the Western Ghats.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat: Endemic to <i>low-elevation tropical forests of the Western Ghats in Kerala</i>, suggesting a highly specialized habitat preference.
<p>Neelakurinji</p> 	<p>Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka have not proposed declaring Neelakurinji a threatened species under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, as noted by the <i>Botanical Survey of India (BSI)</i> in its submission to the National Green Tribunal (NGT).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat and Distribution: The species occupies, primarily in the Nilgiris (Tamil Nadu), Munnar, Palani-Kodaikanal, and Anamalai mountains, with one subpopulation in the Eastern Ghats (Yercaud, Shevaroy Hills). • Unique Characteristics: Neelakurinji is a flagship species of the shola-grassland ecosystems in the Western Ghats, blooming once every 12 years at elevations of 1,340–2,600 meters. • Threats: The IUCN assessment indicates a 40% habitat loss due to tea and softwood plantations, <i>invasive species (eucalyptus, black wattle)</i>.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Vera C. Rubin Observatory (VRO)

The Vera C Rubin Observatory recently released its first test images which captured the **Trifid and Lagoon Nebulae, Virgo Galaxy Cluster** and discovered **2,104 new asteroids** in just 10 hours of data- a major leap compared to conventional observations.

- **Asteroid:** A small, rocky object that orbits the Sun, mostly found between Mars and Jupiter. Asteroids are remnants from the early solar system, vary in size, and have no stable atmosphere. Some can come close to Earth and are called Near-Earth Objects (NEOs).
- **Nebulae:** Clouds of gas and dust in space that can be the birthplace of stars, the scene of their demise – and sometimes both. They can glow or appear dark, depending on the light around them.

About Vera C. Rubin Observatory

Located at 8,684 feet on Cerro Pachón in the Andes (Northern Chile), the Vera C. Rubin Observatory is a state-of-the-art astronomical facility jointly funded by the U.S. National Science Foundation and Department of Energy. The observatory is expected to be fully operational by late 2025.

Key Highlights

Simonyi Survey Telescope	LSST Camera
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Aperture: 8.4 meters with a unique three-mirror system design.• Field of View: Equivalent to 40 full Moons.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• World's largest digital camera: 3.2 gigapixels• Sensitivity: Detects objects 100 million times fainter than the naked eye can see.

Key Scientific Contributions Expected

- **Dark Matter and Dark Energy:** Mapping distribution of galaxies to understand how dark energy affects cosmic expansion. While galaxies, stars, and planets make up 5% of the universe, dark energy makes up about 68%, and dark matter about 27%.
- **Solar System Exploration:** Discover 5+ million asteroids; 100,000+ near-Earth objects (NEOs); may detect a ninth planet; increase known solar system objects by ten folds.

Japonica Rice

Researchers at the National Institute of Plant Genome Research (NIPGR), Delhi have used CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing to improve phosphate uptake and transport in japonica rice.

- ✓ **CRISPR-Cas9** (*Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats*) is a **gene-editing technology** that allows **addition, removal, or modification of specific genetic sequences** in the DNA of plants, animals, and humans.

Key Findings:

- **Higher yield:** Up to **40% increase** with just 10% of the recommended phosphate fertilizer.
- **More panicles and seeds** without compromising seed quality.
- **Gene-edited plants absorbed phosphate faster**, preventing it from becoming insoluble in soil.

What is Japonica Rice?

It is one of the two main types of *Oryza sativa* (the other being *Indica*), originating from northern and eastern China and widely grown in cooler subtropical and temperate regions. Key Feature include:

- **Texture:** Sticky and chewy when cooked.
- **Amylose (a component of rice starch) content:** Low (0–20%).

Grown in: Japan, China, Korea, Vietnam, and Indonesia and are popular in sushi, rice balls, and dishes needing sticky rice. Despite "glutinous" in name, it is gluten-free.

Microcrystalline Cellulose (MCC)

The pharma unit of Sigachi Industries in Hyderabad, which makes microcrystalline cellulose (MCC), was the scene of a lethal accident recently.

What is Microcrystalline Cellulose (MCC)? It is a purified, partially depolymerized form of **cellulose**, obtained from **refined wood pulp**. It appears as a white, free-flowing, and odorless powder.

Chemical & Physical Properties of MCC

- **Structure:** Crystalline form of cellulose, made of tightly packed microfibrils held by hydrogen bonds and polymer cross-links.
 - ✓ **During compression, MCC plastically deforms**, and therefore, **interparticle bonding increases**. The **plasticity** of the MCC is the **main reason for its exceptional binding property**.
- **Nature:** Not absorbed or degraded in the digestive system.
- **Non-toxic:** As a **natural, fiber-rich** component, it's **nontoxic and chewable**.
- **High Plasticity:** Deforms during compression, aiding **tablet binding**.
- **Partially Depolymerized:** Makes it suitable for pharmaceutical use

Safety Status of MCC: It is recognized as **Generally Regarded as Safe (GRAS)** by the Select Committee on GRAS Substances. Thus, it is safe for human consumption when used in **normal quantities** but excessive intake may have a **laxative effect** due to its fiber content.

