

Monthly Current Affairs Magazine

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Index

GOVERNANCE AND POLICY

SOCIAL ISSUES

EMPOWERMENT

ENVIRONMENT

HEALTH

EDUCATION

ECONOMY & FINANCE

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

AGRICULTURE

IMPORTANT DAYS

DEFENCE

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

INTERNATIONAL

MISCELLANEOUS



Governance and Policy

“Game Plan 2025” – Cabinet Clears National Sports Policy to Reimagine India’s Sporting Future

What’s New?

- On **1 July 2025**, the **Union Cabinet** approved the ambitious **National Sports Policy 2025**, replacing the previous policy from 2001, with a vision to position India among the **top 10 sporting nations by 2036**, embracing a holistic and modern framework.
- The new policy introduces **five strategic pillars**—from elite performance and grassroots development to sports diplomacy and talent ecosystems.
- A key highlight: the policy proposes **inclusive engagement** of the **Indian diaspora**, potentially allowing **OCI athletes** to represent India, and deepening sports-driven diplomatic ties.

Why It Matters

- **Global Aspirations:** A clear pathway for India to become a **top 10 sports nation** by 2036, including potential bid support for the **2036 Olympic Games**.
- **Diaspora Dynamics:** Opening doors for **OCI athletes** could enhance talent depth, especially in team sports like football.
- **Sports Diplomacy:** Encourages international exchange programs, sporting events abroad, and diaspora-led engagement, strengthening India’s global image.

Five Pillars of NSP 2025

1. **Global Excellence** – Quality infrastructure, talent ID, Elite athletic performance.
2. **Economic Dimension** – Tapping sports tourism, manufacturing, and sports tech.
3. **Social Development** – Promoting inclusivity and health through sport.
4. **Mass Movement** – Community-level engagement, embracing traditional and modern games.
5. **Sports-Education Integration** – Aligning with NEP 2020 to balance academics and athletics.

ODI Representation & OCI Athletes

- The inclusion of diaspora athletes through “Sports for Social Development” may pave way for **OCI sportspersons** to join Indian national teams, an idea AIFF is already exploring.

Infrastructure & Governance Reforms

- Policy encourages structured **franchise-based multi-city leagues** in ~13 disciplines to nurture professionalism.
- Supports the pending **National Sports Governance Bill**, aiming for athlete representation, oversight bodies, safe sports systems, and streamlined dispute resolution.

Synergy with National Schemes

- Continues **Khelo India programme** for grassroots talent ID and development.

- Builds on **Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS)** and supports athlete life-cycle via initiatives like **RESET**, **PDUNWFS**, and franchise sports investment.
- Promotes institutional innovations like the proposed **Netaji Subhas University of Sports & Entrepreneurship** in West Bengal.

Additional Info

- The policy is founded on the **Allocation of Business Rules, 1961**, empowering the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports to frame policies.
- Developed through national consultations and stakeholder feedback, it will guide both **central and state sports ecosystems** once finalized.
- Budget for FY 2025–26 increased to **₹3,794 cr**, supporting schemes under the new policy.

“Innovation Infusion” – Cabinet Greenlights ₹1 Lakh Crore RDI Scheme to Propel Private Sector Research

What’s New?

- The **Union Cabinet**, on **1–2 July 2025**, approved the expansive **Research–Development–Innovation (RDI) Scheme** with a **₹1 lakh crore** corpus to amplify private-sector R&D in sunrise and strategic sectors.
- Structured as a **50-year interest-free loan** to the **Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF)**, it channels **long-term concessional finance** to innovators through **second-tier fund managers** such as AIFs, DFIs, NBFCs.

Why It Matters

- **Bridges the R&D funding gap** (“valley of death”) hindering India’s tech potential; corporate R&D remains low (~0.64% of GDP).
- Encourages **private-sector-led innovation** in areas like **AI, quantum computing, biotech, clean energy, space, robotics, and digital agriculture**.
- Aims to **de-risk transformative R&D**, foster **tech self-reliance**, build a robust **deep-tech ecosystem**, and improve India’s **Global Innovation Index** ranking.

Institutional Framework

- **ANRF Governing Board** (chaired by PM) for strategic oversight.
- **ANRF Executive Council** to set guidelines and select fund managers.
- **Empowered Group of Secretaries (EGoS)**, led by Cabinet Secretary, will monitor & approve programme changes.
- **DST** acts as the nodal ministry for scheme implementation.

Financial Structure

- **Special Purpose Fund (SPF)** under ANRF holds the **₹1 lakh crore** corpus.
- **Second-tier fund managers** deploy funds via:
 - Long-term, low/no-interest loans.

- Equity investments for startups.
- Contributions to a **Deep-Tech Fund of Funds** for ecosystem building.

Strategic Coverage

- Targets **high-TRL projects** nearing market deployment.
- Sectors include **semiconductors, defense tech, space, biotech, quantum, AI, green hydrogen, digital agriculture** and critical technologies.
- Supports **technology acquisition** to close strategic dependency gaps.

Broader Ecosystem Impact

- Expected to **stimulate IP creation**, high-end job creation, and deep-tech venture expansions.
- Reinforces schemes like **Atmanirbhar Bharat, Startup India, Make in India**, and aligns with **Viksit Bharat@2047** vision.

Additional Info

- A **₹20,000 crore** DST allocation in Budget 2025 kick-started this initiative.
- India's **GERD** has risen from ~₹60,196 cr (2011) to ₹127,381 cr (2021), yet remains a modest 0.64% of GDP.
- ANRF was established in 2022 to spearhead India's **National R&D strategy**, increasingly integrating **private and public spheres** in innovation governance.

National Consumer Helpline Facilitates ₹7.14 Crore Refund in Just Two Months

What's New?

- The **National Consumer Helpline (NCH)** secured **₹7.14 crore** in refunds for consumers between **April 25 and June 30, 2025**, by resolving **15,426 grievances** across **30 sectors**, especially **e-commerce** where **₹3.69 crore** was refunded from **8,919 cases**.
- The platform typically achieves swift redressal—refunds often processed within **3–4 days** of grievance registration.

Role of National Consumer Helpline

- Operated under the **Department of Consumer Affairs**, NCH offers a **pre-litigation grievance redressal mechanism** via **toll-free 1915** (also reachable through WhatsApp/SMS/UMANG/NCH app) in **17 languages**.
- Part of the **INGRAM portal**, it connects consumers, companies, regulators, and ombudsmen for faster resolution.

Why E-Commerce Gripes Are Rising

- A surge in **online shopping** has brought an increase in issues like **delayed refunds, product misrepresentation, and cancellation frustrations**.
- NCH's significant focus and success in this area highlight the need for stronger **consumer awareness, platform accountability, and regulatory enforcement** under the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019**.

Past Student Refund Campaigns

- In **2023–24**, NCH helped students recover **₹1 crore** from coaching centers (UPSC, IIT, CA, medical),

addressing **16,276 grievances**, up from just **5,351** in 2022–23.

- Notable success stories include a Bengaluru student reclaiming **₹3.5 lakh** and another from Gujarat receiving **₹8.36 lakh**.

Additional Info

- **Consumer Protection Act, 2019:** Empowers the **Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)**, supports alternate dispute redressal, and penalizes unfair trade.
- **Department of Consumer Affairs:** Oversees NCH, promotes consumer education, and implements the **INGRAM system**.
- **E-commerce definition:** Encompasses buying/selling via digital platforms.
- **Pre-litigation vs. Litigation:** NCH functions before disputes escalate to **Consumer Commissions** (District, State, National).

NITI Aayog Unveils 2nd NER District SDG Index (2023–24)

What's New?

- **NITI Aayog**, in partnership with **Ministry of DoNER and UNDP**, launched the **2nd North Eastern Region (NER) District SDG Index Report 2023–24** covering **121 districts** across eight NE states—measuring progress on **15 SDGs** using **84 indicators**.
- The share of **'Front Runner'** districts rose sharply from **62% to 85%**, indicating substantial development progress.

Regional Highlights

- **Hnahthial (Mizoram)** topped all districts with a composite score of **81.43**, followed by **Champhai (79.86)**.
- **Tripura** performed strongly: **Gomati (78.79)** ranked 3rd and **West Tripura (77.64)** ranked 5th; all districts in Tripura, Mizoram, and Sikkim are now **'Front Runners'**.
- Over **85% of NE districts** are now **'Front Runner'**; the lowest-scoring district is **Longding (Arunachal Pradesh)** at **58.71**.
- **Nagaland** shows remarkable improvement: three districts—**Mokokchung (78.43)**, **Kohima (76.93)**, **Dimapur (76.29)**—entered the top-10, a significant rise from previous low rankings.

Why It Matters

- Enables **granular, district-level measurement** of SDGs—enhancing accountability and fostering local-level monitoring strategies.
- Acts as a **policy roadmap**—guiding targeted interventions, resource allocation, and enabling **peer-driven competition** among districts.
- Strengthens policy-making under **Viksit Bharat @2047**—aligning local progress with national development aspirations.

Additional Info

- Launched at an event featuring **Suman Bery** (Vice-Chair, NITI Aayog), **BVR Subrahmanyam** (CEO), **Chanchal Kumar** (DoNER Secretary), and **UNDP's Angela Lusigi**.

- Builds on the first 2021–22 edition aimed at **SDG localization**, data-backed district-level planning, and bridging inter-district development gaps.
- Covers **15 SDGs**—including Zero Hunger, Health & Well-being, Gender Equality, Clean Energy, etc.—excluding goals 14 & 17.
- Index categories:
 - **Aspirant (0–49)**
 - **Performer (50–64)**
 - **Front Runner (65–99)**
 - **Achiever (100).**

6. Dispute Resolution Mechanisms

- Establishment of a **Petroleum Adjudicating Authority**, and provisions for **international arbitration**, replacing outdated legal frameworks.

Policy & Strategic Context

- India currently imports ~90% of its crude; these rules aim to lower import dependency by encouraging domestic E&P.
- Complements the **Oilfields (Regulation & Development) Amendment Act 2025**, aimed at making the E&P regime more globally competitive.

Draft Petroleum & Natural Gas Rules 2025: Revamping India's Upstream Sector

What's New?

- The **Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas** released the **Draft Petroleum & Natural Gas Rules, 2025**, replacing the colonial-era Oilfields Regulation Act (1948) and 1959 Rules.
- Released July 9, 2025, with public comments invited by **July 17**, and discussion slated for **Urja Varta 2025**.

Why It Matters

- Aims to **boost ease of doing business** in **exploration & production (E&P)**, reduce import dependency, and attract both domestic and foreign investments.
- Modernizes regulatory framework, aligning with climate goals and including provisions for **renewables and decarbonization**.

Key Features

1. Investor Security & Fiscal Stability

- Introduces **stabilization clauses**: in case of future fiscal/legal changes, companies will be eligible for compensation or deductions.

2. Modern Licensing Structure

- Replaces mining-centric “mining leases” with **Petroleum Leases**, delinks petroleum from mining, and simplifies licensing.
- Clarifies that **mineral oils** now include unconventional hydrocarbons—shale gas, tight oil, coal-bed methane—but exclude coal, lignite, and helium.

3. Revenue Sharing & Lease Extensions

- Revised **Model Revenue Sharing Contract (MRSC)** promotes **area extension, unitisation**, and shared infrastructure.
- Leases valid from 4–30 years with possible extensions to field's economic life.

4. Government Pre-emption Rights

- In a national emergency, the government can **invoke pre-emption rights** over oil & gas with fair market compensation.

5. Environmental & Emission Controls

- Mandates **quarterly reporting on GHG emissions and gas flaring**, requiring operators to adopt emission-reduction measures.
- Empowers authorities to approve **GHG sequestration/storage plans**.

X Corp vs Government: Karnataka HC Examines IT Act's Content-Blocking Powers

What's New?

- **X Corp (formerly Twitter)** has challenged the government's use of **Section 79(3)(b)** of the **IT Act** before the **Karnataka High Court**, arguing that it creates a parallel, opaque content-blocking regime—devoid of safeguards required under **Section 69A**.
- The petition contests the **Sahyog portal**, claiming thousands of officials—including police, railway, and GST officers—can now **block content based on subjective morality**, bypassing institutional review or judicial oversight.

X Corp's Key Arguments

- **Arbitrariness**: Section 79 allows individual officers to issue takedown orders without committee review, violating **Article 14** (equality before law).
- **Legal overreach**: The company says Section 79(3)(b) lacks independent blocking authority and must be read alongside Section 69A, which includes procedural safeguards like written reasons, pre-decisional hearings, and a review mechanism.
- **Sahyog portal concerns**: X alleges the portal is a “censorship portal,” forcing platforms to onboard nodal officers without legal basis.

Government's Position

- **Safe harbour defense**: The government claims Section 79(3)(b) merely strips immunity from intermediaries if they ignore unlawful content notices—not a direct censorship tool.
- **Portal legitimacy**: Authorities argue the Sahyog portal facilitates compliance and coordination, not censorship, and that blocking orders come through designated executive channels.

Broader Legal Context

- **Shreya Singhal (2015) precedent**: Supreme Court upheld Section 69A's constitutionality due to its structured safeguards and struck down overly broad provisions. X contends Section 79(3)(b) circumvents this decision.
- **Constitutional rights**: The case touches upon Articles 14 and 19—equal access to law and freedom of speech/expression—applying legal scrutiny even to intermediaries.

Why It Matters

- **Digital governance:** Sets precedent on the limits of government powers to regulate online content under executive discretion.
- **Platform liability:** A ruling could redefine the boundaries of **safe harbour protections** for tech intermediaries.
- **Freedom of expression:** Balances the need for unlawful content moderation with protecting civil liberties in India's evolving digital ecosystem.

NITI Aayog Urges States to Bolster Innovation Funding & Ecosystem

What's New?

- NITI Aayog has recommended that state governments allocate up to **0.5 %** of their **GSDP** to **Science & Technology (S&T) Councils** to strengthen innovation and technology-led economic growth.
- It also advised **restructuring the governing bodies** of these councils to enhance decision-making, foster **industry links**, and leverage **diversified funding sources**.

Why It Matters

- Enhancing funding and governance of state-level S&T bodies will spur **localized innovation**, **deep tech advancements**, and create **startup-friendly environments**.
- It promotes **cooperative federalism**, enabling states to align innovation policies with national priorities like **Viksit Bharat @2047**, and strengthens NITI Aayog's **State Support Mission**.

Policy & Institutional Context

- This move complements NITI Aayog's previous initiatives:
 - **National Workshop on Building Innovation Synergies** in March 2025 under Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) and GUJCOST.
 - **AIM 2.0** rollout (₹2,750 cr) to deepen innovation infrastructure and decentralize to states.
 - Ongoing development of the **India Innovation Index 2025** to benchmark and enhance state-level innovation.

Centre Releases Over ₹1,000 Crore to Flood & Landslide-Affected States

What's New?

- On **July 10, 2025**, Home Minister **Amit Shah** announced disbursement of **₹1,066.80 crore** from the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) to six states—**Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Kerala, and Uttarakhand**—following recent floods and landslides.

Why It Matters

- Aimed at **relief, rehabilitation, and restoring essential infrastructure**, this release underscores the Centre's role in natural disaster response.

- The move reflects **cooperative federalism**, showcasing Central-State collaboration in crisis management.

Additional Context

- This funding forms part of a broader trend: earlier in **February 2025**, **₹1,554.99 crore** was approved under the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) for Andhra Pradesh, Nagaland, Odisha, Telangana, and Tripura.
- The government has cumulatively released substantial funds: over **₹18,322.80 crore (SDRF)**, **₹4,808.30 crore (NDRF)**, **₹2,208.55 crore (State Disaster Mitigation Fund)**, and **₹719.72 crore (National Disaster Mitigation Fund)** to 27 states during FY 2024–25.

Aspirational DMF Programme Launched to Align Mineral Funds with National Development Goals

What's New?

- On **July 9, 2025**, Union Minister **G Kishan Reddy** inaugurated the **Aspirational DMF Programme** at the **National DMF Workshop** in New Delhi, unveiling new **guidelines** to strategically link **District Mineral Foundation (DMF)** funds with the **Aspirational District Programme (ADP)** and **Aspirational Block Programme (ABP)**.
- The program aligns DMF projects with national development priorities across **152 DMFs** and involves **62 District Collectors**, with key participation by line ministries, state nodal officers, and development partners.

Role of DMF & Aspirational Alignment

- **DMFs**, established under the **MMDR Act (2015)**, channel mining royalty funds (30% of post-2015 lease revenue) into the socio-economic upliftment of mining-affected areas.
- The Aspirational DMF Initiative requires at least **70%** of DMF funds be spent within directly impacted areas, prioritizing sectors like **health, education, nutrition, sanitation, skill development, and infrastructure**.
- Funding projects are expected to integrate with flagship schemes like **Jal Jeevan Mission, Ayushman Bharat, and PM Awas Yojana**, under the umbrella of **PMKKKY 2024 guidelines**.

Governance & Implementation Focus

- DMFs are encouraged to operate in **mission mode**, emphasizing **capacity building, innovative practices, transparency, and citizen engagement**.
- **Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)** oversight has been emphasized to ensure **audit compliance** and financial accountability.
- The launch featured the release of a **"Coffee Table Book 2.0"**, showcasing successful DMF-funded projects across states.

Why It Matters

- This initiative strengthens **cooperative federalism**, ensuring **mineral wealth** is used for **inclusive, grassroots development** aligned with national goals.

- It addresses **implementation challenges** by directly connecting DMF funds to priority areas through Aspirational District/Block frameworks.
- The initiative sets the stage for a new **Program Management Unit (PMU)** to improve operational efficiency and facilitate PMKKKY rollout in mining-affected areas.

- Aadhaar is **unique & lifetime**, and **never reassigned**.
- It is used for **banking, subsidies, pensions, and legal services**.
- A mismatch between death registrations and Aadhaar deactivation has led to inflated saturation figures.

“Silent Deactivation” – UIDAI Seals Off Deceased Aadhaar IDs to Curb Fraud

What’s New?

- The **Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)** has deactivated approximately **1.17 crore** Aadhaar numbers of deceased individuals—based on analysis of **1.55 crore** death records sourced from **24 States/UTs’** Civil Registration System (CRS).
- In parallel, UIDAI unveiled a **“Reporting of Death of a Family Member”** feature on the **myAadhaar portal** (launched June 9, 2025), enabling legal heirs to report a death and get the Aadhaar number deactivated online.
- The initiative includes proactive integration of data from the **Registrar General of India, banks**, and other ecosystem partners for accurate synchronization.
- A special pilot is underway to verify Aadhaar numbers of **centenarians (100+ years)** with state governments to identify inactive IDs.

Why It Matters

- **Identity integrity:** Eliminates the misuse of Aadhaar numbers for illicit bank accounts, pensions, subsidies, etc..
- **Database accuracy:** With over 11 crore deaths since Aadhaar's inception, only ~1.15 crore deactivations have occurred—less than **10%**, underscoring the scale of pending cleanup.
- **Citizen security:** Families can now directly secure the deceased’s Aadhaar by linking the **Death Registration Number**, preventing misuse between certificate issuance and official records.

How It Works

- **Step 1:** RGI shares death data via CRS; banks and ecosystem partners to follow.
- **Step 2:** UIDAI conducts data validation and deactivates verified Aadhaar numbers.
- **Step 3:** Family members log into **myAadhaar**, select “Report Death”, submit Aadhaar number + Death Registration Number + demographic info, self-authenticate → UIDAI validates → deactivates.
- **Step 4:** Ongoing pilot to flag centenarian IDs for verification through states.

Additional Info

- **Aadhaar:** A biometric-based 12-digit unique ID managed by **UIDAI** under the **MEITY**, launched 2009. As of Oct 2024, ~1.38 billion IDs issued.
- **CRS:** Nationwide system under **Registrar General of India (RGI)** monitoring births/deaths.
- **Static facts:**

Parliament's Select Committee Proposes Major Enhancements to IT Bill 2025

What’s New?

- The **Lok Sabha Select Committee**, led by BJP MP **Baijayant Panda**, has finalized its review of the **Income Tax Bill, 2025**, recommending **285 changes** aimed at modernizing and clarifying the legislation.
- Notable amendments include:
 - Proposal for **time-bound resolution of tax disputes** to address long-pending litigations.
 - **Reinstatement of inter-corporate dividend deduction** under Section 80M—reversing its initial exclusion.
 - Removal of the **"no refunds for late filers" clause**, restoring parity with the existing IT Act.
 - Retention of a controversial clause granting **access to “virtual digital space”** (emails, social media, online trading accounts) during tax searches.
- The report will be tabled in Lok Sabha on **July 21, 2025**, with the government eyeing implementation from **April 1, 2026**.

Legislative Clarity & Efficiency

- Simplification efforts have reduced the Bill from around **850 pages to ~600**, removing redundant language while preserving core tax provisions.
- The overhaul aims at **textual and structural clarity**, without altering tax rates, to enhance legal precision and ease of compliance.
- A shift from “Assessment Year” to “**Tax Year**” modernizes terminology and aligns with global standards.

Dispute Resolution & Taxpayer Relief

- The committee recommends firm **timelines for tax dispute resolution**, promoting faster grievance redressal and reducing uncertainty.
- Deleting the clause denying refunds to late filers protects taxpayers from penalties over procedural delays.
- Restoration of **inter-corporate dividend deductions** supports corporate cash flow and harmonizes the Bill with the existing Act.

Digital Search Powers: Balancing Privacy

- The Bill maintains a provision allowing search and seizure of **"virtual digital space"**, including emails, cloud servers, and social media.

- This move expands digital search authority but raises privacy and civil liberties concerns—underscoring the need for safeguards.

Additional Info

- **New Bill overview:**
 - Replaces **Income Tax Act, 1961** (amended >4,000 times).
 - Contains **536 sections and 16 schedules**, effective from **1 April 2026**.
- **Select Committee role:** Acts as a forum for stakeholder consultation and legislative refinement.
- **Non-compliance streamlined:** Non-filing of ITR becomes a **non-cognizable offense**, reducing arbitrary enforcement.

SC Centralises Probe into Opinion-Trading Apps: PILs Transferred

What's New?

- The **Supreme Court of India**, through a Bench of Justices **J. B. Pardiwala** and **R. Mahadevan**, has transferred **four PILs** challenging **opinion-trading platforms** from three High Courts (Bombay, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh) to itself for **centralised adjudication**.
- The petitions argue these platforms operate akin to **betting/gambling** and need a comprehensive legal evaluation.
- The SC has directed the High Courts to **send full case records** promptly, and will list the matter in the Supreme Court registry.

Legal Background & Rationale

- **Opinion-trading platforms** let users **bet on outcomes of real-world events**, such as elections or sports—posing a question whether they are **games of skill or gambling**.
- Probo Media Technologies, an operator of such platforms, filed a **transfer petition**, seeking to consolidate the matter at Bombay HC; SC rejected this, preferring direct oversight.
- A **similar PIL** in Punjab & Haryana HC was dismissed for lack of necessity, given existing gambling laws—highlighting conflicting High Court approaches.