Applications of MCC: Pharmaceutical Industry; Food Industry

Endocrine-Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs)

Beyond choking oceans and clogging landfills, plastics are now infiltrating our bodies through microplastic particles and a cocktail of endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs).

What is the Endocrine System?

The endocrine system is **made up of glands that make hormones (body's chemical messengers)** regulating **growth, development, metabolism, reproduction**, etc. It **influences almost every cell, organ, and function** of our bodies so even minor disruptions can cause **significant health effects**.

What are EDCs?

EDCs are **natural or man-made substances** that interfere with the **body's hormone system**. They may **mimic, block, or alter** hormone levels or hormone signaling.

- ✓ There are approximately **85,000 man-made chemicals** in the world, with at least **1,000 classifiable as EDCs**.
 - Bisphenol A (BPA)** (Plastics, food can linings, toys), **phthalates** (Plasticizers in cosmetics, toys, packaging) and **PFAS** (Non-stick cookware, waterproof fabrics) are **common examples of EDCs**.

Sources of EDCs: EDCs are found in **food and beverage packaging; Cosmetics and personal care products; Toys and plastic materials; Household dust and carpets; Pesticides and industrial waste; Air, water, and soil**. EDCs also **can enter the body through the skin**.

Routes of Exposure	Health Effects of EDCs	Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inhalation (airborne particles)• Ingestion (contaminated food/water)• Dermal contact (cosmetics, products)• Prenatal transmission (from mother to fetus)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reproductive disorders (infertility, low sperm count, endometriosis)• Early puberty• Hormone-related cancers• Metabolic issues (obesity, diabetes)• Thyroid dysfunction• Neurological and learning problems• Immune and respiratory disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Even low-dose exposures can be harmful.• Effects may be delayed or irreversible.

Asteroid Terrestrial-Impact Last Alert System (ATLAS)

A comet, officially designated 3I/ATLAS, originating from outside our solar system was recently spotted by the Asteroid Terrestrial-impact Last Alert System (ATLAS) in Chile.

- ✓ It is just the third interstellar object that scientists have discovered so far. The first two were 1I/Oumuamua and 2I/Borisov that were found in 2017 and 2019 respectively.
- ✓ Comets are icy, dusty remnants from the solar system's formation that orbit the Sun in long, elliptical paths. They originate from the Kuiper Belt (home to short-period comets <200 years) or **Oort Cloud** (home to long-period comets with orbit period of thousands of years) and develop 2 visible tails when heated near the Sun- **Dust tail** (white, curved) and **Ion tail** (blue, straight, points away from the Sun).

Interstellar objects are celestial bodies that **originate outside our solar system** and **pass through it** without being gravitationally bound to the Sun.

What is ATLAS?

ATLAS is an **asteroid impact early warning system** developed by the **University of Hawaii** and **funded by NASA**, aimed at detecting asteroids on a collision course with Earth. It consists of **four telescopes (2 in Hawaii, 1 in Chile, 1 in South Africa)**, which automatically **scan the whole sky several times every night** looking for moving objects.

- ✓ Besides asteroid detection, ATLAS also helps discover **Dwarf planets; Supernovae and Tidal disruption events** (stars being consumed by black holes).

DengiAll

India has reached the 50% enrolment mark in its first **phase III clinical trial** for the indigenous tetravalent dengue vaccine, DengiAll.

About DengiAll

DengiAll is a **single-dose, tetravalent (four-in-one)** vaccine designed to protect against all four dengue virus serotypes (DENV-1 to DENV-4). The vaccine contains **weakened versions of all four dengue viruses**, designed to safely stimulate an immune response.

Developed By: **Panacea Biotec**, using a licensed vaccine strain from the **U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH)**.

Vaccine Trial: **ICMR** (Indian Council of Medical Research) is coordinating the trial.

Why is the Vaccine Important?

- Dengue is **endemic in India**, all four serotypes circulate widely- increasing the risk of **multiple infections** and there is **no specific antiviral treatment or licensed vaccine** currently available in India.

Altermagnets

Scientists spotted a new electrical and thermal transport phenomenon in the high-quality single-crystalline altermagnet **CrSb**.

What are Altermagnets?

- Altermagnets are a newly discovered class of magnetic materials that enjoy the best properties of both **ferromagnets and antiferromagnets**.
 - ✓ **Ferromagnets** (like fridge magnets): All atomic spins align in the same direction, resulting in a net magnetization.
 - ✓ **Antiferromagnets**: Spins align in alternating directions, canceling each other out, resulting in no net magnetization.
- In Altermagnets, spins alternate like in antiferromagnets resulting in **zero net magnetization** but due to unique **crystal symmetries**, their **band structure shows strong spin splitting** (similar to ferromagnets). Thus, they exhibit spin-dependent electronic behavior **without external magnetism**. This dual nature makes them ideal for **spintronics**, where **electron spin** (not just charge) is used to store and process information.
 - ✓ Theoretical predictions (2019–2022) suggested 200+ altermagnetic candidates. But the **first experimental proof** came in 2023 using **X-ray photoemission spectroscopy** on **manganese telluride (MnTe)**

Chromium antimonide (CrSb) is a standout altermagnet, with magnetic order stable at over twice room temperature and the largest altermagnetic spin-splitting. It uniquely exhibits **direction-dependent**

conduction polarity and is the first altermagnet to do so. Made from earth-abundant, non-toxic elements, CrSb is both **promising for practical applications** and **environmentally friendly**.

Key Characteristics of Altermagnets	Future Applications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No stray magnetic fields (unlike ferromagnets), enabling dense packing in memory devices. • Strong spin polarization despite having no macroscopic magnetism. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The term “spin polarization” means the tendency of electron spins to align in a particular direction. In altermagnets, this polarization is unique because it occurs both in real space (atomic arrangement) and momentum space (electron motion and energy distribution). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spintronics: High-density memory, logic devices. • Ultrafast photonics: Use of THz (terahertz) oscillators. • Quantum computing • Multiferroics and superconductivity: Unconventional pairings possible in altermagnetic materials.

3 by 35 Initiative

Recently, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched the “3 by 35” initiative.

The **3 by 35 Initiative** is a **global health and financing strategy** led by **WHO** to **increase the real prices of three harmful products- tobacco, alcohol, and sugary drinks – by at least 50% by the year 2035** through **health-focused tax increases**, tailored to each country’s context.

Why the Initiative Matters?

- **Decline in Official Development Assistance (ODA)** is limiting funds for development.
- Countries need **sustainable, domestic financing** to meet the **SDGs**.
- Tobacco, alcohol, and sugary drinks are **key contributors to noncommunicable diseases (NCDs)** – the **leading global cause of death and disability**.

Three Pillars of Action under the ‘3 by 35’ Initiative:

Mobilizing countries

Supporting country-led policies

Building commitment and partnerships

Cell Broadcasting System

The Department of Telecommunications (DOT) and National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) are testing a new **Cell Broadcast (CB) system** to deliver real-time disaster alerts across India, enhancing emergency communication. It is developed by Centre of Development of Telematics (C-DOT)

- ✓ This new system is in addition to the already-operational **Integrated Alert System (SACHET)**- developed by C-DOT, which is based on Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) recommended by International Telecommunication Union (ITU). SACHET has delivered over 6,899 crore SMS alerts in more than 19 Indian languages across all 36 States and UTs.

Why Cell Broadcast?

While SMS is useful, **CB is faster, more reliable**, and better suited for **real-time dissemination of critical alerts during emergencies** such as earthquakes, tsunamis, lightning strikes, and industrial hazards.

Key Features of C-DOT’s CB System

- **Indigenous Design:** Supports the “Aatmanirbhar Bharat” mission.
- **Geo-Targeting:** Sends alerts only to affected areas.
- **Multilingual**
- **Speed & Scale:** Reaches **millions of devices in seconds**

- **Tech Compatibility:** Works with **2G, 3G, 4G, and 5G** network.
- **Low Latency:** Alerts delivered almost **instantly ensuring rapid delivery in real time** even in congested networks.
- **Customisable:** Adaptable to each **Telecom Service Provider (TSP)** and vendor.
- **Secure & Compliant:** Meets **CERT-IN, InfoSec and HTTPS** security norms.
- **Analytics:** Includes **advanced CB analytics & feedback mechanisms**.

GOSAT-GW Satellite

Japan launched the GOSAT-GW (Global Observing SATellite for Greenhouse gases and Water cycle) Satellite from the Tanegashima Space Centre.

About GOSAT-GW Satellite:

- **Developed By:** **JAXA** (Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency).
- **Launch Details:** Launched by H-2A rocket in Sun-synchronous orbit with an altitude of 666 km.

Instruments Onboard:

- **TANSO-3** (Total *Anthropogenic and Natural emissions* mapping SpectrOmeter-3)- Measures greenhouse gases (GHGs) such as CO₂ and methane.
- **AMSR3** (Advanced Microwave Scanning Radiometer 3)- Monitors water cycle elements like precipitation, soil moisture, and sea surface temperature.

Objectives

- Monitoring atmospheric global-mean concentrations of GHGs.
- Verifying national **anthropogenic GHG emissions** inventories.
- **Detecting GHG emissions** from large sources, such as megacities and power plants.

Terbium (Tb)

Scientists from Indian Institute of Science (IISc) have developed a simple, glowing paper sensor that could help detect liver cancer early- using the green glow of a rare earth metal called terbium (Tb).

About Tb:

- **Classification:** A **rare-earth metal** of the lanthanide series of the periodic table.
- **Occurrence:** In many rare-earth minerals but is almost **exclusively obtained from bastnasite** and from **laterite** ion-exchange clays. It is also found in the products of **nuclear fission**.