Why Centralisation Matters

- Ensures **uniform interpretation** of constitutional and statutory issues across jurisdictions, preventing **conflicting HC verdicts**.
- Recognises the **complex legal questions** around defining skill vs chance and regulating **digital prediction markets**.
- Reflects SC's role in shaping **national-level jurisprudence** on emerging digital economic models.

Stakeholder Positions

- **Probo Media:** argues for clubbing multiple petitions to avoid duplicative litigation.
- **Sumit Kapurbhai Prajapati** (activist): contends issues differ, especially in Chhattisgarh where underlying **gambling law** is questioned.
- **High Courts:** Politely directed to follow SC's lead and transfer records rapidly.

Implications & Next Steps

- The SC's **direct hearing** places this under its **radar**—could set a **benchmark for regulating digital prediction markets**.
- Raises critical questions on:
 - Need for new **regulatory framework**
 - **Skill vs chance** distinction in law
 - Applicability of existing **Public Gambling Acts**
 - **Consumer protection** and **finance regulation**
- Enforcement agencies like **ED, SEBI, and MeitY** may align with SC direction—ED has already raided Probo and seized assets of ₹285 crore.

Bombay HC Acquits All in 2006 Mumbai Train Blasts; Maharashtra to Appeal

What's New?

- On **21 July 2025**, a 2-judge bench of the **Bombay High Court** quashed convictions of all **12 accused** in the **July 11, 2006** Mumbai train bombings, stating the prosecution **"utterly failed to prove the case"**—noting **unreliable witness IDs, coerced confessions, and lack of forensic evidence**.
- The acquittal led to the **immediate release of nine individuals**, who had spent **17–19 years in jail**; three remain detained due to other cases.

The Verdict Breakdown

- Judges **Justices Anil Kilor & S.C. Chandak** highlighted:
 - No proof regarding **type of bombs** used.
 - **Witnesses failed to reliably identify** accused.
 - **Confessions alleged to be tortured** and were inconsistent.
 - **Evidence mishandled/lapses** in investigation.
- Due to **digital judgment issuance**, prisoners were released swiftly under SC guidelines.

Political & Legal Fallout

- **Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis** condemned the verdict as **"very shocking"**, announcing the state will **appeal in the Supreme Court**.
- **Opposition and activists**—including BJP's Kirit Somaiya, Congress MPs, NCP, and Shiv Sena—have urged a review of investigative lapses and called for speedy SC appeal.
- **AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi** called it a failure of justice, emphasizing the **loss of 18 prime years for the acquitted and continued trauma for victims' families**.

Broader Context

- The **2006 blasts**, involving **seven coordinated explosions** in Mumbai suburban trains, resulted in **189 deaths and 800+ injuries**.
- In **2015**, a special **MCOCA court** sentenced five to death and seven to life.
- Key agencies in the case: **Maharashtra ATS**, local police, and special MCOCA court; HC judgment heavily criticized prosecution and ATS procedures.

Additional Info

- **Judges:** Anil Kilor (since 2019; retires 2028) and S.C. Chandak (appointed 2023; retires 2025) as head of the bench.

- **Legal provision:** Digital judgment recognition follows **SC's procedural reform** for speedy release.
- **Cross-case pattern:** Similar lapses in terror-case investigations have been noted in episodes like **Malegaon** and **Godhra**, sparking debate over investigative quality and judicial oversight.

Jagdeep Dhankhar Resigns on Health Grounds

What's New?

- **Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar** tendered his resignation, citing **medical reasons and advisement to prioritise health**.
- The resignation, submitted under **Article 67(a)** of the Constitution, is effective **immediately**, making him one of only **three VPs in India's history to quit mid-term**.

Why It Matters

- The **Vice President** is also the **ex-officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha**, responsible for presiding over the upper house and stepping in for the President if needed.
- **Deputy Chairman Harivansh** will assume duties in a caretaker capacity until a new VP is elected.
- An **election** for the successor—via **secret ballot and single transferable vote** among MPs—must be held “**as soon as possible**” under the Constitution.

Health vs Politics: Immediate Fallout

- Dhankhar, aged **74**, had medical episodes earlier this year, including **cardiac treatment at AIIMS in March**, and **fainting at an event in June**.
- However, political parties and media outlets are speculating on other triggers:
 - Opposition suggests it may not be purely health-based, urging **clarifications from the government**.
 - Former Rajasthan CM **Ashok Gehlot** alluded to possible “**political pressure**”, hinting at internal tensions.
 - In Dhankhar's home region of **Rajasthan**, the influential **Jat community** is reportedly **dismayed**, interpreting his exit as a political marginalisation attempt.

Procedure & Next Steps

- Under **Article 67**, the VP may resign by writing to the President—no further approvals needed.
- With the office now vacant, the **Election Commission** will schedule a new election; timeline likely begins **within weeks**, ahead of the **Monsoon Session**.
- **Eligibility** for the election: Indian citizen, at least **35 years old**, qualified for the Rajya Sabha, and not holding an office of profit.

Additional Info

- **Jagdeep Dhankhar's Profile:**
 - Born **18 May 1951**, from **Kithana, Rajasthan**, educated in science and law.
 - Political career includes: Lok Sabha MP, Rajasthan MLA, Union MoS (Parliamentary

Affairs), Governor of West Bengal (2019–22), and Vice President since August 2022.

- Dhankhar was elected **14th Vice President** in August 2022, winning with **74.37% votes**, defeating Congress candidate **Margaret Alva**.
- **Mrs. Sudesh Dhankhar**, his wife, served as **Second Lady** from 2022 until his resignation.

Parliament Passes Bills of Lading Bill, 2025

What's New?

- The **Rajya Sabha** passed the **Bills of Lading Bill, 2025**, following its earlier approval in the **Lok Sabha** in March.
- Introduced by **Sarbananda Sonowal**, Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, this bill repeals and replaces the **Indian Bills of Lading Act, 1856**, aligning it with modern trade practices.

Key Provisions & Objectives

- **Modernise language and structure:** The three-section colonial-era act is replaced with a clearer, updated framework enhancing **legal clarity** and reducing **litigation**.
- **Transfer of rights & liabilities:** Confirms that rights and responsibilities automatically transfer to the **consignee or endorsee** named on the bill of lading.
- **Digital inclusion:** Explicitly recognises **electronic bills of lading (e-BL)**, enabling smoother paperless trade.
- **Government oversight:** Empowers the **Central Government** to issue implementation directions and includes **repeal and saving clauses** for legal continuity.

Strategic Context

- The update is part of an **ongoing reform spree** in maritime law, including Bills like the *Carriage of Goods by Sea*, *Indian Ports*, *Merchant Shipping*, and *Coastal Shipping* Bills.
- Reinforces the government's “**Swarnim Bharat 2047**” vision and enhances **ease of doing business** under the **Sagarmala Programme**.

Benefits & Impacts

- Promotes **aligning with international norms**, making India more competitive in global maritime trade.
- Simplifies documentation, creating more **operational transparency** and enabling **digitised workflows**.
- Streamlined legal processes should reduce **disputes**, support **e-commerce**, and expedite **contract enforcement**.

Centre Launches SASCI Scheme for Global Standards

What's New?

- The **Ministry of Tourism** unveiled the **SASCI scheme** (*Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment – Development of Iconic Tourist Centres to Global Scale*), aiming to develop **select iconic tourism centres** into **world-class destinations**.

- Funding support will be available until **31 March 2026**, and the identified projects must be completed within **two years**.

Key Features

- End-to-end development** covers:
 - Infrastructure, branding, sustainability, and operations**
 - Enhancement of **tourist experience**
 - Adherence to strict criteria: **connectivity, ecosystem, carrying capacity, management, marketing** etc..
- Execution model:**
 - Projects are **state-led**, with Centre providing **capital assistance**
 - Progress will be **periodically monitored** by the Ministry.
- Promotion support:**
 - Ministry to promote these destinations via **digital campaigns, global events, and social media**.

Scale & Reach

- In **2024–25 FY**, **40 projects** spanning **23 states** were approved, with a total outlay of **₹3,295.76 crore**.
- Example sites include:
 - Orchha Fort (MP), INS-Guldar museum (Maharashtra), Ashtamudi eco-hub (Kerala), Nandavanam Heritage Park (TN), Rafting hub in Rishikesh (Uttarakhand)**, and many more flagged as iconic tourist assets.

Why It Matters

- Supports **tourism-led growth, job creation, and livelihood upliftment** in local communities.
- Reinforces **cooperative federalism**, enabling states to innovate with central support.
- Aligns with **Swarnim Bharat 2047**, enhancing tourism's role in national development.
- Enriches **Make in India** and contributes to **GDP growth, sustainability, and socio-economic resilience**.

Additional Info

- The Scheme complements **Swadesh Darshan** and **MICE Tourism** initiatives under earlier phases of tourism development.
- Criteria-based selection (connectivity, sustainability, carrying capacity, marketing) ensures growth is balanced and responsible.
- Promotional efforts will utilize **Website, Social Media, Events**, and collaboration with **States and Industry**.

a **statutory entitlement**, raising wider legal implications.

Constitutional & Legal Framework

- Article 326** of the Constitution enshrines **universal adult franchise** for all Indian citizens aged 18+.
- The **Representation of the People Acts (1950, 1951)** operationalise this:
 - RPA 1950**: Defines voter qualifications and disqualifications (e.g., non-citizens, unsound mind).
 - RPA 1951**: Section 62 enables enrolled voters to cast ballots unless disqualified by law.

Judicial Interpretations

- Landmark verdicts showcase a divided view:
 - N.P. Ponnuswami (1952)* and *Jyoti Basu (1982)*: Held voting is **purely statutory**.
 - PUCL v. Union (2003)*: One judge viewed it as a **constitutional right**, tied to Article 326.
 - Kuldip Nayar (2006)* and *Anoop Baranwal (2023)*: Reaffirmed its **statutory nature**.
 - Recent 5-Judge bench (2025)*: Recognised the debate but was constrained by precedent; Justice Rastogi dissented, advocating that voting is a **fundamental right** intersecting Articles 19 (expression), 21 (life), 15 (anti-discrimination), and 17.

Why It Matters

- Legal protection**: If statutory, voting rights can be altered or restricted by laws; if constitutional, they are **enforceable under Article 32** and shielded from easy change.
- Democratic integrity**: Ensuring fair rolls, avoiding disenfranchisement, protecting vulnerable groups hinges on robust legal status.
- Electoral reforms** (e.g. NRI voting, prisoner voting, digital roll updates) depend on clarity—statutory limits vs. constitutional safeguards differ.

Additional Info

- Voter disqualifications** include unsound mind, criminal convictions (Section 62 RPA-1951), and prisoners serving sentences—though some cases suggest even prisoners may retain voting rights under Article 21.
- Voting procedures are overseen by the **Election Commission under Article 324**.
- Internationally and in legal doctrine, voting is increasingly seen as a **constitutional or fundamental right**, not merely a privilege.

Defining the Vote – Supreme Court Examines the Legal Status of Voting

What's New?

- A recent Supreme Court hearing on **Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in Bihar** has reignited the debate on whether the **right to vote** is a **constitutional right** or a **statutory privilege**.
- The Court noted the **paradox** of democracy being a core constitutional value while voting remains, legally,

Vice Presidential Election 2025: ECI Prepares for Polls

What's New?

- The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** appointed the **Rajya Sabha Secretary General, PC Mody**, as the **Returning Officer** for the **Vice Presidential Election 2025** on **July 25, 2025**, following the resignation of **Jagdeep Dhankhar** on **July 21, 2025**, citing health reasons.

- **Garima Jain** (Joint Secretary, Rajya Sabha Secretariat) and **Vijay Kumar** (Director, Rajya Sabha Secretariat) were named **Assistant Returning Officers** to assist in conducting the election.
- The election, necessitated during the **Monsoon Session of Parliament**, will follow a **gazette notification** to be issued soon, with the poll schedule to be announced shortly.

Vice Presidential Election Process

- Governed by the **Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Act, 1952**, and **Rules, 1974**, the election is conducted by the **ECI** under **Article 324** of the **Constitution**.
- **Electoral College**: Comprises **790 Members of Parliament** (MPs) from both **Lok Sabha** (543 elected, 2 nominated) and **Rajya Sabha** (233 elected, 12 nominated), using **proportional representation** via **single transferable vote** and **secret ballot**.
- **Nomination Process**:
 - Candidates require at least **20 proposers** and **20 seconders** (all MPs).
 - A **security deposit** of **Rs 15,000** is mandatory.
 - Candidates must be **Indian citizens**, over **35 years old**, and qualified for **Rajya Sabha** membership, without holding any **office of profit**.
- **Timeline**: The election must be held “as soon as possible” per **Article 68**, with a **30-day period** from notification to polling.

Political Context

- The **National Democratic Alliance (NDA)** holds a strong position with **426 MPs** (293 in Lok Sabha, 133 in Rajya Sabha), exceeding the **simple majority** of **396 votes** in the **790-member Electoral College**.
- The **Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha** will discharge the **Vice President's duties** (as ex-officio Chairman of Rajya Sabha) until the new Vice President is elected.
- The **Returning Officer** role rotates between the **Lok Sabha** and **Rajya Sabha Secretary General**; the **Lok Sabha Secretary General** served in the last election.

Additional Info

- **Election Commission of India (ECI)**: An autonomous body under **Article 324**, responsible for conducting elections to the **President**, **Vice President**, **Parliament**, and **State Legislatures**. It is headed by the **Chief Election Commissioner** and two **Election Commissioners**.
- **Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Act, 1952**: Provides the legal framework for electing India's **President** and **Vice President**, with the **Returning Officer** appointed under **Section 3** in consultation with the **Central Government**.
- **Rajya Sabha Secretariat**: Supports the functioning of the **Council of States**, led by the **Secretary General**, who also serves administrative roles like **Returning Officer** for elections.
- **Vice President's Role**: The **second-highest constitutional office**, acting as the **ex-officio Chairman**

of **Rajya Sabha** and stepping in as **Acting President** when needed.

Draft National Telecom Policy 2025: A Digital Bharat Vision

What's New?

- On **July 23, 2025**, the **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** released the **Draft National Telecom Policy (NTP) 2025**, aiming to transform India into a **global telecom leader** by **2030**.
- Key targets: Achieve **universal 4G coverage**, **90% 5G population coverage**, **100 million fixed broadband connections**, and create **1 million new jobs** while **reskilling 1 million workers** in the telecom sector.
- The policy, open for **public consultation**, emphasizes **infrastructure expansion**, **local manufacturing**, **skilling**, and **sustainable development**, with an annual investment goal of **Rs 1 lakh crore** (~\$12 billion).

What is the National Telecom Policy 2025?

- **NTP-25** builds on the **National Digital Communications Policy 2018**, focusing on **next-generation technologies** like **5G**, **6G**, **AI**, **IoT**, **quantum communications**, and **satellite networks**.
- **Six core missions**:
 - Ensure **universal connectivity** with **4G for all** and **90% 5G coverage**.
 - Mobilize **Rs 1 lakh crore annually** for telecom infrastructure.
 - Double **telecom exports** and achieve **50% import substitution** through **local manufacturing**.
 - Create **1 million jobs** in areas like **5G**, **6G**, **cybersecurity**, and **big data**.
 - Increase **tower fiberization** from **46% to 80%** and deploy **1 million public Wi-Fi hotspots**.
 - Promote **green telecom** by transitioning **30% of towers to renewable energy**.
- **Digital Bharat Nidhi**: Replaces the **Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)** to expand networks in **rural and remote areas**, integrating **terrestrial** and **satellite** systems (e.g., **Starlink**, **Jio-SES**).

Strategic Initiatives

- **Innovation and R&D**: Targets **10%** of global **6G-related IPRs**, establishes **10 Centres of Excellence**, supports **500 telecom startups**, and transforms **C-DOT** into a **telecom R&D hub**.
- **Manufacturing Push**: Proposes a **Telecom Manufacturing Zone (TMZ)**, **30 advanced research labs**, and an **Indian Institute of Telecom Technology (IIT2)** for talent development.
- **Cybersecurity**: Introduces **National Telecom SafeNet** for **network protection** and a **Satcom Monitoring Facility (SMF)** to secure **satellite communications**.

- **Economic Impact:** Aims to double the **telecom sector's GDP contribution** and support **BharatNet** for **fibre connectivity** to all **Gram Panchayats**.

Additional Info

- **Department of Telecommunications (DoT):** Under the **Ministry of Communications**, it regulates telecom services, licenses, and policies like **BharatNet** and **PLI Scheme for Telecom**.
- **Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT):** A **DoT** institution driving **indigenous telecom R&D**, pivotal for **6G** and **AI-based solutions**.
- **BharatNet:** World's largest **rural broadband project**, aiming to connect **2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats** with **fibre optic networks**.
- **Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme:** Recorded **Rs 80,927 crore** in telecom sales and **Rs 14,915 crore** in exports by **March 2025**, boosting **self-reliance**.

Delhi HC Pushes for Technology in Transparent Probes

What's New?

- On **July 24, 2025**, the **Delhi High Court**, in a ruling by **Justice Ravinder Dubeja**, directed **investigating agencies** to leverage **technology** to enhance **transparency** and **fairness** in criminal investigations, particularly under the **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985**.
- The observation was made while denying bail to **Ravi Prakash**, arrested on **April 19, 2023**, for possessing **1 kg of heroin**, with the court noting that the absence of **videography** or **photography** does not discredit the police's case, given limited **technological availability** in 2023.
- The court emphasized that tools like **CCTV footage**, **body cameras**, and **digital evidence** should be used to strengthen **investigative integrity**, aligning with the **Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023**.

Why Technology in Investigations?

- **Purpose:** Using **technological tools** ensures **efficiency**, **transparency**, and **fairness** in probes, reducing reliance on potentially biased **human testimony** and enhancing **evidence credibility**.
- **Tools highlighted:**
 - **Videography** and **photography** for documenting seizures.
 - **CCTV footage** to verify incident locations.
 - **Digital forensics** for analyzing **electronic evidence** like mobile data.
- **Context:** The ruling aligns with the **BNSS, 2023**, which mandates **forensic examination** for serious offenses and promotes **video conferencing** and **electronic evidence** under the **Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023**.
- **Case specifics:** In the **heroin seizure case**, the prosecution noted no **CCTV cameras** were available at the site, and the accused's bail plea was rejected as his **15-month custody** was not deemed excessive.

Broader Implications

- **Judicial push for modernization:** The court's directive builds on prior rulings, such as a **2023 order** urging **probe agencies** to adopt technology for cases like **missing children** and **human trafficking**, emphasizing **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)** with **digital checklists**.
- **Challenges:**
 - Limited **infrastructure** in rural areas for tools like **CCTV** or **body cameras**.
 - Need for **training** police in **digital forensics** and **evidence management**.
 - Balancing **technological adoption** with **privacy concerns** under laws like the **Information Technology Act, 2000**.
- **Global relevance:** Countries like the **US** and **UK** use **body-worn cameras** and **AI analytics** in policing, setting a benchmark for India's **investigative reforms**.

Additional Info

- **Delhi High Court:** Established in **1966**, it exercises jurisdiction over **Delhi** under **Article 226** and **227** of the **Constitution**, overseeing legal reforms like the **Electronic Evidence and Video Conferencing Rules, 2025**.
- **Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023:** Replaces the **Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973**, mandating **forensic evidence** for offenses with over **seven years' punishment** and promoting **digital judicial processes**.
- **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985:** Governs **drug-related offenses**, with strict provisions (e.g., **Section 15, 25, 29**) and limited bail scope due to **public safety concerns**.
- **Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)** and **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB):** Key agencies handling **NDPS cases**, now urged to integrate **technology** for transparency.

India Bans Over 20 OTT Platforms for Obscene Content

What's New?

- On **July 23, 2025**, the **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB)** banned **25 OTT platforms**, including **Ullu**, **ALTT**, **Big Shots App**, and **Desiflix**, for streaming **obscene**, **vulgar**, and **pornographic content**, violating Indian laws.
- The decision, following **public complaints** and **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)** references in **July–August 2024**, directed **Internet Service Providers (ISPs)** to block access to **26 websites** and **14 apps** under the **Information Technology Act, 2000**, and **IT Rules, 2021**.
- Public figures like **Kangana Ranaut** and **Ravi Kishan** supported the ban, citing protection of **cultural values** and **youth**, while **Ekta Kapoor** clarified she and **Shobha Kapoor** have had no association with **ALTT** since **June 2021**.

Why the Ban?

- **Violations:** Content on platforms like **Ullu** (over 100 web-series) and **ALTT** included **sexually explicit scenes, nudity, and inappropriate depictions** (e.g., **family relationships**), breaching:
 - **Section 67 and 67A** of the **IT Act, 2000** (obscene and sexually explicit content).
 - **Section 294** of the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023** (obscene acts).
 - **Section 4** of the **Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986**.
- **NCPCR findings:** **Ullu** temporarily removed content (e.g., **House Arrest**, May 2025) but re-uploaded unedited versions, while **ALTT** featured **distasteful scenes** without **contextual justification**.
- **Public outcry:** **Save Culture Save Bharat Foundation** and others, including **Uday Mahurkar**, criticized such content as a threat to **India's cultural heritage**.

Background and Actions

- **Prior warnings:** The **MIB** issued advisories, including one on **February 19, 2025**, urging compliance with **IT Rules, 2021's Code of Ethics**. In **March 2024**, **18 OTT platforms, 19 websites, 10 apps, and 57 social media handles** were blocked for similar violations.
- **Regulatory oversight:** The **Digital Publisher Content Grievances Council (DPCGC)**, a self-regulatory body with **40 OTT members**, had previously flagged **Ullu** and **ALTT**, ordering content edits or removals.
- **Consultation:** The ban was coordinated with the **Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Electronics and IT, Ministry of Women and Child Development, FICCI, CII, and women/child rights experts**.

Additional Info

- **Information Technology Act, 2000:** Governs **digital content**, with **Section 67** (obscene content) and **67A** (sexually explicit material) enabling content blocking.
- **IT Rules, 2021:** Mandate a **Code of Ethics** for OTT platforms, requiring **self-regulation, content classification, and grievance redressal**.
- **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR):** Established under the **CPCR Act, 2005**, it monitors **child safety**, flagging harmful digital content.
- **Banned Platforms:** Include **Big Shots App, Boomex, NeonX VIP, Navarasa Lite, Gulab, Kangan, Bull, Jalva, Wow Entertainment, Look Entertainment, Hitprime, Feneo, ShowX, Sol Talkies, Adda TV, HotX VIP, Hulchul, MoodX, Triflicks, and Mojflix**.

2008 Malegaon Blast Case: All Seven Accused Acquitted After 17 Years

What's New?

- On **July 31, 2025**, a **Special National Investigation Agency (NIA) Court in Mumbai** acquitted all seven accused in the **2008 Malegaon blast case**, including **former BJP MP Pragya Singh Thakur, Lt. Col. Prasad Shrikant Purohit, and retired Major Ramesh Upadhyay**, citing a lack of **reliable and cogent evidence** to warrant conviction. The verdict, delivered nearly 17 years after the **September 29, 2008**, blast, ended a high-profile trial marked by controversy and political debate.
- **Special Judge A.K. Lahoti** stated, "Terrorism has no religion, as no religion advocates violence. Judgments cannot be based on morals or public perception; there must be cogent evidence." The court criticized the **Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS)** for **procedural lapses** and found inconsistencies in the prosecution's case, granting the accused the **benefit of doubt**.
- The ruling sparked varied reactions: **BJP and JD(U)** welcomed it as a vindication, while **Congress, RJD**, and victims' families questioned the investigation's handling, with plans to appeal in the **Bombay High Court**.