Properties of Tb:	Uses of Tb
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appearance: A moderately hard, silvery white metal that is stable in air when in pure form. • Air Stability: The metal is relatively stable in air even at high temperatures, because of formation of a tight, dark oxide layer that can be represented as a mixed oxide composed of Tb₂O₃ and TbO₂. • Reactivity: It readily reacts with diluted acids, but it is insoluble in hydrofluoric acid (HF) because the presence of the fluoride ion protects the metal from further reaction by forming a protective layer of TbF₃. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As Green Phosphors in fluorescent lamps, computer monitors, and TV screens that use cathode-ray tubes. • As Magnetostrictive alloys (with dysprosium and iron) enabling flat-panel loudspeakers • As Doping agent in solid-state devices • Terbium salts are used in laser devices.

BHARAT Initiative

The Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru launched a large-scale study called **BHARAT (Biomarkers of Healthy Aging, Resilience, Adversity, and Transitions)**.

Objective:

- To map physiological, molecular, and environmental indicators that drive ageing in the Indian population.
- Build a **reference baseline** for what constitutes *normal ageing* in Indians.
- Detect early warning signs.

Core Components of Bharat Initiative:

- **India's First Comprehensive Ageing Database:** Researchers are building a **multiparametric database** using clinical assessments, lifestyle and environmental data, and biomarker discovery to define healthy ageing in Indians. The **BHARAT Baseline** will include genomic (like mutations linked to disease susceptibility), proteomic, and metabolic indicators challenging Western benchmarks like cholesterol, vitamin D, and B12 levels that often misclassify Indians.

- **Biomarkers** are measurable physical, chemical, or biological characteristics in the body that reflect health or disease.
- WHO defines a biomarker as “any measurement reflecting an interaction between a **biological system and a potential hazard**, which may be chemical, physical, or biological. The measured response may be functional and physiological, biochemical at the cellular level, or a molecular interaction”.
- Biomarkers are vital for diagnosing diseases, prescribing accurate treatments, and drug development and include molecules like proteins, genes, DNA, RNA, enzymes, and hormones.

- **AI & Machine Learning Integration:** will help to integrate multi-dimensional data, predict effectiveness of interventions and detect subtle signals in small but complex datasets.

India's "Battery Passport" System

India is set to roll out a "Battery Passport" system to give electric vehicle (EV) owners detailed digital information about the batteries in use.

What is the Battery Passport?

It is a **digital record system** that stores key information about **each EV battery** such as its **source, composition, performance, lifecycle, and supply chain**- encoded in a **QR code** printed on the battery.

Objectives:

- **Enhance Safety:** to prevent mixing battery cells of different vintages, a cause of past fire incidents.
- **Improve Quality:** to enable standardization and uniform quality checks.

Key Features & Benefits of the Battery Passport System

- **Unique Digital Identity:** Each battery will have a **unique ID**, functioning like an Aadhaar, containing its detailed data.
- **QR Code Integration:** A **QR code** printed on the battery enables users and regulators to **instantly access battery details**, supporting upcoming battery swapping policy and efficient monitoring.
- **Digital Traceability:** Ensures **transparency, accountability, and standardization** across the battery's supply chain and life cycle.
- **Manufacturing Integrity:** Helps verify that **all cells in a battery are from the same manufacturing year**, improving safety and performance.
- **Export Boost:** Encourages **global EV manufacturers** to set up production in India by aligning with **international standards** and leveraging government incentives.
- **Consumer Confidence:** Since **batteries make up ~40% of EV cost**, reliable data on battery lifecycle and performance builds **trust**, supports informed decisions, and enhances **safety and quality**.

Agricultural Monitoring and Event Detection (AMED) API

Google recently launched the Agricultural Monitoring and Event Detection (AMED) API that provides information on crops and field activity across India.

About Agricultural Monitoring and Event Detection (AMED) API:

AMED is an **AI-based open-source application programming interface (API)** launched by **Google** to strengthen India's agricultural sector by providing **field-level crop data**.

Key Features	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Crop Identification: Detects crop type, crop season, and field size.• Historical Data: Provides three years of past agricultural activity for each field.• Event Detection: Monitors and identifies key agricultural events in near real-time.• Frequent Updates: Data is refreshed every two weeks, ensuring up-to-date insights for field-level changes.• Built on ALU Foundation: Enhances capabilities of the earlier Agricultural Landscape Understanding (ALU)API, by mapping land use via satellite and AI.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports Precision Agriculture: Helps farmers manage crops based on real-time needs- soil, water, climate, and growth patterns as well as predict crops' harvest volume.• Boosts Productivity• Enhances Climate Resilience• Ecosystem Empowerment: Available to agri-tech startups to build innovative, localized solutions to improve the agriculture ecosystem.

Cysteine

The researchers found that removing just one amino acid, **cysteine**, from the diet of mice led to a dramatic and rapid loss of 30% of the body weight in a week.

What is Cysteine?

It is a **sulfur-containing, non-essential amino acid** crucial in **protein function and oxidative metabolism**. It is **abundant in beta-keratin**, a key **structural protein in nails, skin, and hair**.

Key Functions:

- Supports **collagen production**, enhancing **skin elasticity and texture**.
- Aids in **antioxidant defense** by forming **glutathione** which protect our cells from harm.
- Helps produce **taurine** (important for heart and digestion).
- Plays a role in **detoxification** and immune support.

Deficiency Signs: **Fatigue, weakness, slow growth** in children, and a **weakened immune system**.

Sources: Found in protein-rich foods like **meat, eggs, and dairy**.

- **Non-Essential amino acids:** Nonessential means that our **bodies can produce** the amino acid, even if we do not get it from the food we eat. They include alanine, arginine, asparagine, aspartic acid, cysteine, glutamic acid, glutamine, glycine, proline, serine, and tyrosine.

Quantum Noise

Researchers at the Raman Research Institute (RRI) made the discovery that "quantum noise" which was always thought to be detrimental to quantum systems, is potentially beneficial in some situations.

Specifically, it can be used to **enhance entanglement, protect quantum classifiers from adversarial attacks, and improve the performance of quantum reservoir computing**

What is Quantum Noise?

Quantum noise refers to the **unwanted and unavoidable disturbances** that affect quantum systems, leading to **errors in quantum computations**.

Unlike classical noise, which typically adds random disturbances to signals, quantum noise arises from the **fundamental nature of quantum mechanics** and can have more complex and destructive effects.

What Causes Quantum Noise?

- **Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle:** At the quantum level, certain pairs of properties (*like a wave's strength and phase*) **cannot be simultaneously measured with perfect accuracy**. This fundamental limit leads to **inherent fluctuations**, even in ideal conditions (e.g., at absolute zero temperature with perfect detectors).
- **Discrete Nature of Energy:** Energy (e.g., light or radio waves) exists in **quantized units** (like photons). Measuring or amplifying these signals introduces noise due to the discrete, probabilistic nature of quantum systems.
- **Environmental Interactions:** Thermal fluctuations, Electromagnetic interference, Imperfections in quantum gates and Coupling with the surrounding environment.

Types of Quantum Noise: Quantum noise can affect quantum bits (qubits) in various ways:

- **Phase Noise:** Alters the **relative phase** between the basis states of a qubit, disrupting interference patterns.
- **Amplitude Noise:** Affects the **probabilities** of measuring different states, leading to state distortion.

Why Quantum Noise Matters?

- **Decoherence:** Quantum noise causes **decoherence**, where qubits lose their fragile quantum properties like **superposition** and **entanglement**.
- **Loss of Quantum Information:** Even small amounts of noise can cause significant errors, making computations unreliable

Antimatter

Recently, an international collaboration of scientists reported that they had, for the first time, observed that the **matter** and **antimatter** versions of Baryon **decay at different rates**.

What is Antimatter?

Antimatter is the mirror counterpart of ordinary matter, with opposite electric charges:

Electron → Positron (e^+)	Proton → Antiproton (\bar{p})	Neutron → Antineutron (\bar{n})
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Collectively these are referred to as **antiparticles**. Despite these opposite charges, antimatter particles have the same mass as their matter twins.

Formation and Structure of Antimatter: Like matter, antiparticles can combine to form anti-atoms and potentially even anti-matter galaxies. All known particles in the Standard Model have corresponding antiparticles. For example, baryons (protons and neutrons) are made of quarks, while antiprotons and antineutrons are made of antiquarks.

Where Is Antimatter Found?

- They occur naturally in Cosmic ray collisions or Radioactive decay (e.g., positrons).
- They can also be artificially created in **Particle accelerators** (e.g., CERN's **Large Hadron Collider**) or Laboratory experiments (e.g., creation of anti-helium).

Annihilation: Why is Antimatter Rare?

Antimatter isn't everywhere because when it meets matter, both annihilate each other, releasing energy. The Big Bang should have created equal amounts of both, which would have led to total annihilation. But a tiny excess of matter- about one extra particle per billion pairs- remained, making up the universe we see. This imbalance cannot be fully explained by current physics, so scientists continue to investigate the issue.

Coartem Baby

In a major milestone, Swiss authorities have approved Coartem Baby, the first-ever malaria treatment specifically designed for babies and very young children.

What is Coartem Baby?

Coartem Baby (also known as Riamet Baby) is the first-ever malaria treatment specifically **designed and approved** for infants under 4.5 kg.

Developed by: **Novartis**, in collaboration with **Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV)** and the governments of Britain, Switzerland, the Netherlands, **the World Bank**, and the Rockefeller Foundation.

Need:

- **Lack of safe options:** No approved malaria treatment existed for babies under 4.5 kg.
- **Treatment gap:** Infants were previously given unsuitable formulations, risking overdose and side effects.