What is the Malegaon Blast Case?

- **Incident:** On **September 29, 2008**, a low-intensity bomb strapped to an **LML Freedom motorcycle** exploded near **Bhiku Chowk**, a Muslim-majority area in **Malegaon, Maharashtra**, during **Ramzan** and just before **Navratri**. The blast killed **six people** and injured **over 100**, targeting a communally sensitive town to allegedly create **communal unrest**.
- **Accused:** Seven individuals faced trial: **Pragya Singh Thakur, Lt. Col. Prasad Purohit, Major (Retd) Ramesh Upadhyay, Ajay Rahirkar, Sudhakar Dwivedi, Sudhakar Chaturvedi, and Sameer Kulkarni**, charged under the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), Indian Penal Code (IPC), and Arms Act**.
- **Investigation:**
 - **Maharashtra ATS (2008–2011):** Initially led by **Hemant Karkare** (killed in the **26/11 Mumbai attacks**), the ATS alleged the blast was orchestrated by **Abhinav Bharat**, a right-wing group aiming to establish a **Hindu Rashtra (Aryavart)**. The motorcycle was traced to **Pragya Thakur**, and evidence included **call records and voice samples**.
 - **NIA (2011–2025):** Took over in **2011**, filing a **2016 charge sheet** that cleared **Thakur** and others due to **insufficient evidence**, but the court found **prima facie evidence** for trial. Of **323 witnesses, 34 turned hostile, and 26 died** before testifying.
- **Court findings:** The prosecution failed to prove the motorcycle belonged to **Thakur**, that **Purohit** sourced **RDX** or assembled the bomb, or that **Abhinav**

Bharat funded terrorism. **Financial transactions** were linked to personal use, not the blast.

Strategic and Political Implications

- **Legal impact:** The acquittal highlights **investigative flaws**, with the court noting **torture allegations** by accused like Thakur and **technical errors** in the ATS probe, raising questions about **national security** and **counter-terrorism efficacy**.
- **Political fallout:** The verdict has reignited debates over **"Hindu terror"**, with BJP's Ram Kadam calling it a "slap to Congress" for linking **Sanatan Hindu faith** to terrorism. RJD's Israil Mansuri questioned, "If all are acquitted, who was responsible?" fueling demands for accountability.
- **Community impact:** Victims' families, expecting justice for the **six deaths** (e.g., Farheen Shaikh, Irfan Khan), expressed disappointment and plan to appeal, citing **unresolved trauma** in Malegaon, a town with a history of communal tension (e.g., **2006 blasts**).

Additional Info

- **Malegaon's context:** A **textile hub** in **Nashik district**, Malegaon's **Muslim-majority population** made it a target for alleged **revenge attacks**, per ATS claims of **Abhinav Bharat's** anti-Muslim motives.
- **UAPA (1967):** A stringent anti-terror law invoked alongside **MCOCA** (dropped in **2017**) to prosecute the accused, but lack of evidence led to dropped charges.
- **Timeline:**
 - **October 2008:** Thakur and Purohit arrested; motorcycle traced.
 - **2018:** Trial began, charges framed.
 - **April 19, 2025:** Final arguments concluded; judgment reserved.
 - **July 31, 2025:** All accused acquitted.

NITI Aayog Presents India's Third Voluntary National Review on SDGs at UN Forum

What's New?

- On **July 23, 2025**, NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Suman Bery presented India's **Third Voluntary National Review (VNR)** on the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** at the **United Nations High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)** in **New York**, convened under the **UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**. The report showcased India's **whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach** to achieving the **2030 Agenda**.
- The VNR highlighted significant progress: **248 million people** escaped multidimensional poverty between **2013–14 and 2022–23**, **hunger** was addressed through schemes like **PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana**, and **health expenditure** reduced from **48.8%** (2017–18) to **39.4%** (2020–21) of out-of-pocket costs. India's **SDG India Index** and **North-Eastern Region District SDG Index** were praised as global models for **data-driven governance**.
- Posts on X reflected positive sentiment, noting India's transformation of SDGs into a **national**

movement within a decade, driven by **economic growth**, **infrastructure investment**, and **local commitment**.

What is the Voluntary National Review (VNR)?

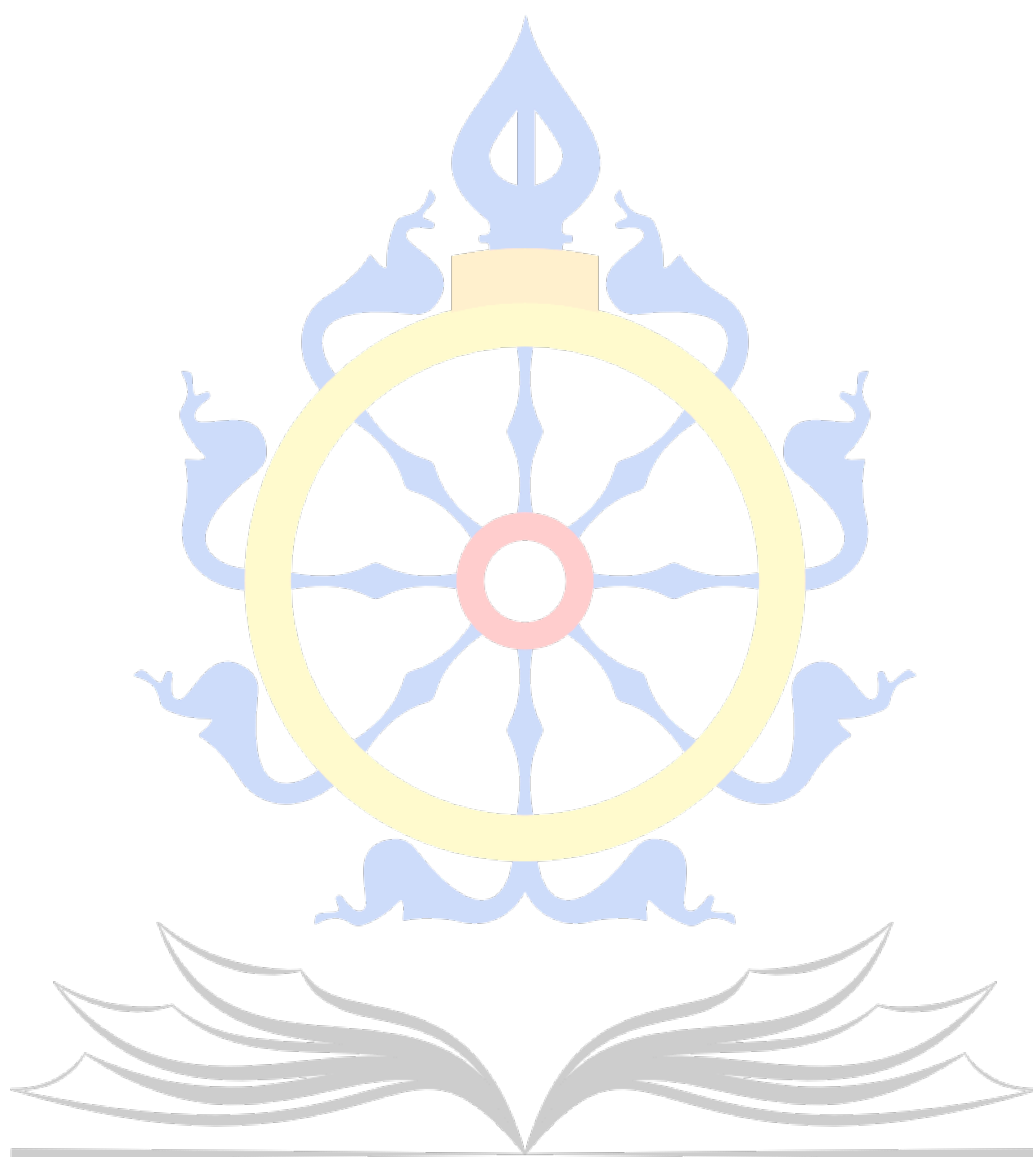
- **Overview:** The VNR is a **country-led, voluntary assessment** to track progress on the **17 SDGs** under the **2030 Agenda**, presented at the **HLPF** since **2016**. India's third VNR follows submissions in **2017** and **2020** ("Decade of Action: Taking SDGs from Global to Local").
- **Key highlights:**
 - **SDG 1 (No Poverty):** **248 million** escaped multidimensional poverty, per the **National Multi-dimensional Poverty Index**, driven by **rural housing** (e.g., **PM Awas Yojana**) and **sanitation** programs.
 - **SDG 2 (Zero Hunger):** **PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana** provided **free food grains** to **81 crore people**, ensuring nutritional security.
 - **SDG 3 (Good Health):** Out-of-pocket health expenditure dropped to **39.4%**, with **Ayushman Bharat** covering **50 crore people** for free healthcare.
 - **SDG 5 (Gender Equality):** Initiatives like **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao** and **Mudra Yojana** empowered women, with **70% of Mudra loans** disbursed to women entrepreneurs.
 - **SDG 13 (Climate Action):** India achieved **40% non-fossil fuel energy capacity** by **2024**, surpassing its **2030 target**.
- **Tools:** The **SDG India Index**, **NER District SDG Index**, and **City SDG Index** enable **local monitoring**, with **103 of 121 North-Eastern districts** classified as **Front Runners** in 2024.

Strategic Importance

- **Global leadership:** India, home to **one-sixth of humanity**, is pivotal to the **2030 Agenda's success**. Its **data-driven approach** and **localization** of SDGs set a benchmark for the **Global South**.
- **Economic impact:** Programs like **PM Ujjwala** (clean cooking fuel) and **Jal Jeevan Mission** (piped water) have driven **inclusive growth**, reducing poverty and boosting **rural economies**.
- **Challenges:** Addressing **regional disparities** (e.g., lagging states like **Bihar, Jharkhand**), scaling **climate finance**, and maintaining **data accuracy** for SDG monitoring.

Additional Info

- **NITI Aayog:** Established in **2015**, it replaced the **Planning Commission** to drive **policy innovation** and **SDG implementation**, coordinating with states and ministries.
- **HLPF:** The **UN's primary platform** for SDG review, held annually under **ECOSOC**, with India's VNRs showcasing progress since **2017**.
- **Context:** India's **SDG India Index 2023–24** reported progress in **13 of 17 SDGs**, with **poverty reduction** and **healthcare access** as standout achievements.



Social Issues

“Poverty Redefined” – India’s Sharp Decline in Extreme Poverty by the Numbers

What’s New?

- **India’s dramatic drop in poverty:** from **27.1% in 2011–12** to **5.3% in 2022–23** (or 2.3% at \$2.15/day), lifting an estimated **269–171 million people** out of **extreme poverty**.

Why It Matters

- **World-class poverty reduction:** India is now a “statistical outlier” in global poverty decline, surpassing expectations despite stricter **\$3/day poverty lines**.
- **Equitable progress:** Both **rural (18.4→2.8%)** and **urban (10.7→1.1%)** extreme poverty fell sharply, narrowing the rural-urban gap from **7.7 to 1.7 ppt**.
- **Broad-based gains:** Millions uplifted at the **\$3.65/day lower-middle poverty line**—from **61.8→28.1%**, benefiting ~378 million people.

Drivers of Change

- **Welfare schemes** (e.g., Ujjwala, PMAY, Ayushman Bharat), **cash transfers**, **financial inclusion**, **rural connectivity** and **labour reforms** form the backbone of inclusive growth.
- **Rising employment and wages**—women’s participation up; non-farm jobs surged—helped fuel poverty reduction.

Inequality Trends

- **Consumption-based Gini** improved from **28.8 to 25.5**, signaling modest reduction in inequality.
- Some studies suggest **near elimination of extreme poverty (<1%)** and steep drop in inequality (Gini ~29.1), but caution over new benchmarks persists.

Caveats & Critiques

- **Data comparability issues** due to methodology shifts (multi-visit surveys) and changing poverty thresholds.
- Debate persists on whether “extreme poverty” is nearly eradicated, or if deeper **relative poverty** and **multidimensional deprivation** should be assessed.

Additional Info

- States like **UP, Maharashtra, Bihar, West Bengal, and MP**—which initially held 65% of India’s extreme poor—contributed two-thirds of the total decline.
- **Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)** dropped from **53.8% (2005–06)** to **15.5% (2022–23)**.

Cooperatives: Driving Inclusive and Sustainable Solutions for a Better World

What’s New?

- **International Day of Cooperatives (CoopsDay)** falls on **Saturday, 5 July 2025**, marking the **103rd cooperative celebration** and the **31st UN-recognized event** since 1995.

- The **International Cooperative Alliance (ICA)** and the **UN Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC)** have declared the theme for this year:
- **“Cooperatives: Driving Inclusive and Sustainable Solutions for a Better World”**, aligning with the **UN’s International Year of Cooperatives 2025 (IYC2025)**.

Significance & Context

- Originating with the **International Cooperative Alliance in 1923**, CoopsDay was later endorsed by the **United Nations in 1995** and is now observed on the **first Saturday of July** each year.
- It celebrates the role of cooperatives in promoting **economic democracy**, **social inclusion**, **sustainable development**, and **environmental stewardship**.

Role of Cooperatives

- Cooperatives are **democratically governed enterprises**—owned and controlled by their members—serving their **economic, social, and cultural** needs.
- Active in sectors like **agriculture, finance, housing, retail, healthcare, energy, education**, and more, they employ **around 10% of the global workforce** with a focus on **equity, solidarity, and community development**.

2025 Theme & Initiative

- **Theme:** “Driving Inclusive and Sustainable Solutions for a Better World”—signifies cooperatives’ capacity to **tackle inequality, climate change, food insecurity, and job instability**.
- Linked to the **UN’s International Year of Cooperatives 2025**, emphasizing cooperatives as **key partners** in achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

Supreme Court Introduces Historic Reservation for SC, ST & OBC in Staff Recruitment

What’s New?

- On **June 24, 2025**, the **Supreme Court** issued an internal circular implementing **reservation quotas** in direct recruitment and promotions for **non-judicial staff** (registrars, assistants, attendants, etc.) for the first time in its history.
- **Reservations introduced:**
 - **15% for Scheduled Castes (SC)**
 - **7.5% for Scheduled Tribes (ST)**

Rule Change & OBC Inclusion

- On **July 3**, under Chief Justice of India **B.R. Gavai**, the Court amended its 1961 Staff Rules to include **OBC, Physically Challenged, Ex-Servicemen, and Freedom Fighter dependents**.

- The new **Rule 4A** aligns Court recruitment quotas with **Government of India norms**, applying central policies to its own vacancies.

Why It Matters

- Marks a key **institutional shift**, aligning the Supreme Court's internal practices with its long-standing support for **affirmative action** and **social justice**.
- Sets a **symbolic and practical precedent** for inclusion, encouraging other **high courts** and **public institutions** to follow suit.

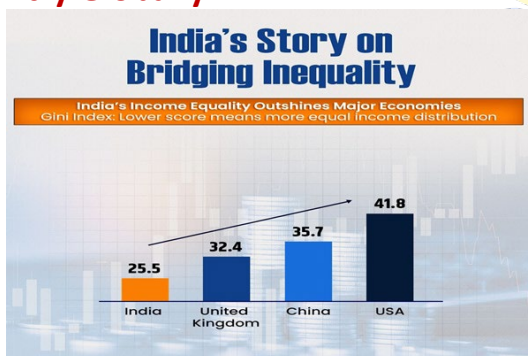
Background & Context

- Historically, SC/ST quotas in judiciary were absent in Court's own staff, even after being mandated in **1950s–60s**.
- The Court's roster now designates **1280 posts**; of which **191** are for SC and **93** for ST, with OBC to follow via amended rules.
- The OBC quota follows the **Indra Sawhney judgment (1992)** doctrine—**27% central quota** and **50% cap on total reservations**—and mirrors the **93rd & 103rd Constitutional Amendments**.

Additional Info

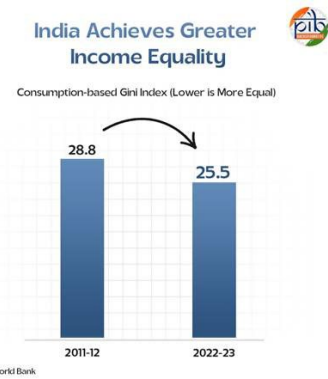
- Constitutional articles involved:**
 - Art. 146(2):** Authority of the CJI to amend Supreme Court service rules.
- Why quotas matter:**
 - SC/ST already have protection; **OBC and EWS** require compliance with “creamy layer” norms.
- Implementation process:**
 - Quota roster uploaded on **Supnet** (internal network); staff can raise objections to the Registrar (Recruitment).

India Rises to 4th Most Income-Equal Country Globally



What's New?

- India's Gini coefficient fell to **25.5** in **2022–23**, ranking it **4th most income-equal nation** in the world—behind only Slovakia (24.1), Slovenia (24.3), and Belarus (24.4).

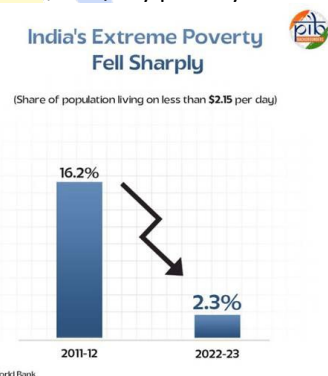


- This positions India above all **G7** and **G20** economies—including China (35.7) and the US (41.8)—per the **World Bank's Spring 2025 Poverty & Equity Brief**.



Why Equality Has Improved

- Extreme poverty** dropped from **16.2% (2011–12)** to just **2.3% (2022–23)**—about **171 million people** were lifted above the \$2.15/day poverty line.

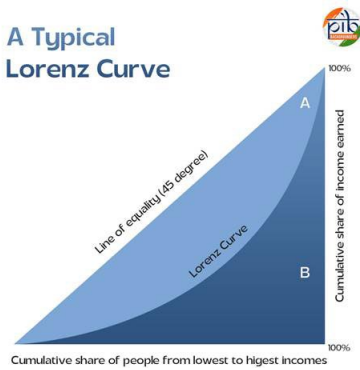


- Major welfare and reform initiatives contributed:
 - PM Jan Dhan Yojana**—55 crore bank accounts opened, enhancing **financial inclusion**.
 - Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT)** through Aadhaar, saving ₹3.48 lakh crore in leakage.
 - Ayushman Bharat** (41 crore cards), **PMGKAY** (80 crore beneficiaries), **Stand-Up India**, **PM Vishwakarma Yojana**, and other efforts targeting equity.

What the Gini Index Indicates

- Measures income distribution—**0 = perfect equality**, **100 = extreme inequality**.
- India moved from a “moderately low” category (28.8 in 2011) to **25.5**, nearing the “low inequality” zone.

A Typical Lorenz Curve



Additional Info

- NCSC is a **constitutional body** established in **2004** under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, with statutory authority defined under **Article 338**.
- Its core functions include **inquiries into rights violations, monitoring welfare schemes, advising governments, and submitting reports to the President** (annually or otherwise).
- NCSC comprises a **Chairperson and two members**, and has the power to conduct **spot visits and hearings** across India.

NCSC Submits 2023–24 Annual Report to President Murmu, Flags Crucial Scheduled Caste Issues

What's New?

- The **National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC)**, led by **Chairperson Arun Haldar**, submitted its **Annual Report 2023–24** to **President Droupadi Murmu** under **Article 338** of the Constitution—its first annual report after recent internal delays.
- The report highlights urgent challenges faced by SC communities and recommends **strengthened safeguards and accountability measures** to protect constitutional rights.

Key Issues Flagged

- The NCSC observed increased **atrocities, land dispossession, and caste-based violence**, especially in rural areas, urging stronger **law enforcement** and better **SC protection architecture**.
- It identified systemic shortfalls in the **implementation of SC welfare schemes**, recommending more robust monitoring, grievance systems, and data transparency.
- The Commission stressed improvement of **educational and employment avenues for SC communities**, including filling reservation vacancies in public services and educational institutions.

Recommendations Made

- **Enhanced accountability** for state governments in executing SC welfare schemes and protection protocols.
- Establishment of a **centralized grievance redressal mechanism**, fast-track courts for SC-related cases, and periodic compliance reviews.
- Tighter oversight of land rights violations with clear protocols for restitution and rehabilitation.

Why It Matters

- Under Article 338, NCSC enjoys a constitutional mandate to **investigate safeguards** and submit periodic reports—critical for maintaining **federal accountability**.
- The 2023–24 report reaffirms NCSC's role as a vital watchdog for SC rights, emphasizing that constitutional promises require **persistent scrutiny and enforcement**.
- It places corporate and government agencies on alert to ensure social justice remains a **functioning reality**, not just constitutional wording.

India's Population at a Crossroads, Not a Crisis—NFPI Emphasizes Rights & Dignity

What's New?

- On **July 11, 2025** (World Population Day), the **Population Foundation of India (PFI)** called for reframing population policy away from panic around overpopulation or fertility decline, and toward ensuring **justice, equity, and human potential**.
- PFI's Executive Director, **Poonam Muttreja**, described India's demographic scenario as a **crossroads**, not a crisis, urging policymakers to focus on reproductive autonomy, gender equality, and investment across life stages.

Key Messages

- **Gender Dividend:** Move beyond female sterilisation; promote a **basket of contraceptive choices** for both genders and shared responsibility in family planning.
- **Demographic Dividend:** With over **250 million youth**, India must **invest in education, skilling, reproductive health, and mental well-being**—especially for adolescent girls.
- **Silver Dividend:** By **2050**, nearly **20%** of India's population will be over 60—urgent need for elder care systems, pensions, healthcare, and age-friendly infrastructure to view older adults as contributors, not dependents.

Why It Matters

- India recently surpassed **China** with over **1.46 billion people**, and though Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has reached replacement level (~2.0), **population momentum** ensures continued growth for decades.
- There are **wide inter-state fertility variations**: TFR is below replacement in Kerala, Tamil Nadu (~1.4–1.6), but significantly above in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh (~2.7–3.0).
- Consequently, PFI urges **state-level, rights-based policy approaches** instead of national one-size-fits-all schemes.

Broader Context & World Trends

- Globally, World Population Day 2025 emphasises the balance between **declining fertility** and **ageing societies**, spotlighting "reproductive agency"—the ability to choose freely about childbearing.

- Across India, rallies (e.g., in Madurai) advocate **family planning**, responsible parenting, and reproductive health education.
- Experts in Bhubaneswar promote a shift from population control to **well-being**, prioritizing supportive policies like childcare, leave, and healthy ageing infrastructure.

Dowry Deaths in India: Alarming Statistics & Rare Convictions

What's New?