Formulation Features: Easy to dissolve, including in breast milk.

Key Facts about Malaria

- **Malaria** is a life-threatening illness caused by **Plasmodium** parasites, transmitted by infected **female Anopheles mosquitoes**. It's **not contagious**, but can spread through **infected blood** or **contaminated needles**.
- **Key species:** *Plasmodium falciparum* (most deadly) and *P. Vivax* (*widely spread*)
- **Immunity:** Partial immunity may develop in endemic areas, complicating diagnosis.
- **Global and Indian Malaria Burden:** ~4 lakh deaths annually (WHO).
- **Africa hardest hit:** Nigeria, Congo, Tanzania, Mozambique, Niger, and Burkina Faso account for over 50% of global malaria deaths.
- **India's improvement:** India remains affected but has seen significant decline in mortality from 1,151 malaria deaths in 1995 to 83 deaths in 2022.

AdFalcivax: India's New Malaria Vaccine Candidate

- AdFalcivax is a chimeric recombinant malaria vaccine- that uses *different parts of the genes of a pathogen* (in this case, *Plasmodium*) to create target proteins that trigger an immune response after being injected.
- It is being produced using **Lactococcus lactis**, a safe, food-grade bacterium.
- It targets *Plasmodium falciparum* (not effective against *P. vivax*, common in India).

TRACERS (Tandem Reconnection and Cusp Electrodynamics Reconnaissance Satellites)

Recently, NASA's twin TRACERS satellite was launched to study magnetic reconnection and how solar activity affects near-Earth atmosphere.

Magnetic Reconnection: Solar wind colliding with Earth's magnetic field triggers magnetic reconnection, releasing massive energy and flinging particles at high speeds. These events produce auroras but can disrupt satellites, GPS, and astronaut safety.

About TRACERS Mission

- **Objective:** To study magnetic reconnection and its impact on Earth's atmosphere.
- **Method:** Twin satellites will fly in low Earth orbit through **polar cusps**- funnel-shaped regions in Earth's magnetic field where the solar wind has a direct path into our atmosphere.
- **Focus:** Investigate how solar wind and charged particles from the Sun interact with Earth's magnetosphere (magnetic shield).
- **Significance:** Enhances understanding of space weather, aiding in improved forecasting and protection of vital Earth-based technologies.

INVICTUS Programme

European Space Agency (ESA) and UK-based Frazer-Nash have kicked off **INVICTUS research programme**.

About Invictus:

- **Objective:** To develop hypersonic technologies for future **reusable vehicles** capable of **horizontal takeoff and landing**.
- **Key Feature:** A **fully reusable experimental aerospace vehicle** designed to fly at **Mach 5** (five times the speed of sound).
- **Technology Demonstration:** Will test key technologies for **sustained hypersonic atmospheric flight** with modular upgrades for materials, software, and propulsion.

- **Propulsion Focus:** Aims to validate a **hydrogen-fueled precooled air-breathing propulsion system** for horizontal take-off and hypersonic flight.

Chronic Venous Insufficiency (CVI)

Donald Trump has been recently diagnosed with Chronic Venous Insufficiency (CVI).

What is CVI? It is a condition where leg veins fail to efficiently return blood to the heart due to weakened or damaged vein valves, causing blood to pool in the legs.

✓ Under **normal conditions**, the **valves in our veins facilitate the flow of blood** towards the heart.

Symptoms of CVI: Pain, swelling, leg cramps, skin changes, varicose veins, and leg ulcers.

Risk Factors	Treatment Options
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher risk in people who are overweight, pregnant, or have a family history. • Also common after leg injuries, surgeries, or blood clots. • Affects 1 in 20 adults, with risk increasing with age. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First-line care: Regular exercise, leg elevation, and weight management. • Medical treatment: Compression therapy (tight stockings/bandages) and medications to improve blood flow. • In severe cases, surgical intervention may be needed.

NISAR: NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar Mission

NISAR- the world's first dual-band **Earth observation satellite** jointly developed by **ISRO** and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (**NASA**) was recently launched from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota aboard **GSLV-F16** into a **747 km sun-synchronous orbit**.

About NISAR (Mission Life: 5 years)

It is a **Low Earth Orbit (LEO)** satellite designed to map the **entire globe every 12 days** using **dual-band Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR)** operating in both **L-band (NASA)** and **S-band (ISRO)**.

Primary Objectives of NISAR:	Key Features of NISAR:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor Earth's ecosystems, ice mass, sea level, vegetation biomass, and groundwater. • Track natural hazards: earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes, and landslides. • Map ice sheets, sea ice, glaciers, and wetlands. • Measure woody biomass and active crop extent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microwave imaging mission with polarimetric and interferometric capabilities. • Combines data from L- and S-band SAR on a single platform for comprehensive Earth monitoring. • Offers consistent spatial and temporal data.