- Recent cases highlight that even serious allegations often lead to acquittals or ongoing legal limbo:
 - A **Delhi court** acquitted two relatives charged under **IPC 498A (cruelty)** and **304B (dowry death)** after the victim's mother withdrew support and no suicide note or clear evidence was presented.
 - In **Pune**, the postmortem of 24-year-old **Vaishnavi Hagawane** revealed **30 injuries**, reinforcing suspicions of dowry-related violence.

Statistics & Trends

- From April 2023, under the new **Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) 2023**, dowry death convictions jumped from **~32–35%** to **~42%** in 2024, and cruelty cases saw modest improvement as well.
- National trends are stark:
 - **Dowry deaths (IPC 304B)**: ~7,097 cases in 2023; ~6,845 in 2024; ~1,678 reported by Q1 2025.
 - **Cruelty (Section 85)**: ~1.52 lakh cases in 2024; ~38,756 in Q1 2025.
- Between **2017–2021**, India recorded an average of **~20 dowry deaths daily**, totalling **35,493 cases**. Highest numbers were in **Uttar Pradesh (~6/day)**, followed by **Bihar, MP, West Bengal, and Rajasthan**.
- In **Bengaluru**, cases fell from 60 (2011) to 20 (2024), but only **2.1%** resulted in convictions (13 out of 610 cases).

Why It Matters

- The **conviction rate remains dismally low** even as legal reforms take shape. Lengthy investigations, hostile witnesses, and acquittals undermine trust in enforcement.
- Social pressures and familial compromise often lead to case withdrawals, making prosecution ineffective.
- **New evidence laws** (digital records, CCTV, CDRs) are helping—but infrastructure and training gaps limit effectiveness in many regions.

for 7.6% of all suicide cases in India—a slight dip from 8.0% in 2021 and 8.2% in 2020.

- The figure equates to **one in 13 suicides** in India involving students, underscoring persistent mental health concerns.
- States such as **Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Madhya Pradesh** collectively contributed nearly one-third of student suicide cases, indicating regional concentration of the crisis.
- The **Education Minister of State**, in response to a Lok Sabha query, called for **multi-pronged measures**, including psychological support systems for students, their families, and educators.

India's Response: Initiatives & Institutional Actions

- **Manodarpan**, the Education Ministry's flagship mental health programme, has reached **lakhs of students** through counselling helplines, webinars, and interactive sessions.
- **District Mental Health Programme (DMHP)**—under the Health Ministry—now covers **767 districts**, offering suicide-preventive services along with **life-skills training** in schools and colleges.
- **Anti-drug campaigns** have been intensified in recognition of substance abuse as a key risk factor among youth.
- The **University Grants Commission (UGC)** has directed institutions to emphasise **physical fitness, emotional well-being, and student welfare** in campus policies.
- **IIT Madras, IIT Delhi, IIT Guwahati**, under the **Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Programme**, initiated **stress-management and resilience-building workshops** for students and educators.

Additional Information

- **NCRB & ADSI Report:**
 - Provides annual data on accidental deaths and suicides, including breakdown by profession, age, and occupation.
 - Student suicides reported as 7.6% of total in 2022.
- **Mental Health Care Act, 2017:**
 - Decriminalised suicide attempts (IPC Section 309).
 - Mandates free mental health services and rehabilitation for survivors.
- **National Suicide Prevention Strategy (Nov 2022):**
 - Multi-sectoral roadmap targeting a **10% reduction in suicide mortality by 2030**, aligned with **SDG 3.4.2**.
 - Education sector identified as key stakeholder for school-based awareness and gatekeeper training.
- **Youth Suicide Rates:**
 - Individuals aged **15–24** face the **highest suicide risk**; they account for **35% of total suicides**.
 - Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Madhya Pradesh frequently report higher student suicide counts, underlining geographic disparities.

Silent Crisis: Student Suicides in India Hold at 7.6% of Total in 2022

What's New?

- According to NCRB's *Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India (ADSI) 2022* report, **student suicides accounted**

India Leads with Highest Number of Slum Clusters in Flood-Prone Areas

What's New?

- A **July 2025 study** published in **Nature Cities** revealed that India has the **world's highest number of slum clusters** in flood-prone areas, with **over 158 million slum dwellers** (more than Russia's population) living in vulnerable settlements, primarily in the **Ganga river delta**.
- The study, analyzing **satellite imagery of informal settlements** across **129 low- and middle-income countries**, found that **33% of global slum clusters** (908,077 households, 445 million people) are in **floodplains**, with India leading in absolute numbers, followed by **Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Pakistan**.
- **Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri** emphasized ongoing efforts like the **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)**, which has sanctioned **1.18 crore houses** since **2015**, including **6 lakh slum households**, to provide **pucca houses** and reduce flood vulnerability.

What is the Issue?

- **Flood exposure:** Slum dwellers are **32% more likely** to settle in floodplains due to **lower land costs**, as seen in cities like **Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Kolkata**. The **Ganga delta** hosts the highest concentration, exacerbated by **monsoon flooding** and **poor drainage**.
- **Key findings:**
 - **Mumbai's Dharavi**, Asia's largest slum (**1 million residents, 2.1 sq km**), is highly flood-prone due to its **low-lying marshy location** and proximity to **railway lines**, making it a cheap but risky settlement.
 - **Kolkata's Basanti slum** (one-third of the city's population) faces recurrent flooding, worsened by **unhygienic conditions** and **infrastructure decay**, as seen post-Cyclone Amphan (**2020**).
 - **Bengaluru** has **570 slums** (20% of its population), with settlements like **Rajendra Nagar** vulnerable due to **encroachment** on natural drains and **poor urban planning**.
- **Causes:**
 - **Urbanization:** Rapid city expansion pushes slums into **floodplains**, as **gated communities** gentrify safer areas, displacing low-income groups.
 - **Infrastructure gaps:** **Stormwater drains** designed for **12–20 mm rainfall** are overwhelmed by **monsoon intensities** (e.g., **Mumbai: 868 mm in July**), worsened by **encroachments** and **solid waste dumping**.
 - **Climate change:** Rising **sea levels** (1.7 mm/year) and **extreme weather** increase flood risks in coastal slums like **Chennai's Nochikuppam**, hit by the **2004 tsunami** and **2015 floods**.

Strategic Importance

- **Humanitarian impact:** **600 million Indians** are at risk of **coastal or inland flooding**, with slum dwellers facing **loss of life, livelihoods, and disease outbreaks** (e.g., **cholera**) due to **poor sanitation**.
- **Government initiatives:**
 - **PMAY (Urban):** Aims to provide **housing for all by 2029**, with **1.18 crore houses** sanctioned, focusing on **in-situ rehabilitation** and **slum redevelopment**.
 - **Delhi's efforts:** **Rs 700 crore** allocated in the **2025 budget** for slum rehabilitation, ensuring **relocation** without eviction panic.
 - **Community solutions:** Proposals include **sanitation training, waste management, and drainage systems** to enhance resilience, alongside **participatory flood risk mapping** (e.g., **Mumbai's ALM approach**).
- **Global context:** The **Global South** houses **445 million slum dwellers** in flood-prone areas, with India's challenges mirrored in **Jakarta, Rio de Janeiro, and Rwanda**. The **UN SDG 11** (sustainable cities) urges **equitable flood adaptation**.

Additional Info

- **Slum population:** India's **6.5 crore slum dwellers** (2011 Census) have grown, with **Maharashtra** (**1.18 crore**) leading. **1 in 6 urban residents** live in slums with **unsanitary conditions**.
- **NDMA:** The **National Disaster Management Authority** issued **Urban Flooding Guidelines** post-**Mumbai 2005 floods**, advocating **widened natural drains** and **improved infrastructure**, but implementation lags.
- **Climate Risk Index:** India ranks among the **top 10 countries** for climate risks, with **coastal slums** facing **sea-level rise** and **cyclonic storms**.

India Explores Living Wage to Boost Women's Workforce Participation

What's New?

- On **July 28, 2025**, the **Ministry of Labour and Employment** announced plans to explore a **living wage** framework for India by **2026**, replacing the **minimum wage** system, as part of commitments made during the **46th International Labour Conference** in **Geneva** (June 2025). The initiative aims to ensure wages cover **basic needs** like food, housing, healthcare, and education, with a significant focus on increasing **female labour force participation rate (LFPR)**, currently at **32%** for women above 15 years, compared to **77.1%** for men, per the **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS, June 2025)**.
- The **International Labour Organization (ILO)** defines a living wage as income sufficient for a **decent standard of living**, unlike the minimum wage, which ensures a basic floor. The **Economic Survey 2024–25** highlighted that a living wage could help India achieve a **50%**

female LFPR, critical for **developed economy** status by **2047**.

- **Pooja Sharma Goyal**, CEO of **Udaiti Foundation**, noted that **54 state laws**, including outdated **night shift restrictions**, currently hinder women's workforce participation, though reforms are underway to remove these barriers.

What is the Living Wage Proposal?

- **Objective:** Shift from **minimum wage** (e.g., **Rs 178/day** for unskilled workers in some states) to a **living wage** that accounts for **regional cost-of-living variations**, ensuring workers can afford **nutrition, housing, healthcare, education, and savings**.
- **Key features:**
 - **Women-focused impact:** Women face **higher opportunity costs** (e.g., childcare, safety concerns), contributing to low LFPR. A living wage could boost participation by addressing **low pay** and **poor work culture**.
 - **Implementation:** The **Ministry of Labour** is collaborating with the **ILO** to develop a **methodology** by **2026**, incorporating **state-specific needs** and **inflation adjustments**. Pilot projects are planned in **urban hubs** like **Bengaluru** and **Delhi**.
 - **Economic Survey insights:** Higher wages could increase **consumption**, driving **GDP growth**, but may raise **labour costs** for businesses, requiring **subsidies** or **tax incentives** for MSMEs.

- **Significance:** Aligns with **UN SDG 8** (decent work and economic growth) and **Viksit Bharat 2047**, aiming to reduce **gender disparities** and boost **economic inclusion**.

Strategic Importance

- **Economic impact:** Raising female LFPR to **50%** could add **\$700 billion** to India's GDP by **2030**, per **McKinsey estimates**, by increasing women's **purchasing power** and **tax contributions**.
- **Social barriers:** Women face **mobility constraints, unsafe workplaces, and lack of affordable housing**. A living wage, combined with reforms like **night shift law relaxations** (e.g., **Karnataka, Haryana**), aims to address these.
- **Challenges:** Balancing **business costs** (especially for **MSMEs**), ensuring **state compliance**, and addressing **rural-urban wage disparities** to prevent urban migration.

Additional Info

- **PLFS (2025):** Reports **32% female LFPR** (urban: 23.7%, rural: 36.2%) and **77.1% male LFPR**, with women earning **20–30% less** than men in similar roles.
- **ILO:** Advocates for living wages globally, with India's commitment made under **ILO Convention 131** (Minimum Wage Fixing).
- **Context:** India's **gender wage gap** and **low female LFPR** lag behind peers like **China (60%)** and **Vietnam (68%)**, necessitating urgent reforms.



Empowerment

NESTS, UNICEF & Tata Motors Launch Multi-Pronged Tribal Youth Upliftment Programmes

What's New?

- **NESTS, UNICEF, and Tata Motors** have rolled out multiple initiatives targeting **tribal youth** education, skills, and career readiness—spanning **over 50,000 students** in EMRS schools across **28 states and 8 UTs**—under a **five-year partnership** launched today.
- The initiatives include:
 - **"TALASH" e-learning portal** by NESTS & UNICEF: supports life skills, self-esteem, 9–10 grade aptitude testing ("Tamanna"), and career guidance for tribal adolescents.
 - A **JEE/NEET coaching initiative** in partnership with Tata Motors and Ex-Navodaya Foundation—helping tribal students prepare for competitive exams.

Why It Matters

- **Bridges educational gaps** in tribal areas by offering holistic support—academics, psychological, and career-oriented.
- Aligns with NEP 2020 goals—emphasizing digital access, aptitude testing, and life skill development.
- Strengthens **public-private partnerships**: NESTS (Ministry of Tribal Affairs), UNICEF, Tata Motors, Ex-Navodaya—enhancing resources and reach.

Strategic Components

1. TALASH E-Portal

- Comprehensive digital platform offering:
 - Career modules ("500 Roads to Success")
 - Aptitude test ("Tamanna") for classes IX–X
 - Age-appropriate **Life Skills and Self-Esteem** content.

2. Competitive Exam Coaching

- JEE/NEET support through expert mentorship and resources, enabled by Tata Motors and Ex-Navodaya.

3. EMRS Scale & Governance

- NESTS currently oversees **477 EMRSs** with **~138,000 students** and over **9,075 staff**.
- These initiatives dovetail with NESTS' existing governance and staffing framework, offering scale for new programmes.

Additional Info

- NESTS was institutionalized in **2019**, aimed at quality tribal education through EMRS.
- Earlier initiatives included the **Amazon Future Engineer Programme**, training students in AI, coding, and block programming.
- Tata Motors' existing CSR arms—like **Automotive Skill Labs**—complement these new efforts and historic commitments to **employability and education**.

"Campus Guardians" – Odisha Launches 'Shaktishree' for Women's Safety

What's New?

- Odisha CM **Mohan Charan Majhi** launched **Shaktishree** on **19 July 2025**, a **comprehensive safety and empowerment initiative** for girl students across **16 state universities and 730 colleges**.
- The move follows the **Balasore college suicide**, allegedly due to sexual harassment, prompting public demands for campus safety reforms.

Campus Safeguards & Measures

- **Shaktishree Empowerment Cells:**
 - In each institution, led by a **female faculty and student coordinator** ("Shaktishree Sanyojika" and "Shaktishree Mate").
- **Mentorship Program:**
 - **Five senior women professionals** ("Shakti Apas") per district to mentor students quarterly.
- **Mobile App:**
 - Enables **anonymous complaints** (text/audio/video), **SOS emergency alerts**, **ICC contact**, and **Tele-MANAS counselling**.
- **Self-defence & Training:**
 - Regular **self-defence, gender sensitisation, POSH Act (2013)**, and **UGC Code of Conduct** awareness courses.
- **CCTV & Safety Audits:**
 - **24x7 CCTV**, annual security audits, campus safety reports due by **31 December annually**.
- **Awareness Campaigns:**
 - **SAFE** (Shaktishree Actions for Female Empowerment) held **bi-annually**; **Shakti Swarupini** training events for cells.

Why It Matters

- **Addresses gender-based violence on campuses:** Enhances prevention and redress mechanisms post Balasore incident.
- **Institutionalising safety:** Embeds **ICC protocols, helplines, and mandatory training** in higher education.
- **Empowerment beyond protection:** Mentorship, training, and app-based reporting reinforce **self-reliance, legal awareness, and mental well-being**.

Additional Info

- **POSH Act, 2013 & UGC Regulations, 2015:** legal mandates requiring ICCs in educational institutions and staff training.
- **Emergency helplines:** 181 (women), 112 (police), 1098 (child), plus **student helpline 18003456722** mandated on campuses.
- **District-level oversight:** DEOs directed by the Education Department to enforce measures, conduct regular checks, and submit compliance.

How National Sports Policy 2025 Empowers India's Athletes

What's New?

- Approved on **1 July 2025**, the **National Sports Policy (NSP) 2025** replaces the 2001 version, charting a vision to make India a **global sporting powerhouse** by the **2036 Olympics**.
- The policy marks a **historic shift** by embedding **sports science, evidence-based medicine, and AI-enabled performance analysis** at the core of athlete development.

Policy Pillars & What They Mean

- **Excellence on the Global Stage:**
 - Early talent spotting, structured leagues, stronger **National Sports Federations (NSFs)**, advanced coaching systems, and infrastructure upgrades.
 - Emphasis on **sports science, biomechanics, nutrition, injury prevention, mental conditioning, and rehabilitation hubs**.
- **Sports for Economic & Social Development:**
 - Promotion of **sports tourism**, support for **start-ups** and **public-private partnerships**, and mass participation initiatives.
- **People's Movement & Fitness Culture:**
 - Integration with **NEP 2020, fit India**, and school sports. Encourages sports as part of daily life and holistic education.
- **Technology & Governance Reform:**
 - Data-driven monitoring (KPI-based), AI platforms, dashboards, and performance analytics for transparency and accountability.

Athlete-Centric Innovation in Action

- Latest **policy article by sports orthopaedic surgeon Dinshaw Pardiwala** highlights features like:
 - **Injury surveillance systems**, layered medical teams across major training hubs (SAI centers and National Centers of Excellence).
 - **Performance analytics labs**, recovery rooms, mental health support, and multidisciplinary teams including data scientists.
 - An **innovation task force**, research grants, and academic collaborations to produce India-specific sports tech solutions.

Policy Ecosystem & Related Developments

- **Governance reforms:** Draft **National Sports Governance Bill 2025**, introduced in Lok Sabha on **23 July**, is set to regulate NSFs (including BCCI), enforce safe-sport protocols, and establish grievance redressal via tribunals.
- **Grassroots to elite pipelines:** Initiatives like **Khelo India, TOPS (Target Olympic Podium Scheme), Bharatiya Khel**, and **Special Area Games Scheme (SAG)** continuously feed the system.
- **League culture boost:** Government support for **13 multi-city franchise-based leagues**, including shooting

league launches, is professionalizing sports beyond cricket.

Real-World Challenges & Community Voices

- **Winter sport neglect** highlighted by Shiva Keshavan calls for NSF recognition and support under the new policy.
- **Access inequities:** Athletes and coaches criticize new stadium entry fees in Bengaluru that exclude underprivileged talent.
- **Grassroots scouting gap:** Reddit users emphasize the urgency to scout rural, tribal talent beyond urban tournaments.

Additional Info

- The **NSP 2025** build on prior governance frameworks like the **NSDC 2011** and the **Good Governance Sports Code 2017**, seeking to heal past pitfalls.
- The **Wrestling Federation case restoration** underscores how administrative disruptions can affect medal pipelines in multi-sport events.
- Efforts to make sports more inclusive extend to addressing **LGBTQ+ participation**, traditional games revival, and equitable state-level investment.

PMKVY 4.0: Over 20 Lakh Youth Trained in FY 2024-25

What's New?

- The **Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE)** reported that **over 20 lakh youth** were trained under **PMKVY 4.0** in the **2024–25 financial year**.
- **Top-performing states:** Uttar Pradesh trained **4.63 lakh**, Rajasthan **2.79 lakh**, and Madhya Pradesh **2.58 lakh** candidates.
- Placement tracking under earlier phases (PMKVY 1.0–3.0) showed a **43% placement rate** among certified candidates.
- **Independent evaluations** revealed:
 - RPL-certified trainees earned **~19% higher monthly income**
 - STT participants earned **~15% more** than non-participants.
- The **Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH)** has been launched to connect skilling, employment, education, and entrepreneurship domains, including organizing **Rozgar Melas**.

Background & Key Developments

- **PMKVY**, flagship under **Skill India Mission**, began in **2015–16**. With phases 1.0, 2.0, 3.0, it has skill-certified over **1.6 crore** individuals so far.
- As of **July 11, 2025**, **over 25 lakh trainees** have been trained under **PMKVY 4.0**.
- Scheme has expanded from core industries like manufacturing and IT to **new-age sectors — AI, robotics, drones, IoT**, and more.
- Inclusivity is high: nearly **45% female participation** and strong representation of **SC/ST/OBC** communities.

Additional Info

- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY):**

- Launched **15/16 July 2015**, aims to certify youth via **Short Term Training (STT)** and **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**.
- **Skill India Mission (SIM):**
 - Launched **15 July 2015** by PM Modi; goal to train **30–40 crore people by 2022**.
- **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC):**
 - Set up in **2008** as a **public-private partnership**, coordinated via MSDE to support training infrastructure and quality assurance.
- **Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH):**
 - A central digital ecosystem linking **skilling, jobs, education, entrepreneurship** and hosting **Rozgar Melas** for employer-jobseeker interaction.

- **Financial Inclusion:** Expands access to **insurance schemes**, providing a **financial shield** in **disaster-affected areas** and promoting **social security**.
- **Impact:** Over **20 crore people** insured under related schemes, with **Rs 20,000 crore** in claims disbursed, highlighting the scale of India's **insurance outreach**.
- **Community Trust:** Bima Sakhis leverage **local knowledge** to make insurance accessible, especially in **underserved areas**.

Bima Sakhi Yojana: Empowering Rural Women Through Insurance

What's New?

- The **Bima Sakhi Yojana**, launched on **December 9, 2024**, in **Panipat, Haryana**, by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**, aims to empower rural women and achieve **Insurance for All by 2047**.
- The **Ministry of Rural Development** and **Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC)** signed an **MoU** to train **Self-Help Group (SHG)** women as **Bima Sakhis**, who will promote **financial literacy** and **insurance awareness** at the **Gram Panchayat** level.
- Over **2 lakh women** have enrolled, with a goal to create **2 crore Lakhpati Didis** (women earning **Rs 1 lakh/year**) by **August 15, 2025**, aligning with **SDG 5 (Gender Equality)** and the **Lakhpati Didi Mission**.

What is the Bima Sakhi Yojana?

- A scheme to train women aged **18–70 years** (minimum **Class X pass**) as **insurance agents** for **LIC**, focusing on **rural and semi-urban areas**.
- Key features:
 - **Training:** Specialized programs to enhance **financial literacy** and **insurance knowledge**.
 - **Stipend:** Provided for the first **three years** to support Bima Sakhis.
 - **Career Path:** Post-training, Bima Sakhis can become **LIC agents**, with graduates eligible for **Development Officer** roles after **five years**.
 - **Role:** Act as **grassroots ambassadors**, raising awareness and delivering **trust-based insurance services** to rural families.
- Aligns with **Viksit Bharat** (Developed India by 2047), **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** (Self-Reliant India), and schemes like **Jan-Dhan Se Jan Suraksha** and **Digital India**.

Strategic Importance

- **Women Empowerment:** Enables **financial independence** for SHG women, supporting the **Lakhpati Didi Mission** to create **2 crore women entrepreneurs**.

NALSA's Veer Parivaar Sahayata Yojana: Legal Aid for Defence Families

What's New?

- On **July 26, 2025**, the **National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)** launched the **Veer Parivaar Sahayata Yojana 2025** in **Srinagar**, during the **North Zone Regional Conference** on "Reaffirming the Constitutional Vision of Justice for Defence Personnel and Tribals" at the **Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC)**.
- Launched in collaboration with the **High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh** and the **J&K Legal Services Authority**, the scheme aims to provide **free legal aid** to **defence personnel**, including **soldiers, paramilitary forces** (e.g., **BSF, CRPF, CISF, NDRF**), and their families, addressing issues like **land disputes, service entitlements, and matrimonial cases**.
- The initiative, unveiled on **Kargil Vijay Diwas**, was presided over by **Justice Surya Kant, Supreme Court Judge** and **NALSA Executive Chairman**, who emphasized it as a "solemn pledge" to support those protecting India's borders.

What is the Veer Parivaar Sahayata Yojana?

- A **legal aid scheme** to ensure **accessible justice** for defence personnel and their families, addressing their unique challenges due to **remote postings** and **limited leave time**.
- **Three pillars:**
 - **Legal Services Clinics:** Established at **Zilla, Rajya, and Kendriya Sainik Boards** to provide **localized support**.
 - **Trained Personnel:** **Nodal officers, legal aid counsels, and paralegal volunteers** (including **ex-servicemen**) for compassionate and timely assistance.
 - **Digital Access:** **e-Lok Adalats** and **online mediation** to ensure **speedy resolution** of cases, minimizing delays.
- **Objective:** Fulfill **Article 39A** of the **Constitution**, which mandates **equal access to justice**, ensuring **dignity** and **rights** for defence families.

Strategic and Regional Context

- **Significance:** The scheme addresses **legal hurdles** faced by defence personnel, such as **land disputes** in rural areas or **pension issues**, which are complicated by their **frequent relocations** and **service conditions**.
- **Endorsements:**
 - **Union Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal** (Law and Justice) praised the scheme for aligning with

the government's push for **inclusive justice** and **digital empowerment**.

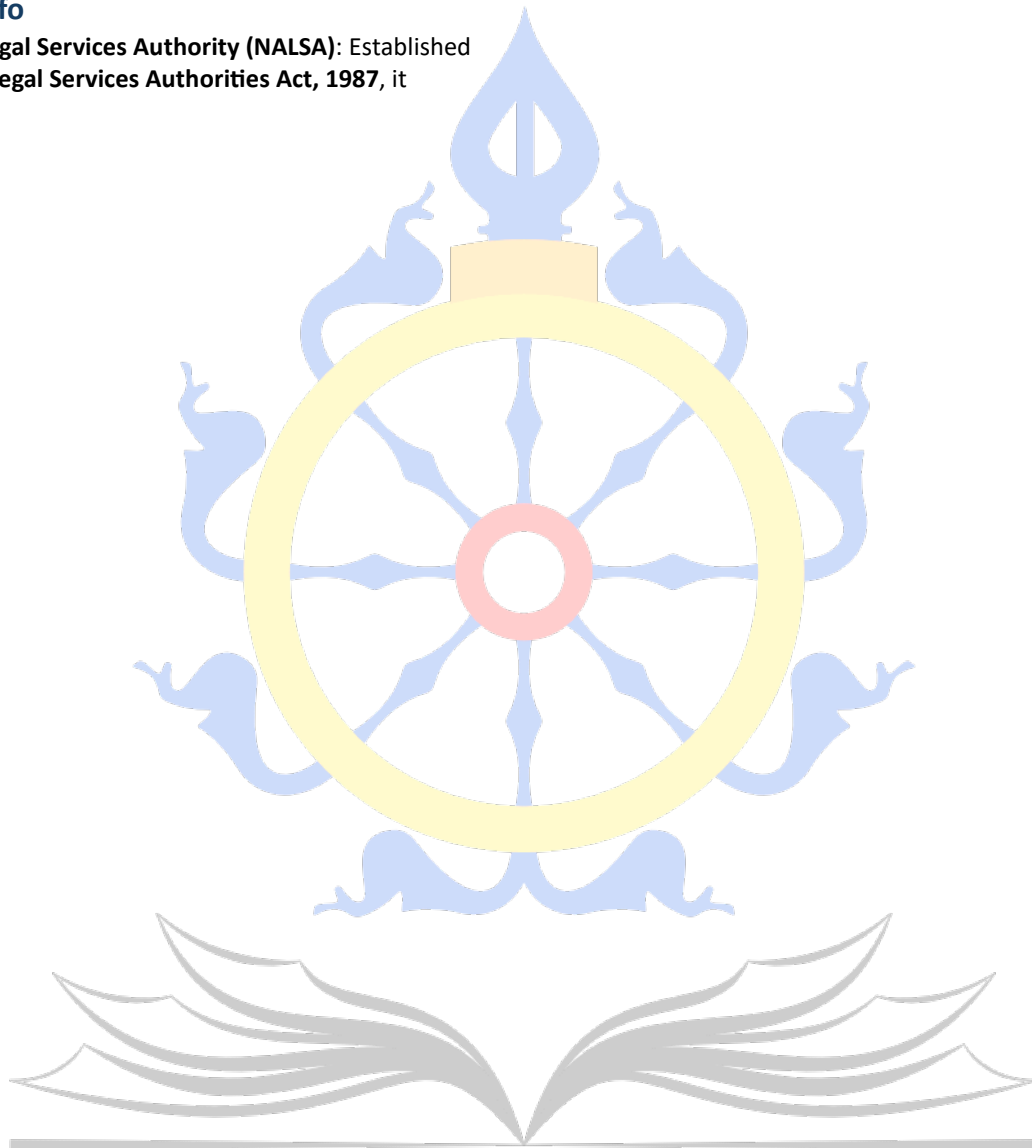
- **J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah** highlighted its role in supporting soldiers in **challenging terrains** like **J&K** and **Ladakh**.
- **J&K High Court Chief Justice Arun Palli** emphasized **judiciary-led tech interventions** to fast-track cases, ensuring **minimal disruption** to soldiers' leave.
- **Impact in J&K:** Over **12,000 people** benefited from **J&K Legal Services Authority** schemes in 2025, with the new yojana enhancing support for **soldiers** and **tribal communities**.

Additional Info

- **National Legal Services Authority (NALSA):** Established under the **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987**, it

provides **free legal aid** to marginalized groups, with **State** and **District Legal Services Authorities** implementing programs.

- **Article 39A:** A **Directive Principle of State Policy** in the **Constitution**, mandating **free legal aid** to ensure **equal justice** for all citizens.
- **J&K Legal Services Authority:** Coordinates legal aid in **Jammu and Kashmir**, with **Justice Sindhu Sharma** as **Executive Chairperson** for **Ladakh**.
- **Kargil Vijay Diwas:** Observed on **July 26**, it marks India's victory in the **1999 Kargil War**, making the scheme's launch symbolically significant.



Environment

“RECLAIM & Restore” – Coal Ministry Launches Inclusive Mine Closure Framework

What’s New?

- Coal and Mines Minister **G. Kishan Reddy** unveiled the **RECLAIM framework**—a structured, community-centric initiative for **inclusive mine closure and post-closure redevelopment**.
- Developed by the **Coal Controller Organisation** alongside the **Heartfulness Institute**, RECLAIM emphasizes strong **community engagement**, gender inclusion, and collaboration with **Panchayati Raj institutions**.

Why It Matters

- **Just & equitable transition:** Ensures that **miners, families, and local communities** are not sidelined but actively involved in planning and implementation.
- **Female and vulnerable representation:** Women and other marginalized groups are provided space in decision-making, ensuring socially inclusive outcomes.
- **Sustainable land reuse:** Aims to repurpose mine lands for **eco-parks, solar farms, agriculture, fisheries, tourism**, and other revenue-generating uses.

Historical & Institutional Background

- For over a decade, MoC has prepared a nationwide mine closure plan under the **Just Transition** principle, consulted with bodies like **World Bank** and **GIZ**, and crafted guidelines for reclamation, land use, and community welfare.
- Previous efforts involved:
 - **Phase–1:** Mapping coal regions, socio-environmental assessments, legal review.
 - **Phase–2:** Implementation through Special Purpose Entities (SPEs) and multi-disciplinary teams, aiming to leave no one behind.

Local Empowerment

- RECLAIM integrates **village communities**, including PRIs, in shaping post-closure land use.
- Places strong emphasis on **gender and vulnerable group inclusion**, ensuring equitable benefits and representation.

Environmental & Economic Mixed Use

- Reclaimed land will be developed into **eco-parks, forestry zones, solar/wind energy sites, tea/fruit orchards, fisheries, sports zones, tourist spots**, and even **warehouse/logistics hubs**.
- These diversified uses are intended to generate **local employment** and support regional economies beyond the lifespan of mines.

Additional Info

- RECLAIM sits alongside the **National Mineral Policy 2008** and its thrust on **sustainable development and scientific mine closure**.
- India pioneered formal mine closure rules in **2009** (revised 2013), yet legacy closed mines across

states—especially Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh—await systematic reclamation.

- Existing **Coal PSUs and state bodies** have already created **eco-parks and green zones** on reclaimed land, testing repurposing models.

“Pricing the Planet” – Carbon Pricing & India’s Climate Strategy

What’s New?

- India is **accelerating its carbon pricing ecosystem** with the formal launch of the **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS)** in July 2024, aimed to evolve into a full-fledged **rate-based Emissions Trading System (ETS)** by **2025–26**.
- The ETS will initially cover **nine energy-intensive sectors** (e.g., cement, steel, power), setting performance benchmarks and enabling **tradeable carbon credit certificates (CCCs)** for efficient emitters.
- India is also rolling out a **voluntary carbon market**, issuing CCCs for green activities like **renewable energy, green hydrogen, and afforestation**, regulated under the **Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2022**.

Why It Matters

- **Climate goals alignment:** Supports India’s commitment to reduce **emissions intensity by 45% by 2030** and achieve **net-zero by 2070**, under its revised **NDCs**.
- **Bridging policy gaps:** Transitions from legacy schemes like **PAT and RECs** to a unified **market-based carbon framework**—a flexible alternative to cap-based ETS.
- **Global integration:** Positions India alongside emerging markets like Brazil and Türkiye in adopting carbon pricing tools, and responds proactively to global trends like the **EU’s CBAM**.

CCTS & ETS Architecture

- **Rate-based mechanism:** Entities are assessed on **emission intensity benchmarks**, not fixed caps, suiting India’s growing industrial context.
- **Phased sector coverage:** Started with nine sectors; targets expanding to include difficult-to-decarbonize industries like thermal power and agriculture.
- **Regulatory framework:**
 - **Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2022** empowers carbon credit issuance.
 - **NSCICM** under MoP oversees market;
 - **BEE** handles technical administration;
 - **Grid Controller (GCI)** and **CERC** act as registries and trading regulators.

Voluntary Market & Green Finance

- Voluntary offsetting enables private entities to generate carbon credits through sustainability projects—expected to stimulate investment in **green hydrogen, clean cooking, forest restoration**.
- Offers new **green finance opportunities**, including carbon verification agencies, eco-advisory services, and

employment in climate tech—estimated to create **200,000+ jobs**.

Challenges & Policy Roadmap

- **Implementation delays:** ETS launch postponed to 2025–26 with coverage still limited (~30% of national emissions), risking delayed compliance.
- **Design complexity:** Success hinges on clear emission targets, data accuracy, market stability (floors/ceilings), and inclusion of power/agriculture sectors.
- **Global trade impact:** With EU's CBAM rolling out in 2026, robust carbon pricing can buffer Indian exporters from border tariffs.

Additional Info

- **International comparisons:** India joins cap-based (EU, China) and rate-based (Indonesia) emerging economies opting for carbon pricing.
- **Legacy tools:** The shift from **PAT**, **Escerts**, and **RECs** ensures continuity in behavioral change while moving toward decarbonization.
- **Net-zero roadmap:** This marketplace approach underpins India's broader climate commitments—45% intensity reduction by 2030 and net-zero by 2070.

GCF & ADB Launch \$200 Million India Green Finance Facility (IGFF)

What's New?

- The **Green Climate Fund (GCF)** has approved **USD 200 million** at its **42nd Board meeting (July 1, 2025)** for the **India Green Finance Facility (IGFF)**—an ADB-led blended-finance initiative aimed at mobilizing large-scale public and private investments in India's emerging clean-energy sectors.
- This marks the **first GCF–ADB collaboration in India**, focused on unlocking funds through national **Development Finance Institutions (DFIs)**.

Why It Matters

- Aims to **decarbonize hard-to-abate sectors**—industry, agriculture, transport—beyond conventional solar and wind, by enabling **round-the-clock renewables, green hydrogen, compressed biogas, electric transport, and decentralized renewables**.
- Establishes a **\$65 million Risk-Sharing Facility**, providing partial credit guarantees to **derisk small/mid-sized projects**, especially in **compressed biogas**, enhancing bankability.

How It Works

- **Structure:** GCF (USD 187 m loan + USD 13 m grant) together with ADB funding will channel **lines of credit via DFIs** for private/public sector clean-energy projects.
- **Focus Areas:**
 - **RTC renewables** (solar + storage),
 - **Green hydrogen** production,
 - **Compressed biogas** in rural/industrial uses,
 - **Electric transport infrastructure**,
 - **Decentralized renewables** for rural empowerment.
- Includes **technical assistance** for DFIs to mainstream gender-responsive green lending practices.

Policy & Strategic Context

- Supports India's **net-zero by 2070 target**, diversifying beyond solar/wind, and addressing gaps in financing innovative technologies.
- Complements India's ongoing clean-energy push through schemes like PM-KUSUM, Green Hydrogen Mission, and PLI incentives.
- Reinforces multilateral cooperation, as ADB renewed access to GCF funds via the 2023 Accreditation Master Agreement.

Additional Info

- **Green Climate Fund (GCF):** Largest climate fund under the **UNFCCC**, working on mitigation and adaptation in developing nations; total portfolio reached ~\$18 bn after recent approvals.
- **Asian Development Bank (ADB):** Established in 1966, supports sustainable infrastructure; in 2023, 8% of GCF projects were ADB-led.
- **Development Finance Institutions (DFIs):** India-based DFIs like **IREDA, NABARD**, act as intermediaries to channel credit to sustainable projects.
- **Blended Finance Model:** Combines concessional capital with market resources to mobilize private investment by reducing perceived risks.

India Surpasses China in Biofuel Use for Second Straight Year

What's New?

- In **2024**, India became the **fourth-largest biofuel consumer globally—overtaking China** for the **second consecutive year**—with consumption jumping **40% to around 77,000 barrels per day (bpd)**, according to the World Biofuel Outlook.
- While India's **domestic biofuel production** also surged (~27%), China retained the overall lead in production with **106,000 bpd** compared to India's **70,000 bpd**.

Why It Matters

- Biofuels help **reduce reliance on fossil fuels**, lower **carbon emissions**, and support **energy security**.
- India's aggressive ethanol blending—under its **Ethanol Blending Programme (EBP)**—and push into biodiesel reflect its commitment to clean energy and its **2030 climate goals**.

India's Biofuel Landscape

- **Ethanol:**
 - Ethanol blending hit **11.5 – 12%** in 2024, up from **E-10 in 2022**, meeting and edging beyond the **E-12 target**.
 - **Ethane production** reached **6.35 billion liters**, with consumption around **6.2 BL**, financed through sugarcane-based feedstocks.
- **Biodiesel:**
 - Despite a **5% blending target by 2030**, current mix remains low (~**0.16%**), though production rose modestly to **226 million liters** in 2024.
 - Feedstock source shifted from **jatropha to used cooking oil (UCO)**, animal fats, and non-edible oils.

Strategic Drivers & Future Outlook

- **Feedstock diversification:** Use of **multi-feedstock distilleries**, tapping molasses, grains, maize, rice, and agricultural residue.
- **2G/3G biofuels:** Scaling up cellulosic ethanol production via biomass; 12 second-generation refineries planned.
- **Global biofuel alliance:** India championed the G20-endorsed **Global Biofuels Alliance** (with Brazil & USA), driving technology transfer and standards.
- **Market projections:** The **biofuel market** in India valued at **USD 5.8 billion in 2024**, expected to grow to **USD 9.9 billion by 2033** (CAGR ~6%).

India to Introduce “Battery Passport” for EVs

What’s New?

- India is preparing to roll out a **Battery Passport** system for electric vehicles (EVs), embedding key details like **origin, composition, performance, lifecycle**, and **supply chain data** in a **unique QR code** on each battery.
- **NITI Aayog** has initiated consultations with various ministries to develop the framework.

Why It Matters

- **Safety & Quality Assurance:** Prevents hazardous practices like mixing cells of different vintages, which can affect performance and cause fires—recent EV battery fires prompted the need for stricter norms.
- **Export Potential:** Enhances **EV export competitiveness** by aligning with global safety standards and boosting consumer confidence.
- **Supports Battery-Swapping Policy:** Enables users to retrieve battery history by scanning the QR code—critical for forthcoming swapping infrastructure.

How It Works

- Each battery receives a **digital identity**, like an “Aadhaar for batteries,” stored in a secure central database.
- Scanning the QR code provides full access to the battery’s **manufacturing date, health records, performance metrics, and recycling traceability**.
- Concept influenced by the **EU battery passport framework**, starting February 2027 for batteries >2 kWh—India’s model will align with these standards.

Global & Industrial Context

- Internationally, automakers like **Volvo (EX90)** and platforms backed by the **Global Battery Alliance** use battery passports to trace materials, confirm carbon footprint, and support second-life usage.
- The EU mandates these passports under its **Battery Regulation** from 2027 to boost transparency and sustainability.
- The broader vision includes fostering **circular economies**, efficient recycling, and improved resale transparency.

India Launches First-Ever Incentives for Electric Trucks under PM E-DRIVE

What’s New?

- On **July 11, 2025**, Union Minister **H D Kumaraswamy** announced the launch of India’s **first customer-facing incentive scheme** for **electric trucks** under the **PM E-DRIVE** initiative, earmarking **₹500 crore** for this purpose.
- Incentives of up to **₹9.6 lakh per vehicle** will be provided directly to OEMs and fleet operators, supported by a total PM E-DRIVE budget of **₹10,900 crore**.

Salient Features & Eligibility

- Applicability to **N2 (3.5–12 t)** and **N3 (>12 t)** class e-trucks, with incentives applied only to the puller tractor for articulated N3 vehicles.
- **Mandatory scrappage** of older diesel trucks with valid MoRTH certificate to qualify for incentives, supporting fleet modernization.
- A **dedicated quota of 1,100 e-trucks** and approx. **₹100 crore** earmarked specifically for Delhi to tackle pollution.

Strategic Impact

- Aims to **reduce diesel truck emissions**, which currently constitute ~42% of transport-sector GHG emissions despite being just 3% of vehicles.
- Triggers the adoption of e-trucks in key industries—steel, logistics, ports—highlighted by **SAIL’s procurement commitment of 150 e-trucks**.
- Promotes **clean freight mobility**, aligning with India’s **net-zero 2070 target** and supporting **Viksit Bharat 2047** vision.

Policy Framework & Infrastructure Support

- The scheme is integrated into PM E-DRIVE, which also supports **e-2W, e-3W, e-buses, and e-ambulances**, and provides **₹2,000 crore** for charging infrastructure and **₹780 crore** for testing facilities.
- Incentives will be distributed through a digital **e-voucher system** with Aadhaar-based verification, ensuring transparent, first-come-first-served allocation.

Environment Ministry Updates Islands Protection Zone (IPZ) Rules

What’s New?

- On **July 4, 2025**, the **Environment Ministry** amended the **Island Protection Zone Notification, 2011**, to align with the **EIA Notification, 2006**.
- Under the new rules:
 - **IPZ clearances** for projects in **Andaman & Nicobar** and **Lakshadweep** are now valid for **10 years** (previous validity: 5 years), with a possible **1-year extension**.
 - Introduced provisions for **project transferability** and **splitting** of clearances across multiple entities.

- Allowed a **90-day grace period** for filing delays post-pandemic (April 2020–March 2021).

Why It Matters

- **Greater certainty** enables infrastructure developers to manage long-term planning and investments.
- **Transaction flexibility**—through transfer and splitting—facilitates JV structures in major projects.
- **Pandemic relief** ensures COVID-induced delays are not penalized.

Background: IPZ Framework

- **IPZ 2011** was designed to protect the unique coastal ecosystems of remote islands, preserving high-biodiversity areas and supporting tribal livelihoods.
- The **2019 revision** aligned IPZ with Coastal Regulation Zone norms, permitting **eco-tourism, roads**, and controlled economic activity within 20–50 m of the High Tide Line.

Additional Context

- IPZ safeguards islands up to the **High Tide Line (HTL) + 100–200 m**, depending on island size.
- EIA 2006 alignment standardizes environmental clearance across island and mainland zones, ensuring consistent **impact assessment norms**.
- The **10-year clearance tenure** is now comparable to larger Environmental Clearances, reducing periodic renewals.

India Achieves 50% Non-Fossil Fuel Power Capacity

What's New?

- Union Minister **Pralhad Joshi** announced that India has hit the milestone of **50% installed power capacity from non-fossil fuel sources** as of **July 2025**—five years ahead of its **2030 Paris Agreement** commitment.
- Non-fossil capacity now stands at **242.8 GW** out of a total **484.8 GW**.

Why It Matters

- Represents a major shift in energy policy under PM Modi's "**Green Leap**," showcasing strong adoption of **solar, wind, hydro, biomass, and nuclear power**.
- Despite this, **coal-fired generation** remains dominant—accounting for over two-thirds of actual electricity production, indicating a gap between capacity and utilization.
- The rapid capacity addition marks the **fastest growth since 2022**, with India adding nearly **28 GW** in 2024 and **16.3 GW** in early 2025.

Broader Context & Ongoing Plans

- India aims for **500 GW non-fossil capacity by 2030**, encompassing **hydro, solar, wind, bioenergy, and nuclear**.
- Key government initiatives in play: **PM-KUSUM, Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana, Solar Parks, Wind-Solar Hybrid Policy**, and bioenergy investments.
- To balance intermittent green energy, India is actively investing in **battery storage, component recycling**, and the production of **green hydrogen**.

Challenges Ahead

- **Coal still powers most electricity:** In 2024, coal produced **1,517.9 TWh**, while renewables contributed just **240.5 TWh**.
- **Grid integration and financial stress** on state utilities continue to hamper renewable activation.
- New coal capacity (~80 GW planned by 2032) underscores ongoing reliance on fossil fuels to meet demand.

NHAI's Green Milestones: Sustainability Report 2023–24

What's New?

- The **National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)** has released its **second Sustainability Report (FY 2023–24)**, showcasing eco-friendly infrastructure and social governance efforts.
- Union Minister **Nitin Gadkari** unveiled the report, which ties into India's climate goals and the **Mission LiFE** campaign.

Major Highlights

- **Reduced Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Intensity**
 - Despite a **20% surge** in new highway construction, GHG emissions intensity dropped from **1.0 to 0.8 MTCO₂e/km**.
- **Circular Economy Practices**
 - Over **631 lakh tonnes** of materials (fly-ash, plastic, reclaimed asphalt) were recycled in FY 2023–24.
- **Green Highways & Eco-Plantations**
 - **56 lakh saplings** planted in FY 2023–24, followed by **67.5 lakh** in early FY 2024–25—over **4.69 crore trees** now enrich the highway network.
- **Water Body Rejuvenation**
 - Under **Amrit Sarovar**, **467 water bodies** rejuvenated; **2.4 crore m³** of excavated soil reused in highway projects, saving around **₹16,690 crore**.
- **Wildlife Conservation Passages**
 - Highways include **wildlife corridors, noise buffers, and underpasses** to mitigate habitat fragmentation and animal-vehicle conflicts.
- **Occupational Health, Diversity & Inclusion**
 - **100% workforce** under health and safety protocols. No workplace discrimination reported; marked improvements in gender and minority representation.
- **Technology & Efficiency Enhancements**
 - Tools like **Data Lake 3.0** enabled quicker dispute resolution (₹25,680 crore saved across 155 cases).
 - **FASTag adoption** at 98.5% minimizes idling emissions.

Why It Matters

- Demonstrates NHAI's success in **decoupling growth from carbon emissions**—a crucial step towards sustainable infrastructure.