Significance: NISAR will revolutionize Earth observation with its **global, high-resolution, and frequent imaging.**

***Note: Lower frequency bands (L, S) can penetrate through rain, clouds, vegetation useful for mapping and Earth observation. Higher frequency bands (X, Q, V, W) give sharper images and better resolution, but are more affected by weather and atmospheric conditions.*

N-Nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA)

Drug regulator DCGI has asked drug controllers of all states and UTs to direct manufacturers under their jurisdiction to monitor the presence of a potentially carcinogenic chemical -- N-Nitrosodimethylamine -- in **antacid Ranitidine.**

About N-Nitrosodimethylamine

NDMA is a **volatile organic compound (VOC)** that forms easily in the environment from common precursors. It is classified as a **probable human carcinogen** based on animal studies.

How It Forms?

- It is formed when **secondary or tertiary amines react with nitrite ions** under acidic conditions.

- It can also form in the **stomach** from chemicals in food or water (e.g., nitrosamines, alkylamines).
- It is also produced as a **byproduct** of industrial processes and **water chlorination**.

Sources of Exposure

- It is found in **small amounts** in the environment, food, and water.
- It is present in **cured meats, beer, fish, cheese, vegetables, and processed foods**.
- It may be present in **contaminated medications**.
- It breaks down in **sunlight**.

Past Applications: NDMA was previously used in manufacturing **rocket fuel, antioxidants, lubricant additives, and copolymer softeners**.

National Flag Day

- The National Flag Day also known as Tiranga Adoption Day was recently observed in India on July 22.
- On **July 22, 1947**, the **Constituent Assembly of India** officially adopted the Indian National Flag, known as the Tiranga.
- The Indian flag evolved over time, with various designs proposed and used during the freedom struggle.
- The earliest flag was created by **Sister Nivedita in 1904**, featuring red and yellow colours symbolising victory and power, with Vande Mataram inscribed in Bengali.
- After several modifications over the years, the present-day flag was adopted with three coloured stripes – saffron, white, and green – and the Ashoka Chakra replacing the charkha as the national emblem.
- Each colour in the Indian national flag has a significant meaning.
 - The top band of **saffron stands for** the bravery and sacrifices of freedom fighters.
 - The middle band in **white stands for** purity, truth, and peace.
 - The bottom band in **green stands for** fertility, growth, and fortune while also reflecting India's agricultural heritage and commitment to protecting the environment.
 - The navy blue wheel chakra in middle, known as the wheel of law, symbolises the continuous movement of life and highlight on the importance of a nation progressing and advancing.



Alluri Sitaram Raju

- The 128th birth anniversary of Alluri Sitarama Raju was celebrated recently.
- Alluri Sitaram Raju, was an Indian revolutionary, who became a monk at the age of 18 and led the **Rampa Rebellion** in 1922.
- The rebellion was a revolt of tribal community to oppose the British Raj for enacting the **1882 Madras Forest Act**.
- The Act heavily limited the tribal group's freedom of movement within their forest habitat and prevented them from practicing a traditional form of agriculture known as **podu**.
- In 1924, Raju was taken into police custody, and was executed publicly, effectively ending the armed rebellion.
- He was awarded the designation of **Manyam Veerudu**, or **Forest hero**, for his courage.

Syama Prasad Mookerjee

- The PM recently paid tributes to Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee on the occasion of his birth anniversary.
- Born on 6 July 1901 in Calcutta, Syama Prasad Mookerjee was an Indian politician, barrister and academician.
- In 1934, Mookerjee earned the rare distinction of becoming the youngest vice-chancellor of Calcutta University at the age of 33.

Political Career before Independence

- Mukherjee started his political career in 1929, when he entered the Bengal Legislative Council as an Indian National Congress (INC) candidate representing Calcutta University.
- In 1937, he was re-elected to the assembly as an independent candidate. The same year, Mookerjee became the Leader of the Opposition when Krishak Praja Party and Muslim League joined hands to come to power in the state.
- In 1939, he joined the All-India Hindu Mahasabha in Calcutta when V.D. Savarkar was its President.
- As the member of the Hindu Mahasabha, Mookerjee formed the government in Bengal with Fazlul Haque of Krishak Praja Party. In this government, he was allocated the finance portfolio.

Boycott of Quit India Movement

- In a series of events relating to the politics of independence struggle in India, the Hindu Mahasabha decided to boycott the Quit India movement launched by the INC under Mahatma Gandhi, and Mookerjee, too, supported the boycott.

Support for Division of Bengal

Though Mookerjee was a strong advocate of the integrity of the country, but when the division of India became clear, he campaigned for the division of Bengal and demanded West Bengal for Hindu Bengalis.

Formation of Bharatiya Jan Sangh

- Mookerjee later founded the Bharatiya Jana Sangh in 1951 and became its first President.
- The Bharatiya Jana Sangh later merged with other non-Congress parties to form the Janata Party, which later became the present-day BJP.