- Circular and cost-saving strategies showcase **green financing potential** for future highway projects.
- Enhances **biodiversity conservation** and supports **Mission LiFE** objectives across rural and urban India.

Cabinet Clears ₹7,000 Crore Special Exemption for NLCIL's Green Energy Push

What's New?

- On **July 16, 2025**, the **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)** approved a **₹7,000 crore** investment by **NLC India Ltd (NLCIL)** into its subsidiary **NLC India Renewables Ltd (NIRL)**—without prior government approvals previously mandated for Navratna PSUs.
- The exemption also lifts the mandated **30% net-worth cap** on subsidiary investments set by the Department of Public Enterprises.

Why It Matters

- **Strategic boost:** Rapid investment will help NLCIL scale its renewable portfolio from **2 GW today to 10.11 GW by 2030**, and ultimately **32 GW by 2047**.
- **Supports national goals:** Aligns with India's **COP26 commitment** of 500 GW non-fossil capacity by 2030 and achieving **net-zero emissions by 2070**.
- **Economic ripple effects:** Expected to generate **jobs**, reduce **coal imports**, and enhance **power reliability**, thereby benefiting local economies.

Implementation & Flexibility

- Existing **2 GW renewable assets** will be transferred to **NIRL** and eventually scaled up via **joint ventures** and competitive bids.
- The relaxation in investment norms mirrors a similar move for **NTPC**, which has been permitted to invest **₹20,000 crore** in its clean energy arm—NLCIL's move complements a **₹27,000 crore overall PSU renewable thrust**.

How Did Indore Achieve It?

- Scored **100%** in **door-to-door garbage collection**, **waste processing**, **cleanliness of markets**, **water bodies**, **public toilets**, with **98%** in **source segregation**, and **zero dumpsites**.
- Initiatives by the **Indore Municipal Corporation (IMC)**:
 - **Green waste processing plants**, upcoming **glass and cloth waste facilities**
 - **Route rationalization**, **electric garbage vehicles**, and **zone-wise zero-waste plans**
 - Strong **public awareness campaigns** supported by NGOs in **air purity**, **rain-water harvesting**, and **segregation**.

Broader Context & Related Developments

- **Survey Coverage:** Ninth edition of **Swachh Survekshan**, covering **4,500+ cities**, **~10 parameters**, **54 indicators**, **3,000 assessors**, **45-day assessments**, and participation of **14 crore citizens**.
- **New Population Categories:** Cities divided into five brackets—from **very small** to **million-plus**—making evaluation **more equitable**.
- **Central Support:**
 - From **Aug 15, 2025**, a **dumpsite remediation programme** will be launched
 - **Swachh City Partnership:** 78 top cities to mentor lagging ones—"each one, teach one".

Additional Info

- **Swachh Survekshan:** Annual urban cleanliness survey under **Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban**, overseen by the **Quality Council of India** since 2016.
- **Key Parameters:**
 - **Service-level progress**, **citizen feedback**, **on-ground observation**, **garbage-free certification**, **Open Defecation Free (ODF)** status.
- **Indore:**
 - A **Smart Cities Mission** pilot; first-ever **"Water Plus"** city (2021)
 - Hosted the **International Clean Air Catalyst Programme**
 - Hub of street food, culture, commerce, higher education (e.g., **IIM**, **Devi Ahilya University**).
- **Surat:** Gujarat's **Diamond City**, maestro in **urban infrastructure**, clean-tech projects, fluctuating ranks but fast-tracked cleanliness initiatives.
- **Navi Mumbai:** Maharashtra city with consistent waste-segregation, **'Water Plus'** & **'Seven-Star Garbage-Free'** certifications.

Indore Crowned Cleanest City Again; SSL Spurs Mentorship Model

What's New?

- **Indore** has emerged as India's **cleanest city for the 8th consecutive year**, leading the **Super Swachh League** for cities with over 10 lakh population.
- **Surat** and **Navi Mumbai** secured 2nd and 3rd positions respectively, while **Noida** topped the 3–10 lakh category.
- President **Droupadi Murmu** conferred awards at New Delhi's **Vigyan Bhavan** on July 17, 2025.

What is Super Swachh League?

- A **distinct category** for cities with **populations above 10 lakhs** that have ranked in the **top 3 for at least 3 consecutive years** and remain in the **top 20%** this year.
- SSL participants include **Indore**, **Surat**, **Navi Mumbai**, and **Vijayawada**.

Unique Bird Endemism & Climate Peril

What's New?

- A new global study reveals **bird endemism** actually **increases toward the southern hemisphere**, overturning the assumption that less-known southern bird communities are ecologically unimportant.

- This pattern persists across **taxonomic, functional, and phylogenetic** diversity, making southern birds **evolutionarily irreplaceable**.

Why Southern Endemism Is High

- The **southern hemisphere's landmasses are smaller and fragmented**, separated by vast oceans. Southern species live in **restricted ranges**, boosting their **local endemism**.
- Northern species can migrate across connected lands; southern birds cannot, because the **nearest cooler zones (e.g., Antarctica)** are mostly unsuitable.

Vulnerability & Conservation Imperatives

- These high-endemism birds are **extremely vulnerable to climate change**, as they **cannot shift their range** due to geography.
- Southern ecosystems—like **Antarctica, sub-Antarctic islands, High Andes, Australia, New Zealand, southern Africa**—contain rare endemics: **kiwis, emus, lyrebirds, albatrosses, petrels, penguins**.
- **Conservation strategies** must prioritize **site complementarity** (irreplaceability), not just species richness, even in low-biodiversity zones.

Additional Info

- **Endemism vs Richness:** Traditional conservation maps focus on species count. This new study uses **complementarity**, valuing **unique evolutionary lineages**.
- Private species to note:
 - **Snow petrel:** only bird recorded at South Pole.
 - **Emperor penguin:** near-threatened, heavily impacted by warming sea ice.
 - **Botha's lark, Stresemann's bushcrow:** small-range birds of southern Africa and Ethiopia, climate-threatened.
- **Geographic hotspots:**
 - **South Georgia Island:** home to millions of Antarctic prions.
 - **Sub-Antarctic and southern Andes:** centers of unique bird lineages.

"Clean Capacity, Dirty Disconnect" – India's Renewables Still Underutilized

What's New?

- India has reached a **landmark milestone** by achieving **50% of its installed power capacity from non-fossil sources**—including solar, wind, nuclear, and hydro—five years ahead of the 2030 Paris Agreement target.
- Despite this, the **actual electricity generated from clean energy is under 30%**, showing that added capacity isn't translating into usable power.

Capacity vs Generation

- **Installed capacity:** ~484 GW – **50%** non-fossil (≈242 GW).
- **Actual generation:** Clean energy contributes only **28–30%** of electricity; fossil fuels still supply **70–72%**.
- Coal-fired plants, with **~60%+ CUF**, continue as the **baseload backbone**.

Why the Utilization Lag?

- **Low Capacity Utilisation Factor (CUF):**
 - Solar: ~20%, Wind: 25–30%, Coal: ~60%, Nuclear: ~80%.
- **Intermittency & no storage:** Solar/wind rely on daylight or weather and cannot deliver round-the-clock power without batteries or pumped hydro.
- **Grid limitations:** Lack of smart grids, Time-of-Day (ToD) tariffs, and transmission infrastructure hinder clean energy integration.
- **Policy inertia & coal dependence:** Coal remains policy-favored for reliability; states like Rajasthan still rely heavily on thermal power.

Government Actions & Projects

- Record **29.5 GW clean capacity** added in FY 2024–25; total non-fossil targets ramped to 500 GW by 2030 under Panchamrit/NDC.
- Renewable energy zone development: **Gujarat Hybrid RE Park (30 GW)** plus plans for **14 GWh battery storage**.
- Policy planners aim to issue **50 GW annual RE tenders till 2028**; scale-up **storage systems, smart grids, hybrid projects**.

Additional Info

- **Installed clean capacity breakdown:**
 - Solar: ~116 GW
 - Wind: ~52 GW
 - Small hydro + biomass: ~16 GW
 - Large hydro: ~49 GW
 - Nuclear: ~9 GW.
- **Leading states:** Rajasthan (Bhadla Solar Park – 2.2 GW), Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka.
- **CUF calculation:** (Actual generation ÷ maximum potential) × 100.

₹1,000 Cr ADEETIE Scheme Boosts Energy Efficiency

What's New?

- The **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)** under the **Ministry of Power** launched the **ADEETIE** (Assistance in Deploying Energy Efficient Technologies in Industries & Establishments) Scheme with a **₹1,000 crore budget**, operational from **FY 2025–26 to FY 2027–28**.
- Officially unveiled on **July 15, 2025**, in Panipat by Minister **Manohar Lal Khattar**, the scheme offers **end-to-end financial and technical support** to MSMEs for deploying energy-efficient tech across 14 priority sectors.

Support & Incentives

- **Interest subvention:**
 - **5%** for micro & small enterprises
 - **3%** for medium enterprises
- **Technical help** includes:
 - **Investment-grade energy audits (IGEA)**
 - **Detailed project reports (DPRs)**
 - **Post-implementation monitoring & verification (M&V)**

Target Sectors & Clusters

- Coverage across 14 energy-intensive MSME sectors (e.g., brass, bricks, chemicals, textiles) and phased rollout in **60 industrial clusters**, scaling to **160+ clusters**.
- Expectation to **catalyse ~₹9,000 crore investments**, including ₹6,750 crore in MSME lending.

Implementation Strategy & Outcomes

- **Phased implementation** over three years allows monitoring and adjustments.
- Harnesses **MSME clusters** and BEE's facilitation centre network; states like **Andhra Pradesh** have piloted projects with significant energy savings.
- Technologies under the scheme could reduce energy usage by **30–50%**, raising energy productivity and supporting **green corridor goals**.

Additional Info

- ADEETIE is part of India's commitment to the **Paris Agreement**—aiming for **45% GDP emissions intensity reduction by 2030** and **net-zero by 2070**.
- Administered by **BEE** under the **Energy Conservation Act, 2001**. BEE's mandate includes promoting energy efficiency, especially in MSMEs.
- Aligns with global best practices of **clean industrialisation** and the UN's **Sustainable Development Goal 7** (Affordable & Clean Energy).

- **Neglected enforcement:** GSI and Environmental Policy Groups are urging J&K authorities—including the **High Court** and **Pollution Control Committee**—to declare it an **Eco-Sensitive Zone** and ban dumping.

Broader Context

- First studied during the **British colonial era** (1859) by geologists like **Godwin-Austen**; it continues to anchor **global paleoenvironmental research**.
- The **Permian–Triassic boundary** represents Earth's most severe extinction (~95% marine, 70% terrestrial species loss), and Guryul offers an easily accessible research site hard to match elsewhere.
- The site's fine-grained stratigraphy is rare—unlike thinner boundary layers globally (e.g., 27 cm in China vs 3 m here).

Additional Info

- **2017 Protection Order:** Jammu & Kashmir government recognized the site's value and imposed bans on mining and related industrial activities.
- **Global Importance:** Potential candidate for UNESCO "World Natural Heritage" status due to its paleontological value.
- **Civil society pressure:** Environmental groups and scientists (like **Abdul Majid Butt**, geologists) have appealed to authorities to enforce existing laws and involve community action.

Guryul Ravine's 251-Million-Year Heritage at Risk

What's New?

- The **Geological Survey of India (GSI)** has issued a stark warning about industrial and waste activities endangering the **Guryul Ravine fossil site**, a globally significant **Permian–Triassic boundary formation** near **Khonmoh, Srinagar**.
- Despite being **protected since 2017**, parts of the site are being encroached upon for industrial blocks and **illegal garbage dumping**, risking irreversible damage.

Geological Significance

- The **Guryul Ravine** preserves one of the best continuous records of the "**Great Dying**" **extinction** ~251 million years ago, showing sedimentary layers, fossils, and even early evidence of a **tsunami**.
- The site includes **primordial corals, invertebrates, plant remains**, and unique strata documenting climate shifts and biodiversity recovery.
- Scientists consider it a potential **Global Boundary Stratotype Section and Point (GSSP)** due to its rarity and clarity.

Current Threats

- **Industrial expansion:** Cement factories and quarrying have encroached near the site, laden with dust pollution.
- **Garbage dumping:** Illegal waste sites are being built on the site's fringes, breaching environmental laws like the **Environment Protection Act 1986** and **Solid Waste Management Rules 2016**.

India Shines at Ramsar COP15: Wetland Conservation Leadership

What's New?

- India showcased its **wetland conservation** efforts at the **15th Conference of the Parties (COP15)** to the **Ramsar Convention**, held in **Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe**, from **July 23–31, 2025**.
- Union Minister **Bhupender Yadav** led the Indian delegation, highlighting a **250% increase in Ramsar Sites** over the past decade, with India now hosting **91 sites** (1.36 million hectares), the largest network in **Asia** and third globally.
- **Udaipur** and **Indore** received the **Wetland City Accreditation**, a first for Indian cities, recognizing their efforts in **urban wetland conservation**.

What is the Ramsar Convention?

- An **international treaty** signed in 1971 in **Ramsar, Iran**, aimed at the **conservation and sustainable use** of wetlands.
- Objectives:
 - Promote **wise use** of wetlands to maintain their **ecological character**.
 - Designate **Wetlands of International Importance** (Ramsar Sites) based on **biodiversity, water conservation, and migratory bird habitats**.
 - Foster **international cooperation** for wetland protection.
- **COP15** focuses on the **Strategic Plan 2025–2034, Victoria Falls Declaration**, and resolutions

on wetland restoration, climate resilience, and urban wetland management.

India's Wetland Conservation Efforts

- **Growth:** From 26 Ramsar Sites in 2014 to **91 in 2025**, covering **1.36 million hectares**, including wetlands like Sundarbans, Chilika Lake, and Keoladeo National Park.
- **Initiatives:**
 - **Mission LiFE** (Lifestyle for Environment): Promotes **sustainable lifestyles** globally.
 - **Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam:** Encourages tree planting for environmental conservation.
 - **Mission Sahbhagita:** Engages over **2 million citizens** in wetland protection.
 - **Save Wetlands Campaign:** Enhances community-driven conservation.
- **Bilateral talks:** India discussed **knowledge sharing and wetland restoration** with Zimbabwe, CITES, CMS, and Ramsar Secretariat during COP15.

Additional Info

- **Ramsar Convention:** Governed by **172 Contracting Parties**, with the Secretariat in Gland, Switzerland. India joined in **1982**.
- **Wetland City Accreditation:** Recognizes cities promoting **urban wetland conservation**. Globally, **31 cities** from 16 countries, including Indore and Udaipur, were accredited at COP15.
- **Zimbabwe's Role:** Hosts **7 Ramsar Sites** (e.g., Victoria Falls, Mana Pools National Park) and assumed the **Ramsar Presidency** in 2025. Its **Wetlands Management Act** aligns with Ramsar principles.
- **Related Treaties:**
 - **CITES (1973):** Regulates trade in **endangered species**.
 - **CMS (1979):** Protects **migratory species** reliant on wetlands.
- **India's Global Initiatives:** International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA), International Solar Alliance (ISA), and Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) promote **biodiversity and climate resilience**.

Odisha's Green Leap: Rs 869.8 Crore for Renewable Energy

What's New?

- On **July 24, 2025**, Odisha's **Single Window Committee (SWC)**, chaired by Principal Secretary Vishal Kumar Dev, approved **renewable energy projects** worth **Rs 869.8 crore**, adding **178 MW of solar** (128.5 MW) and **wind** (49.5 MW) capacity.
- **Projects include:**
 - **69.5 MW solar park** by Prozeal Green Energy Limited in Biramaharajpur, Subarnapur.
 - **49.5 MW solar project** by INOX Solar Limited in Telkoi, Keonjhar.
 - **10 MW solar project** by Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) in Lakhanpur, Jharsuguda.

- **49.5 MW wind project** by NLC India Renewables Limited in Papadahandi, Nabarangpur.

- Odisha's total approved **renewable energy capacity** now stands at **1,844.86 MW**, with cumulative investments of **Rs 12,599.79 crore**.

Why Renewable Energy Matters in Odisha?

- **Economic impact:** Projects align with **Odisha Renewable Energy Policy-2022**, boosting **local employment**, especially in **tribal areas** like Nabarangpur, and enhancing **infrastructure development**.
- **Climate goals:** Supports **Renewable Purchase Obligations (RPO)** and India's **net-zero emissions** target by **2070**, leveraging Odisha's high **solar potential** (average 5.5 kWh/m²/day) and **wind resources** in coastal and hilly regions.
- **Energy transition:** **Mahanadi Coalfields Limited** diversifying into **solar** reflects coal-based PSUs shifting to **green energy**, though the **10 MW** scale is modest compared to their **land resources**.

Implementation and Challenges

- **Approval process:** The **12th SWC meeting** involved key stakeholders like **GRIDCO, OHPC, and Renewable Energy Nodal Agency (RENA)**, ensuring rigorous project evaluation.
- **Concerns:** Social media discussions highlight the need for **environmental impact assessments** to ensure **wastelands**, not **agricultural lands**, are used for solar parks, and for **timely project completion** to avoid cost overruns.
- **Skilling:** Emphasis on training **local youth**, especially in **tribal areas**, to maximize **employment benefits** from projects like the **Nabarangpur wind project**.

Additional Info

- **Odisha Renewable Energy Policy-2022:** Aims to achieve **10,000 MW renewable capacity by 2030**, offering incentives like **land allocation, single-window clearance, and tax exemptions**.
- **GRIDCO (Grid Corporation of Odisha):** Manages **power procurement and transmission**, ensuring renewable energy integration into the state grid.
- **Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL):** A Coal India subsidiary, it operates in Odisha's coal-rich regions but is diversifying into **renewables** to align with **sustainability goals**.
- **India's Renewable Energy Targets:** India achieved **50% non-fossil fuel capacity in 2025**, with a goal of **500 GW renewable capacity by 2030** under the **National Solar Mission and Green Energy Corridor**.

India Bolsters Climate Resilience on MoES Foundation Day

What's New?

- On **July 28, 2025**, Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh marked the **19th Foundation Day** of the **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)** in New Delhi by launching **14**

new scientific tools and digital services to enhance **climate resilience** and **public safety**.

- Key initiatives include **advanced weather forecasting systems**, **rainfall monitoring tools**, **crop-weather calendars**, and **ocean state forecasts**, aimed at supporting **agriculture**, **fisheries**, and **disaster preparedness**.
- The **MoES budget** increased from **Rs 1,281 crore** in 2014 to **Rs 3,658 crore** in 2024, enabling **Doppler weather radars** to rise from **15 to 41**, with **seismic stations**, **lightning detection networks**, and **rain gauges** more than doubling.

What are the New Initiatives?

- **14 products launched:**
 - **IMD Digital Services: Weather Analysis and Prediction (WAP)** portal and **IMD Meteo App** for real-time **weather alerts**, **cyclone warnings**, and **air quality updates**, accessible to millions via mobile phones.
 - **Crop-Weather Calendars:** Tailored for **farmers**, integrating **rainfall data** with **agricultural planning** to boost productivity.
 - **High-Resolution Rainfall Maps:** Enhance **flood forecasting** and **urban planning** with precise precipitation data.
 - **Ocean State Forecasts:** Support **fisheries** and **coastal communities** with real-time **wave**, **tide**, and **current** predictions.
- **Technological advancements:**
 - **Earthquake alerts:** Reduced to **2–3 minutes** post-event, with **online access** by lakhs, though server crashes occurred during a recent **Delhi tremor** due to high demand.
 - **Cyclone forecasting:** Improved **lead time** to **10 days**, minimizing casualties compared to the **1999 Odisha super cyclone** (10,000 deaths).
- **Lakshadweep impact:** Six **Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC)** desalination plants now provide **1.5 lakh litres** of potable water daily, transforming water-scarce islands into **water-rich** regions.

Strategic Importance

- **Climate resilience:** Aligns with the **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)**, particularly the **National Mission for a Green India** and **National Mission on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change**, enhancing **adaptation** and **mitigation**.
- **Public outreach:** Dr. Jitendra Singh emphasized **communication** in local languages and coordination with other ministries to boost awareness of tools like the **IMD Meteo App**.
- **Economic impact:** Supports **agriculture** (e.g., crop planning), **fisheries** (e.g., ocean forecasts), and **tourism** (e.g., **Chalo India** diaspora campaign), contributing to India's **economic growth**.
- **Deep Ocean Mission:** Highlighted as a **game-changer**, it aims to tap India's **underwater resources** for future economic benefits.

Additional Info

- **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES):** Established in **2006** from the **Department of Ocean Development (1981)**, it oversees **weather**, **climate**, **ocean**, **seismology**, and **polar research**, with institutes like **India Meteorological Department (IMD)** and **National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR)**.
- **IMD:** Founded in **1875**, it now operates **41 Doppler radars** and advanced systems like **M-STripES** for weather and wildlife monitoring, critical for **cyclone preparedness**.
- **NAPCC (2008):** Includes **eight missions**, with **MoES** contributing to climate data and **DST** coordinating **Himalayan Ecosystem** and **Strategic Knowledge** missions.
- **Lakshadweep OTEC Plants:** Use **ocean thermal gradients** to generate **clean energy** and **desalinated water**, supporting **sustainable development**.

Kaziranga's First Grassland Bird Census: A Technological Leap for Conservation

What's New?

- On **July 27, 2025**, **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** highlighted the **first-ever Grassland Bird Census** in **Kaziranga National Park**, Assam, during his **124th Mann Ki Baat** radio address, praising its use of **AI-powered acoustic monitoring** to identify **43 grassland bird species**, including **1 Critically Endangered**, **2 Endangered**, and **6 Vulnerable** species, as per the **IUCN Red List**.
- Conducted from **March 18 to May 25, 2025**, across **185 grassland sites** in **Eastern Assam Wildlife Division**, **Biswanath Division**, and **Nagaon Division**, the census revealed a breeding colony of the **Endangered Finn's Weaver** in **Kohora Range**, a key indicator of grassland ecosystem health.
- **Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma** and **Kaziranga Field Director Dr. Sonali Ghosh** lauded the survey as a model for **biodiversity conservation**, with findings released on **July 11, 2025**, in the presence of **Assam's Environment Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary**.

What is the Grassland Bird Census?

- **Overview:** The census, initiated by doctoral student **Chiranjib Bora** with an **INSPIRE fellowship** from the **Department of Science & Technology**, targeted **grassland birds** in **Kaziranga National Park**, a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** covering **1,100 sq km**, with **70% grasslands**. It focused on **10 priority species**, including **Bengal Florican**, **Swamp Francolin**, **Finn's Weaver**, and **Black-breasted Parrotbill**, many endemic to the **Brahmaputra floodplains**.
- **Methodology:**
 - **Passive Acoustic Monitoring:** **Sound recorders** placed on tall trees captured bird calls during the **breeding season** (March–May), when birds are most vocal. **AI**

algorithms analyzed recordings to identify species without disturbing their habitat.

- **Point Count Surveys:** Traditional visual counts complemented acoustic data, covering **185 sites** for comprehensive mapping.
- **Collaboration:** Involved **Indian ornithologists** (e.g., **Dr. Asad R. Rahmani**, **Dr. Anwaruddin Choudhury**) and organizations like **Aaranyak**, **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)**, and **WWF-India**.
- **Findings:** Recorded **43 species**, including **Critically Endangered Bengal Florican**, **Endangered Finn's Weaver** (85+ nests in Kohora Range), and **Vulnerable Black-breasted Parrotbill**, highlighting Kaziranga's role as a **biodiversity hotspot**.

Strategic Importance

- **Ecological significance:** Grassland birds are **indicators of ecosystem health**, akin to **BMI for humans**, per Dr. Sonali Ghosh. Their presence signals robust **floodplain ecosystems**, vital for **rhinos**, **tigers**, and other wildlife.
- **Conservation challenges:**
 - **Habitat loss:** Assam has lost **70% of its grasslands** over four decades due to **overgrazing**, **agricultural conversion**, and **ecological succession** (natural transition to forests).
 - **Unique species:** Grassland birds are **small**, **camouflaged**, and live in **declining habitats**, making them harder to monitor than wetland birds.
- **Technological innovation:** The use of **AI** and **acoustic tools** sets a **replicable model** for non-invasive biodiversity monitoring, potentially applicable to other **protected areas** like **Manas** or **Dudhwa**.
- **Policy alignment:** Supports India's **National Biodiversity Action Plan** and **UN SDG 15 (Life on Land)**, reinforcing Kaziranga's role in **global conservation**.

Additional Info

- **Kaziranga National Park:** Established in **1905**, it spans **Golaghat**, **Nagaon**, and **Sonitpur districts**, famed for **one-horned rhinos**, **Royal Bengal tigers**, and **elephants**. Its **grasslands** are critical for **endemic species**.
- **Finn's Weaver:** Locally called **tukura chorai**, this **Endangered** bird builds intricate nests atop trees, with its **Kohora Range colony** a key discovery.
- **IUCN Red List:** Provides **conservation status** for species, with **Critically Endangered** (e.g., Bengal Florican) facing an **extremely high extinction risk**.

the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**, establishing India's first **legal framework** to identify, assess, and remediate **chemically contaminated sites**.

- The rules target **103 known contaminated sites** across India, including **landfills**, **dumps**, **chemical waste storage**, and **spill sites**, with only **seven sites** currently under remediation. A **senior MoEFCC official** emphasized that the rules codify existing processes, ensuring **time-bound action** to mitigate risks to **human health** and the **environment**.
- **Key mechanisms:** District administrations will submit **half-yearly reports** on suspected sites, with **State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs)** or **reference organizations** conducting **preliminary assessments** within **90 days**. The **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)** oversees implementation, aligning with the **"Polluter Pays"** principle.

What are the Environment Protection Rules, 2025?

- **Objective:** Establish a **legally binding mechanism** to manage **hazardous chemical waste sites**, protecting **soil**, **groundwater**, **surface water**, and **sediments** from long-term pollution caused by **industrial dumping**, **spills**, or **improper waste handling**.
- **Key provisions:**
 - **Identification:** District authorities report suspected sites, with SPCBs or reference organizations (e.g., **scientific experts**) verifying contamination within **90 days**.
 - **Remediation:** Polluters bear **cleanup costs**; if unavailable or unable to pay, **Centre** and **State** split costs under a prescribed formula. Technologies include **soil washing**, **bioremediation**, or **thermal treatment**.
 - **Liability:** Criminal penalties under the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023**, apply for **severe damage** or **loss of life** due to contamination.
 - **Exclusions:** Rules avoid overlap with existing laws like the **E-Waste (Management) Rules, 2016**, or **Hazardous Waste Management Rules**, ensuring **specialized agencies** handle specific waste streams.
- **Significance:** Fills a **policy gap**, replacing fragmented enforcement with a **structured framework**, reducing delays in cleanup (previously **9–33 years** for environmental cases).

Strategic Importance

- **Environmental health:** Contaminated sites, like **groundwater wells** near **Humnabad Industrial Area**, pose risks of **cancer**, **respiratory issues**, and **ecosystem damage**. The rules prioritize **public safety** and **biodiversity protection**.
- **India's context:** With **103 sites** identified by the **CPCB**, states like **Tamil Nadu**, **Gujarat**, and **Maharashtra** face high contamination from **textile**, **chemical**, and **petrochemical industries**. Only **7**

India Notifies Environment Protection Rules to Tackle Chemically Contaminated Sites

What's New?

- On **July 24, 2025**, the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** notified the **Environment Protection (Management of Contaminated Sites) Rules, 2025** under

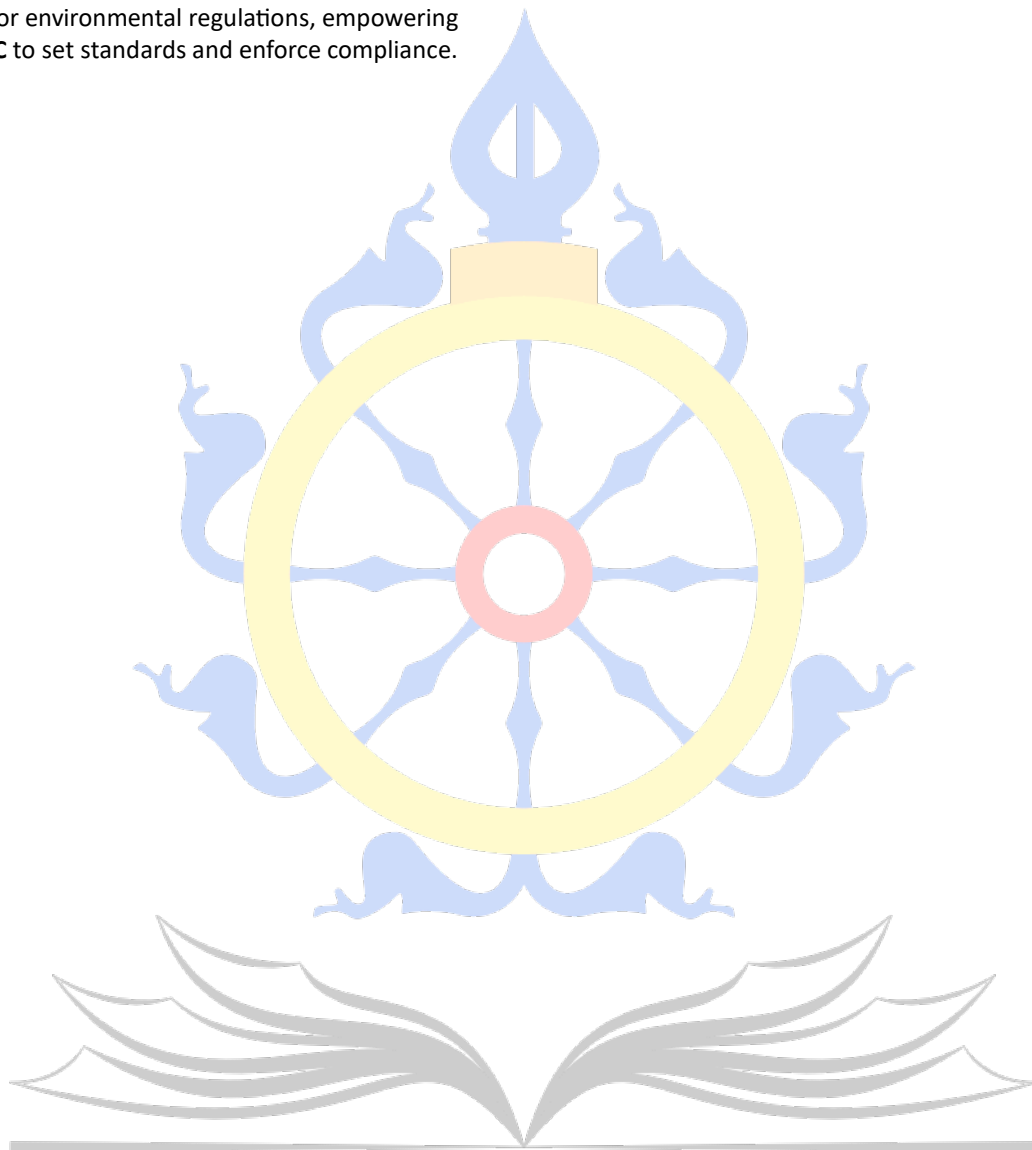
sites (e.g., **Bhopal's Union Carbide site**) are under remediation, highlighting urgency.

- **Global alignment:** Supports **UN SDG 12** (responsible consumption and production) and **Stockholm Convention** on persistent organic pollutants, positioning India as a leader in **environmental governance**.
- **Challenges:** Identifying **historical polluters**, funding remediation for **defunct companies**, and building **technical capacity** for advanced cleanup technologies.

Additional Info

- **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986:** Provides the **legal backbone** for environmental regulations, empowering the **MoEFCC** to set standards and enforce compliance.

- **CPCB:** Established under the **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974**, it coordinates with **SPCBs** to monitor and regulate pollution, including **contaminated sites**.
 - **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023:** Replaces the **Indian Penal Code**, introducing stricter penalties for **environmental crimes** causing severe harm.
 - **Context:** India's **rapid industrialization** and **urbanization** have increased contamination risks, with **e-waste** (1.5 million tonnes in 2015) and **chemical dumping** posing ongoing threats.
-



Health

“Safe Shots” – ICMR–AIIMS Reaffirm COVID Vaccines Do Not Cause Sudden Deaths

What’s New?

- Recent collaborative studies by **ICMR** and **AIIMS New Delhi** have found **no causal link** between COVID-19 vaccination and **sudden unexplained deaths** among adults in India. These conclusions are backed by the **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW)**, based on robust scientific analysis.

What Did The Studies Reveal?

- Multi-centre analysis:** A case–control study across **47 hospitals in 19 states (Oct 2021–Mar 2023)** reviewed **729 sudden death cases** in adults aged 18–45.
- Dominant causes:** Found sudden cardiac events due to **heart attacks, genetic predisposition, lifestyle factors** (smoking, binge drinking, heavy exercise), and **post-COVID complications** as primary contributors.
- The studies also suggest that receiving **two vaccine doses** may **reduce** the risk of unexplained sudden death, compared to unvaccinated or single-dose recipients.

Why It Matters

- Countering misinformation:** The findings dispel myths linking vaccines to sudden deaths—a dangerous trend that fuels **vaccine hesitancy**.
- Public confidence in immunization:** Reinforces the message that **COVID-19 vaccines are safe, effective**, and crucial in preventing severe disease outcomes.
- Policy implications:** The MoHFW urges reliance on **evidence-based analysis** and discourages attributing natural medical events to vaccination without scientific proof.

Additional Info

- These findings align with **global evidence**, including a **CDC study** in the USA which found **no rise in sudden cardiac deaths** post-vaccination among young adults.
- Historical ICMR analysis during Lok Sabha responses also confirmed vaccination does **not increase sudden death risk**, and may even offer **protective benefit**.
- While rare issues like **vaccine-induced thrombosis** have been noted globally, extensive reviews show **no increase in overall mortality due to vaccines**.

- Urban: **2,250 kcal → 2,240 kcal**.
- Protein intake:** Rural ~**61.8 g**, Urban ~**63.4 g** (2023-24).
- Fat intake:** Rural ~**60.4 g**, Urban ~**69.8 g** per day.
- Persistent inequality: Top 5% of households consume ~**3,000 kcal/day**, while bottom 5% consume ~**1,680 kcal/day**.

Why It Matters

- Nutritional security insight:** Stable calorie and nutrient intake suggests gradual improvement but doesn’t eliminate undernutrition—~**11–12% households** fall below **1,860 kcal/day**, the minimum for healthy living.
- Income-nutrition link:** Better-off households have significantly higher nutrient intake, underscoring the impact of **Monthly Per Capita Consumption Expenditure (MPCE)** on diet quality.

Rural-Urban & Income Variation

- Rural and urban calorie intake are now comparable (~2,220–2,240 kcal), but fat intake remains higher in urban areas.
- A strong **MPCE gradient** persists: in rural top 5%, calorie intake ~2,941 kcal vs. ~1,688 kcal for bottom 5%.

Diet Composition

- Cereals continue to dominate:** ~48% (rural) and ~40% (urban) of calorie intake.
- Protein sources:** Pulses, dairy, meat contribute modestly—usually well below dietary recommendations.
- Fat intake rising**, particularly in rural areas, indicating westernized diet patterns.

Nutritional Deficiencies Persist

- Undernutrition in poorer households** remains stubborn: 11.7% rural & 10.2% urban households lacking sufficient calories.
- Rising fat intake, though positive, must be balanced with protein and micronutrient intake to avoid malnutrition and obesity dual burden.

Additional Info

- This NSO exercise is part of its longstanding series (rounds 50, 55, 61, 66, 68), comparing trends since 1994.
- Nutritional indicators** are vital for designing policies under **POSHAN Abhiyaan**, **Public Distribution System (PDS)**, and **Mid-day Meal schemes**, targeting calorie, protein, and fat deficiencies.

“Plate Check 2024” – NSO Survey Reveals India’s Nutrient Intake Trends

What’s New?

- The **National Statistics Office (NSO)** published the **Nutritional Intake in India** report (Household Consumption Expenditure Surveys) for **August 2022–July 2024**, comparing two consecutive years.
- Daily per capita calorie intake** remained stable:
 - Rural: **2,233 kcal → 2,212 kcal**

“Health Taxes 3 by 35” – WHO Urges 50% Hike on Cancer-, Diabetes-Culprits

What’s New?

- The **World Health Organization** launched its bold new **“3 by 35” initiative**, calling on all countries to **increase taxes by at least 50% on sugary drinks, alcohol, and tobacco** over the next decade.

- Aimed at tackling **non-communicable diseases (NCDs)**—like diabetes, heart disease, and cancer—while also **raising US \$1 trillion in revenue by 2035**, the move was issued at the UN Finance for Development meeting in Seville.

Why It Matters

- **Kills two birds with one stone:** Price hikes reduce consumption of harmful products and generate vital revenue for underfunded health systems.
- **Evidence-backed:** Studies show that raising alcohol prices by 50% could avert over **21 million deaths over 50 years**, and similar increases in the other two categories could save **tens of millions** globally.
- **Supports global health financing:** As many nations face falling development aid and rising debt, the US\$1 trillion could become a reliable source for domestic healthcare budgets.

Real World Examples

- Between 2012–22, almost **140 countries** raised tobacco taxes by over 50%, demonstrating feasibility.
- Lithuania's increased alcohol taxes (2016–18) reduced alcohol-related deaths from **23.4 to 18.1 per 100,000**, while boosting revenue.
- **Chile's soda tax** and **UK's Soft Drinks Industry Levy** helped reduce sugar consumption and pushed industry reformulation, though obesity impacts are still under study.

Why a 50% Rise?

- WHO labels health taxes as **"most efficient" non-clinical tools** for NCD prevention.
- Studies suggest such price rise can save up to **50 million lives over 50 years** and raise **US \$3.7 trillion** over the next 5 years (mostly in low-/middle-income countries).

Opposition & Industry Pushback

- Beverage and alcohol industries often challenge the claims, arguing tax hikes have limited impact on behavior, or push shift to cheaper alternatives.
- WHO warns that industries deploy **lobbying, misinformation**, and litigation to stall fiscal health measures.

Additional Info

- These **"sin taxes"** align with **Pigovian principles**, targeting negative externalities like health costs from tobacco, alcohol, and sugar—all forms of **excise duty**.
- WHO's broader strategy is consistent with its **SAFER initiative** for alcohol and decades of tobacco tax policy.
- Sugar-sweetened beverage taxes, in general, average **only 6.6% of retail price globally**, far short of the effective 20–50% threshold.

India's Phenome India National Biobank Ushers in Personalized Healthcare Revolution

What's New?

- Union Minister **Dr Jitendra Singh** inaugurated the cutting-edge **Phenome India National**

Biobank at CSIR-IGIB, Delhi, a major step toward establishing a national cohort study capturing **comprehensive genomic, lifestyle, and clinical data** from **10,000 individuals** across India.

- Inspired by the UK Biobank model, this Indian version is customized to embrace the country's **geographic, ethnic, and socio-economic diversity**.

Role & Purpose

- The Biobank will serve as the **backbone of a longitudinal health database**, supporting early disease detection and **precision medicine** for conditions like **diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular diseases**, and **rare genetic disorders**.
- Minister Singh emphasized its importance in shaping **AI-driven diagnostics, gene-guided therapies**, and **indigenous scientific innovation**.

Why It Matters

- India has a unique **phenotypic profile** (e.g., central obesity despite low body mass index), underscoring the need for **population-specific health data** to tailor treatments.
- Building this reference database ensures India moves beyond adopting global health models to delivering **personalized treatment solutions** based on local genotypic and lifestyle factors.

Broader Scientific Context

- The Biobank complements recent national efforts such as AIIMS-Jammu's **Centre for Advanced Genomics & Precision Medicine**, reflecting an overarching commitment to growing India's **bioeconomy** from **\$10 bn in 2014 to ~\$165 bn in 2024**, targeting **\$300 bn by 2030** under the **Bio-E3 policy**.
- These efforts are part of a broader **biotech boom**: over **9,000 startups**, **95 bio-incubators**, and emerging as a **top-12 global biotech hub**.

Novartis Gains Approval for World's First Malaria Drug for Newborns

What's New?

- Switzerland's regulatory body, **Swissmedic**, approved **Coartem® Baby** (also **Riamet Baby**), the **first malaria treatment** specifically for **newborns and infants under 4.5 kg**, marking a historic milestone in malaria care.
- Designed with a **sweet cherry flavour** and **water-soluble formula**, it can be mixed into **breast milk**, making it **easy to administer** to young babies.
- **Eight African countries**—including **Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Malawi, Mozambique**—are now poised for **rapid approval** under a Swiss **Global Health Products** scheme.

Why It Matters

- Prior to this, infants under 4.5 kg had no age-appropriate treatment; doctors were forced to use

scaled-down doses for older children, increasing risks of **overdose or toxicity**.

- Each year, an estimated **30 million babies** are born in malaria-endemic regions, with infants under six months experiencing infection rates between **3.4–18.4%**.
- Malaria claimed nearly **600,000 lives in 2023**, with **over 75%** of deaths among children under five, underscoring the urgent need for an **infant-specific treatment**.

Clinical Background & Development

- The drug's formula stems from the **Phase II/III CALINA trial** conducted by **Novartis and Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV)** in Africa, which showed strong **efficacy and safety** for infants under 5 kg.
- CALINA, supported by the **PAMAfrica consortium** and EU-funded **EDCTP2**, was the first study to focus specifically on this vulnerable weight group.

Implementation & Impact

- **Swissmedic's fast-track** approval, in coordination with **WHO**, sets the stage for **rapid adoption in endemic countries**.
- Distributed on a **not-for-profit basis**, it addresses critical issues of **access, cost, and supply continuity** amid emerging global aid cuts.
- This breakthrough contributes to the WHO's goal of **reducing malaria deaths among children by 90% by 2030**, and builds on Novartis' long-standing commitment—having provided over **1.1 billion antimalarial courses** since 1999.

WHO Recognizes India's AI–Ayush Fusion as Global Healthcare Innovation

What's New?

- The **WHO** released its first technical brief, “**Mapping the Application of Artificial Intelligence in Traditional Medicine**”, acknowledging **India's leadership** in integrating AI across **Ayush systems**—Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani, Sowa Rigpa, and Homoeopathy.
- India's **proposal and contributions** shaped this global roadmap, positioning the country at the forefront of traditional medicine modernization.

Why It Matters

- **Validation of India's approach:** The brief applauds AI-driven **Prakriti diagnostics, personalized care (Ayurgenomics)**, and digital preservation of ancient wisdom through platforms like **SAHI, NAMASTE**, and the **Ayush Grid**.
- **Global roadmap:** It offers a template for **AI-enhanced traditional medicine**, guiding research, diagnostics, and personalized treatment pathways worldwide.
- **Policy influence:** Positions India's model as a global standard for tech integration in traditional health practices.

India's Achievements Highlighted

- **Ayurgenomics:** AI-powered analytics combining genomics with Ayurvedic body-constitution profiling.
- **Tech-backed diagnostics:** Tools using AI to enrich **pulse, facial, tongue, and voice diagnostics** in traditional systems.

- **Digital preservation:** AI-aided curating and translation of ancient texts via the **Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL)**.
- **Global health infrastructure:** Digital portals such as **SAHI, NAMASTE**, and **Ayush Research Portal** are facilitating interoperability and rural healthcare.

Policy & Institutional Context

- Builds upon the **India–WHO MoU (May 2025)** to add a Traditional Medicine module to the **International Classification of Health Interventions (ICHI)**.
- Follows earlier workshops (Sept 2024) on AI for traditional medicine by **AIIA, WHO–GTMC**, and **WIPO**, which laid the groundwork for the technical brief.
- Aligned with India's **Digital Health Policy** and the **Ayush Grid**—a digital infrastructure under the Ministry of Ayush developed with MeitY support.

India Slashes Zero-Dose Children by 43% in 2024

What's New?

- According to **WHO–UNICEF data**, the **global** number of zero-dose children (those who haven't received a single routine vaccine) in 2024 stood at **14.3 million**, highlighting a slow recovery from pandemic-era disruptions.
- **India's Union Health Ministry** reported that the proportion of its zero-dose children dropped from **0.11% in 2023 to 0.06% in 2024**—a **43% reduction**—thanks to vigorous immunisation campaigns under the **Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP)**.

What Are Zero-Dose Children?

- These are children **who did not receive the first dose of DTP vaccine**, used as a proxy for access to routine immunisation services.
- They are often from **underserved communities**, including tribal regions, urban slums, conflict zones, or remote areas lacking healthcare access.

Why It Matters

- **Immunisation Agenda 2030** calls for a **50% reduction** in global zero-dose children by 2030; India's decline from 0.11% to 0.06% shows strong national alignment with this goal.
- Despite India still ranking **second globally in absolute numbers** (~1.4 million), the **relative rate** is low—reflective of vast birth cohorts (~2.6 crore infants).
- Sustained immunisation has boosted **DTP1 coverage to 93%**, measles coverage to 93%, and DTP3 to 91%—all above global averages.

Key Drivers of Success

- **Expanded UIP coverage:** Delivering 12 vaccines annually to ~2.6 crore infants and 2.9 crore pregnant women.
- **Mission Indradhanush and Measles–Rubella campaigns** that've bolstered reach in hard-to-access regions.

- Targeted **IEC campaigns**, health outreach in slums and tribal zones, and **zero-dose action plans** in high-burden districts.

Broader Trends & Global Context

- Globally, zero-dose numbers dropped post-COVID but remain high at 14.3 million—mainly in fragile and conflict-affected countries.
- India's relative rate (0.06%) is among the **lowest worldwide**, outperforming nations like Yemen (1.68%), Sudan (1.45%), Pakistan (0.16%).
- However, gaps persist in **remote rural areas, urban slums, and migrant clusters**—requiring tailored outreach.

Shastri Bhawan Launches 'Mahila Aarogyam Kaksh'

What's New?