Opposition of Article 370

- Mookerjee was a lifelong opponent of Article 370, the provision in the Indian constitution that assigned an autonomous status to the state of Jammu & Kashmir, and wrote extensively on this topic.
- He came up with the motto of '**Ek desh mein do nishan, do pradhan, do vidhan nahi chalega**' (A country can't have two emblems, two PMs and two Constitutions).
- To protest against Article 370, he went to Jammu & Kashmir, from where he was arrested for illegal intrusion. He died a detainee (a person held in custody) on June 23, 1953, at the age of 51.

Maratha Military Landscapes of India

- UNESCO has granted World Heritage status to a set of **12 historic Maratha forts** spread across Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. The decision was taken at the 47th Session of the World Heritage Committee.
- It is the 44th Indian property to receive this recognition. **India ranks 6th globally and 2nd in Asia Pacific Region** for the most number of World Heritage Sites.
- Spanning from the **17th to 19th centuries CE**, these sites are together called the **Maratha Military Landscapes of India**.
- The selected sites, include **Salher, Shivneri, Lohgad, Khanderi, Raigad, Rajgad, Pratapgad, Suvarnadurg, Panhala, Vijaydurg, and Sindhudurg** in Maharashtra, along with **Gingee Fort in Tamil Nadu**.

1,000 years of Rajendra Chola's Maritime Expedition to South-East Asia

- The Ministry of Culture celebrated the birth anniversary of the great Chola emperor Rajendra Chola I with the **Aadi Thiruvathirai Festival** held at Gangaikonda Cholapuram, Tamil Nadu.
- The special celebration also commemorates **1,000 years of Rajendra Chola's maritime expedition to South-East Asia** and the commencement of the construction of the iconic **Gangaikonda Cholapuram temple**.

Rajendra Chola I

- **Rajendra Chola I (1014–1044 CE)** was one of the most powerful and visionary rulers in Indian history. Under his leadership, the Chola Empire expanded its influence across South and Southeast Asia.
- He established Gangaikonda Cholapuram as his capital after his Army marched right up to the Ganga River, **defeating the Pala kingdom of Bengal**, and returned victorious. He also assumed the title **Gangaikonda Chola**.
- In this new town, he built a grand water tank. The tank, Cholagangam, was meant to be a **Ganga-jalamayam jayasthambham**, (a liquid pillar of victory).

Aadi Thiruvathirai festival

- **Aadi is the name of the month**, and **Thiruvathirai is a nakshatra** (arrangement of stars and planets) **linked to Lord Shiva**, also believed to be the **king's birth star**.
- The festival celebrates the rich **Tamil Shaiva Bhakti tradition**, supported by the Cholas and immortalized by the **63 Nayanmars—the saint-poets of Tamil Shaivism**.
- The key aims of the festival are to highlight the profound philosophical roots of Shaiva Siddhanta and the role of Tamil in its spread, to honour the contributions of the Nayanmars to the spiritual fabric of Tamil culture.

Kudavolai System: During the festival, the Prime Minister highlighted the elections held under the Chola Empire through a democratic method. What made the system particularly significant was the method of voting, a process called the Kudavolai system **or ballot pot election**.

AWARDS/ PERSONALITIES IN NEWS

Chess World Cup

- India will host the **FIDE Chess World Cup 2025**, scheduled to take place in the month of November.
- The World Cup will feature 206 players competing in a knockout format.
- The top three finishers of the 2025 World Cup will earn direct qualification for the 2026 Candidates Tournament, which determines the challenger for the World Chess Championship.
- This is the second time India is hosting the World Cup, after hosting it at Hyderabad in 2002.
- Last major FIDE event in the country was Chess Olympiad of 2022, held at Mamallapuram, near Chennai.

Durand Cup Tournament

- The President of India recently unveiled the trophies of the Durand Cup Tournament. The trophies unveiled include the **Durand Cup, the President's Cup and Shimla Trophy.**
- **Durand Cup** is named after its founder **Sir Henry Mortimer Durand**, who served as the foreign secretary of British India from 1884-1894.
- **First played in 1888**, the Durand Cup is **Asia's oldest existing football tournament** and the third oldest in the World.
- The Durand Cup is **organised by the Indian Army on behalf of the three Services**, and under the aegis of the All India Football Federation (AIFF).
- After the inaugural edition in Shimla, the tournament moved to New Delhi in 1940, where it was held till 2016.
- What makes the Durand Cup unique is that the winning team gets three trophies, two rolling (Durand Cup and Shimla Trophy) and one for permanent keep (President's Cup).



Sonali Mishra

- Senior IPS officer Sonali Mishra has been named as the ***first woman Director General of the Railway Protection Force (RPF).***
- RPF is a **Union Armed Force under the Ministry of Railways**, responsible for ensuring the safety of railway passengers, property, and infrastructure. Established under the RPF Act, 1957, it includes 12 RPSF battalions, with three more being formed, including a Mahila Battalion.
- RPF has state police-like powers i.e., it has powers to arrest, investigate, and prosecute offenses related to railway property and passengers.