- The **Department of Legal Affairs**, under **Ministry of Law & Justice**, unveiled a unique wellness facility exclusively for **women employees** on **18 July 2025**, called **Mahila Aarogyam Kaksh**.
- **Union MoS (Law & Justice)**, **Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal**, inaugurated the centre, underscoring its support for PM Modi's '**Hum Fit Toh India Fit**' initiative.

Why It Matters

- First-of-its-kind government office wellness centre promotes:
 - **Physical fitness** and **mental well-being**
 - **Work-life balance** for women officials
 - Support for **nursing mothers** via a private **lactation room**.
- Built from a repurposed **unused garage**, it aligns with creating **inclusive, human-centric workspaces**.

Key Features

- **Gym equipment** for exercise and fitness.
- **Private lactation room** catering to working mothers.
- **Promotes holistic well-being**, recognizing women's dual roles at home and work.
- Institutional response to workplace health needs: a shift towards **dignity, inclusion, and gender sensitivity**.

Institutional Vision

- Supports the **Fit India Movement** and ambitions of a **Viksit Bharat**, integrating wellness into public administration culture.
- Law Secretary **Dr. Anju Rathi Rana** emphasized that "**self-care is foundational to empowerment**", vital for productivity and long-term workforce health.

Additional Info

- Implemented by the **Department of Legal Affairs**, part of the **Ministry of Law & Justice** located at **Shastri Bhawan**, New Delhi.
- Reflects the **institutionalisation of health initiatives** under **Government of India workplace policies**.
- Resonates with **National Policy on Occupational Safety, Health & Working Conditions (2020 draft)** and **labour laws** promoting safe workplaces.

200+ Hidden Proteins Linked to Alzheimer's

What's New?

- A groundbreaking **Johns Hopkins University** study using **aged rat models** has identified **over 200 misfolded proteins** in the hippocampus of cognitively impaired animals—beyond the well-known **amyloid-beta (Aβ)** and **tau** proteins.
- These "**stealth misfolded proteins**", which **don't form visible plaques**, may evade the brain's cleanup systems yet disrupt neural function.

What This Study Found

- Researchers examined **17 two-year-old rats** (~70 human years), comparing those with **cognitive decline** to **age-matched healthy controls**.
- **Proteomic analysis (LiP-MS)** of **2,500 proteins** in the **hippocampus** revealed **200+ proteins misfolded only** in impaired rats.
- These misfolded proteins **fail to carry out normal functions** and appear to **escape cellular surveillance**, unlike Aβ/tau which form plaques.

Why It Matters

- **Expands understanding** of Alzheimer's pathology beyond plaque-centric models.
- **Identifies new molecular targets** for diagnostics and therapeutic intervention.
- **Suggests novel mechanisms** of cognitive decline—may explain why plaque-targeted drugs have had limited success.

Related Scientific Insights

- Conditions like Alzheimer's are classified as **proteinopathies**, resulting from abnormal protein structures.
- Cellular systems like the **chaperome** and **proteostasis network** regulate protein folding; dysfunction here contributes to neurodegenerative diseases.
- **Folding@home** and other global initiatives focus on computational modeling to understand protein misfolding and design treatments.

Additional Info

- The study, published in **Science Advances** on **11 July 2025**, is led by chemist **Stephen Fried**.
- Examined the **hippocampus**, a key brain region for memory and learning.
- Rat age (2 years) approximates **human age 70+**, making the findings relevant to **age-related dementia**.

India Bans 37 Antimicrobials to Tackle AMR

What's New?

- India has **banned 37 antimicrobial drugs**—including **18 antibiotics**, **18 antivirals**, and **one anti-protozoan**—in livestock and animal-based food production (eggs, milk, meat, honey, intestines).

- The ban applies at **all production stages**, including where animal casings are processed, aiming to reduce drug residues and exposure risk in human food.

Regulatory Measures in Action

- **FSSAI (Food Safety & Standards Authority of India)** has enforced amendments from **April 1, 2025**, prohibiting certain antibiotic classes such as **glycopeptides, nitrofurans, nitroimidazoles**, and specific antibiotics like **colistin, chloramphenicol, streptomycin, sulphonamides**.
- Effective immediately under the **Export (Quality Control & Inspection) Act, 1963**, the ban helps align with global food-safety norms and prevent shipment rejections.

Monitoring: The Missing Link

- The **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)** has directed **states/UTs** to coordinate with the **Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying (DAHD)** to begin systematic **Antimicrobial Use (AMU) reporting**.
- A **joint working group** involving CDSCO, DAHD, and state drug controllers will collect data on production, import, and consumption of veterinary antimicrobials for oversight and enforcement.

Why It Matters

- **Public health safeguard:** Minimising **drug-resistant bacteria** in the food chain helps prevent emergence of "superbugs" and protects antibiotic efficacy for humans.
- **Trade and export compliance:** Reduces antibiotic residue-related rejections of exports, particularly seafood and processed animal products.

Additional Info

- **AMR Threat:** The World Health Organization projects antimicrobial resistance could cause up to **10 million deaths annually by 2050**, with India potentially facing **2 million fatalities** due to AMR exposure.
- **One Health Approach:** Recognises the interconnectedness of **human, animal, and environmental health** in shaping antibiotic resistance policy.
- **Global Reference:** EU nations banned antibiotic growth promoters as early as 2006; India's new policy echoes this precedent.

development, **clinical trials**, and **commercial production**.

Why It's Groundbreaking

- **Dual-stage targeting:** Combines antigens from both the **pre-erythrocytic (CSP)** and **sexual transmission (Pfs230/Pfs48/45)** stages—unlike existing single-stage vaccines.
- **Key advantages:**
 - **Broader protection** with lower risk of immune evasion
 - **Extended stability**—remains effective for >9 months at room temperature
 - **Potential for long-lasting immunity**, making it a strong candidate for both individual prevention and breaking the transmission cycle.

Research & Development Progress

- Preclinical tests in animal models show **excellent efficacy**, indicating superior performance compared to WHO-recommended vaccines (RTS,S, R21).
- The vaccine is produced using **Lactococcus lactis**, a safe bacterium commonly used in vaccines.

Technology Transfer & Commercial Plans

- ICMR's **Eol** invites partners for manufacturing, clinical trials, commercialization under its **intellectual property policy**, including **royalty-share agreements**.
- Timeline: projected **7 years to market**, with **Phase-I human trials expected in ~2 years**.

Broader Context & Comparison

- Complements global malaria vaccine advancements, like **RTS,S (Mosquirix)** and **R21/Matrix-M**, which are single-stage vaccines.
- Supports India's **Make in India**, affordable public health, and **malaria elimination** agendas—India accounts for ~50% of WHO SE Asia region cases.

Additional Info

- **Institutions:**
 - RMRC Bhubaneswar (lead developer)
 - ICMR-NIMR & DBT-NII (partners)
- **Manufacturing model:** Non-exclusive licensing, technical support by ICMR, royalties mandated.
- **Vaccine comparison:** WHO-approved RTS,S reduces severe malaria by ~30%; R21 shows up to 77% efficacy—AdFalcivax's dual-stage design aims for improved performance.

"AdFalcivax"—India's Indigenous

Multi-Stage Malaria Vaccine Takes Shape

What's New?

- The **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**, along with RMRC Bhubaneswar, NIMR, and NII, is developing **AdFalcivax**, a **recombinant chimeric multi-stage** malaria vaccine targeting **Plasmodium falciparum**, currently in **preclinical stages**.
- ICMR has released an **Expression of Interest (Eoi)** inviting **vaccine manufacturers/licensees** for **technology transfer** under non-exclusive agreements for further

Siddha Goes Global: WHO Standards

Elevate India's AYUSH Leadership

What's New?

- On **July 24–25, 2025**, the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, in collaboration with India's **Ministry of AYUSH** and **Central Council for Research in Siddha (CCRS)**, held a **two-day External Expert Group Meeting** to finalize **WHO International Standard Terminologies and Training and Practice Reports for Siddha medicine**.
- **Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha**, Secretary, Ministry of AYUSH, emphasized India's commitment to **evidence-based**

practices, positioning the country as a **global knowledge hub** for **AYUSH systems** (Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, Homeopathy).

- The meeting, attended by **16 international experts** from **11 countries** across all six WHO regions, marks a milestone in integrating **Siddha** into **global healthcare frameworks** while preserving its **indigenous identity**.

What is Siddha Medicine?

- **Siddha** is a **traditional South Indian medical system**, originating in **Tamil Nadu**, rooted in the teachings of **18 Siddhars** (spiritual scientists), focusing on **holistic healing** through **herbal medicines, minerals, yoga, and lifestyle practices**.
- Key principles:
 - Balances **three humors** (Vatham, Pitham, Kabam) to maintain health.
 - Uses **herbal formulations, metal-based medicines** (e.g., purified mercury), and **therapeutic techniques** like **Varma** (pressure point therapy).
 - Emphasizes **preventive care, diet, and spiritual wellness**.
- **Global relevance:** Siddha's **evidence-based potential** is being validated through **modern scientific methods**, including **AI-driven diagnostics and clinical research**.

Strategic Importance

- **Global standardization:** The **WHO Technical Reports** provide **standardized terminologies and training benchmarks**, enabling **Siddha education and clinical practice** to gain international credibility.
- **India's leadership:** The event reinforces India's role in the **WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy**, with initiatives like the **Ayush Grid** and **Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL)** integrating AI for preserving and modernizing Siddha.
- **Health tourism:** Siddha's global recognition supports India's **Ayush Medical Value Travel Summit 2024**, promoting **wellness tourism** through traditional systems.

Additional Info

- **Ministry of AYUSH:** Established in **2014**, it promotes **Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy** through education, research, and healthcare delivery. The **Union Budget FY26** allocated **Rs 3,992.9 crore** for AYUSH initiatives.
- **Central Council for Research in Siddha (CCRS):** A nodal body under the **Ministry of AYUSH**, it conducts **research, clinical trials, and standardization** of Siddha medicines, headquartered in **Chennai, Tamil Nadu**.
- **WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine:** Established in **Jamnagar, Gujarat (2023)**, it promotes **global research and integration** of traditional medicine, with India as a key contributor.
- **Tamil Nadu's Role:** The **birthplace of Siddha**, it hosts key institutions like the **National Institute of Siddha (NIS)** and supports **herbal cultivation** for medicinal use.

WHO's Global Specs 2030: Affordable Eyecare for All

What's New?

- On **July 26, 2025**, the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, in collaboration with **NGO Drishti**, launched the **Global Specs 2030 Initiative** during a conference on **adolescent eye health** at **Amity University, Noida**, aiming to ensure **universal access to affordable eyecare by 2030**.
- The initiative targets a **40% increase in effective refractive error coverage**, addressing the **800 million people globally with unaddressed vision impairments** due to **refractive errors** like **myopia** and **presbyopia**.
- **Dr. Yutaro Setoya**, WHO India Team Lead for Non-communicable Diseases, highlighted the **socioeconomic impact** of vision loss, particularly among **children aged 5–15**, with **myopia** cases rising alarmingly in India.

What is the Global Specs 2030 Initiative?

- A **WHO-led global strategy** endorsed at the **74th World Health Assembly (2021)**, aiming to provide **quality, affordable, and people-centered refractive error services to all by 2030**.
- **Five strategic pillars (SPECS):**
 - **Services:** Expand access to **refractive error services** like **spectacles and vision screenings**.
 - **Personnel:** Strengthen the **eye care workforce** through training and capacity building.
 - **Education:** Raise **awareness** about eye health, especially among **youth and adolescents**.
 - **Cost:** Make **eyeglasses and services affordable**, particularly in **low- and middle-income countries**.
 - **Surveillance:** Enhance **data systems and research** to monitor progress and improve outcomes.
- **Global SPECS Network:** A platform for **stakeholders** to coordinate advocacy, share experiences, and expand professional networks for **collective action**.

Strategic Importance

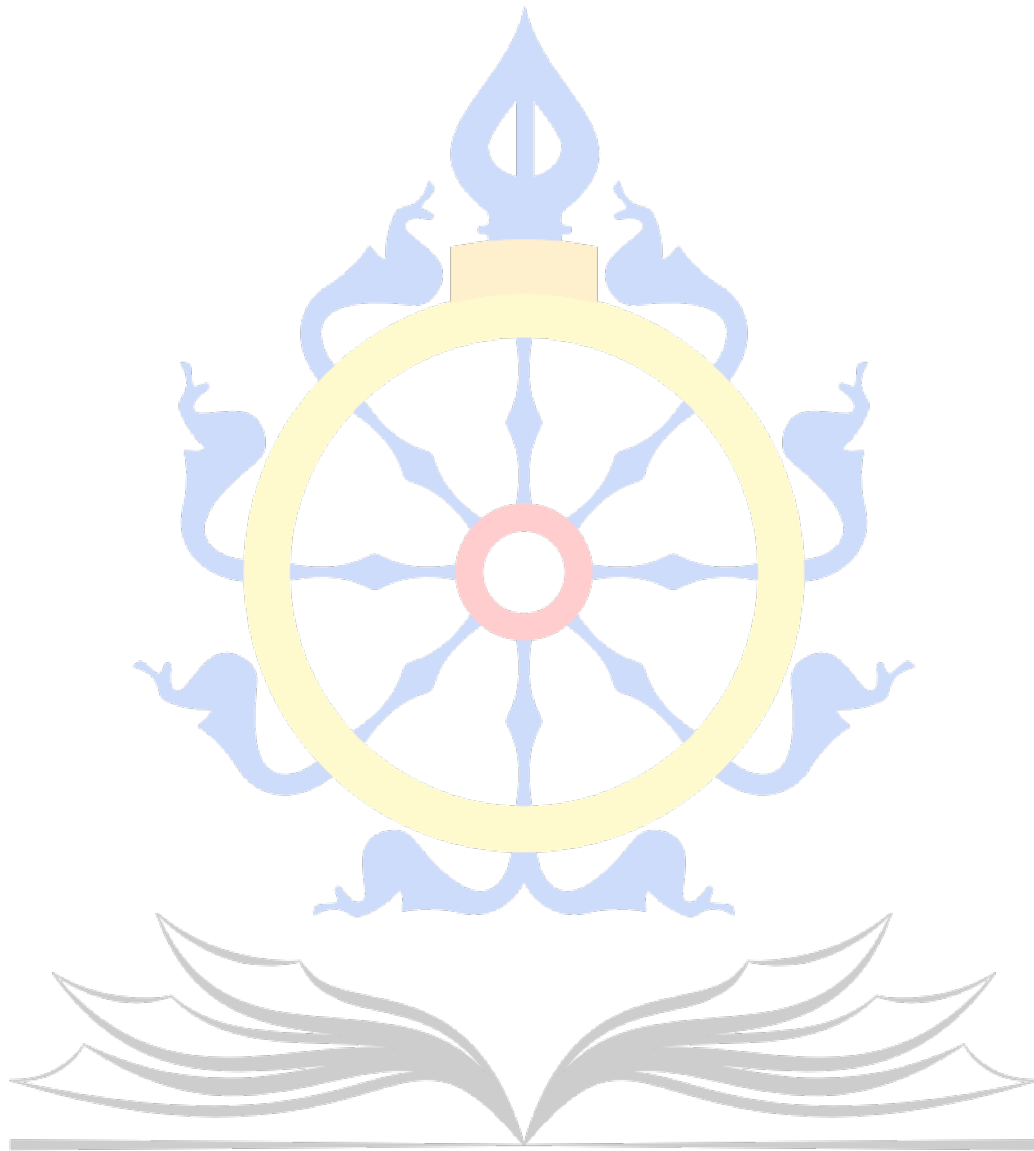
- **Global burden:** **1.1 billion people** suffer from **vision impairment**, with **800 million** due to **unaddressed refractive errors**, costing the global economy **\$411 billion annually** in lost productivity. **Women, girls, and vulnerable populations** are disproportionately affected.
- **India's context:** **Myopia** is rising among **schoolchildren (5–15 years)**, with **urban areas** reporting up to **20% prevalence** due to **screen time and lifestyle changes**. Initiatives like **school-based vision screenings** are critical.
- **Youth engagement:** **Vision health champions** (youth ambassadors) promote **eye health awareness**, leveraging **digital campaigns** like **Love Your Eyes** to reduce **stigma** and encourage **early intervention**.

Additional Info

- **World Health Organization (WHO):** Leads global health initiatives, including the **2030 eye care targets** for **30% increase in cataract surgery coverage** and **40% increase in refractive error coverage**, set in **2021**.
- **Love Your Eyes Campaign:** A **WHO initiative** launched in **2021**, it recorded **6.5 million pledges** and **542 million media impressions** in **2022**, focusing on **workplace eye health** in **2023** and **youth engagement** in **2025**.
- **National Programme for Control of Blindness and Visual Impairment (NPCBVI):** India's flagship program

under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, providing **free spectacles** and **eye screenings** in **schools** and **rural areas**.

- **2030 In Sight Strategy:** A global framework aligned with **WHO's World Report on Vision (2019)** and the **UN Resolution on Vision for Everyone (2021)**, aiming to integrate **eye health** into **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.
-



Education

CBI Exposes Massive Corruption in Medical Education—34 Booked

What's New?

- The **Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)** has filed a **FIR against 34 individuals**—including **8 Ministry of Health officials**, several **National Medical Commission (NMC) assessors**, intermediaries, and **private medical college representatives**—for allegedly manipulating **regulatory inspection processes**, sharing classified files, and accepting bribes to secure **favourable reports** for institutions. The charges include corruption, criminal conspiracy, breach of official secrecy, forgery, and misuse of government systems.
- In a significant raid across **40 locations** nationwide, **six individuals**, including **three NMC doctors**, were arrested during an operation involving a **₹55 lakh bribe** linked to **Rawatpura Institute of Medical Sciences & Research**.

How the Scam Operated

- Officials from the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** and NMC allegedly **leaked administrative files**, including **inspection schedules** and **names of assessors**, using **personal devices**, passing them to college representatives.
- Colleges responded by staging **fake faculty**, **dummy patients**, manipulating **biometric attendance**, and **bribing assessors** to secure a positive outcome during evaluations.

High-Profile Persons Named

- **D. P. Singh** (former UGC chairman, now TISS Chancellor), **Mayur Raval** (Registrar, Gitanjali University), **Ravi Shankar Maharaj** (godman and college chairman), **Suresh Singh Bhadoria** (Index Medical College chairman), among others, have been implicated.

Related Arrests & Impact

- In **May 2025**, CBI had arrested **Dr. Tapan Kumar Jana**, an **NMC assessor**, in Belagavi for accepting a **₹10 lakh bribe**, recovering **₹54.6 lakh** during raids in **Kolkata, Bardhaman, and Belagavi**.
- Following this, the **NMC blacklisted the assessor** and revoked approvals for new **UG/PG seats** at the implicated college, halting expansions for **AY 2025–26**.

Why It Matters

- Undermines **integrity of medical education**, endangers **public health**, and erodes **trust** in regulatory institutions.
- Corruption in inspections jeopardises **quality of healthcare professionals** and undermines **standards in medical training**.
- CBI's action exposes the **structural manipulation** involving **inspectors, intermediaries, and educational institutions**, highlighting urgent need for **regulatory reforms**.

Additional Info

- **National Medical Commission (NMC)**: Established in **September 2020**, it oversees **medical education, accreditation**, and medical professions in India.
- **CBI**: Authorized agency for investigating **central corruption cases**, under the **Prevention of Corruption Act**, though operating within legal constraints in several states.
- **Grave consequences**: Violations may lead to **seat withdrawal, monetary penalties, assessor blacklisting**, and **Criminal proceedings** under **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Section 61(2)** and **PC Act**.

NMC's 2025 Faculty Rework: Unlocking 75,000 New Medical Seats

What's New?

- The **National Medical Commission (NMC)**, via its Postgraduate Medical Education Board, notified the **Medical Institutions (Qualifications of Faculty) Regulations, 2025** on **June 30, 2025**.
- Key changes:
 - **Non-teaching government hospitals** with **≥220 beds** can now be recognised as **teaching institutions**.
 - **Specialists/consultants** in such hospitals with **≥2 years** of experience can be appointed **Assistant Professors** (without senior residency, subject to completing a research course within 2 years).
 - Those with **≥10 years** of experience can become **Associate Professors**.
 - **Senior consultants** with **≥3 years'** teaching experience at NBEMS-recognised institutions qualify as **Professors**.
 - **Diploma holders** with **≥6 years'** relevant experience are now eligible for **Assistant Professor** roles.

Why It Matters

- India has set a target to **add 75,000 MBBS and MD/MS seats** over five years, but has faced a **serious shortage of faculty**.
- These reforms tap the **existing pool of clinical doctors**, easing rigid paths based on senior residency to quickly fill teaching vacancies.

Additional Regulatory Relaxations

- **Minimum faculty requirements for PG courses** reduced: now possible with just **2 faculty members and 2 seats** instead of 3 faculty plus a senior resident.
- **Bed criteria relaxed**, allowing 220-bed hospitals to host teaching programs.
- **Eligibility expanded** to include MSc/PhD holders in pre-clinical subjects, increased age limit (up to 50 years) for senior residents, and recognition of teaching-related roles in NMC/state bodies as equivalent.

Strategic Impact

- **Expands medical education** by removing systemic bottlenecks in faculty availability and infrastructure.
- **Strengthens rural and underserved health systems** by converting district hospitals into medical teaching centres.
- **Bridges quality and access gaps**, aligns with national priorities such as **Ayushman Bharat**, **doctor-patient ratio improvement**, and addressing post-pandemic healthcare demands.

- **Reinstate comprehensive mechanisms:** Anonymous channels, parent outreach, data publication, surprise inspections—tools that earlier reduced ragging from 40% to 5% by 2020—should return.
- **Multilevel oversight:** Civic participation by independent NGOs, legal experts, and student bodies recommended to oversee institutional tasks.
- **Address root causes:** Through mentorship, counseling, psychological support, and peer-led orientation to counter fear and abuse.

Delhi HC Slams UGC's Anti-Ragging System as "Utterly Failed"

What's New?

- On **July 11, 2025**, the **Delhi High Court** strongly criticized the **University Grants Commission's (UGC)** anti-ragging framework, asserting it has "utterly failed" and threatening to initiate a **suo motu PIL** to tackle the surge in ragging incidents and related student suicides.
- The **UGC helpline** recorded its highest number of complaints in nine years with **1,084 ragging cases** in 2024.

Why It Matters

- **Safety crisis:** Ragging-related suicides among students increased from ~7 per year pre-2022 to ~17 annually since then.
- **Underfunding:** UGC spends just **₹44 lakh annually** on anti-ragging for over 3.5 crore students—a figure the court called grossly inadequate.
- **Complaint mechanisms eroded:** Anonymous reporting, real-time tracking, annual surveys, and helpline responsiveness have been removed since 2022, weakening enforcement and monitoring.

The Court's Demand

- **Robust system overhaul:** Delhi HC directed UGC to furnish data on student suicides, dropouts linked to ragging, and UGC's anti-ragging records over the last three years.
- **Consideration of suo motu PIL:** The court is contemplating direct action to monitor improvements and compel stronger action.

What's Going Wrong?

- **Policy dysfunction:** A system mandated by a 2009 Supreme Court order—featuring a helpline, complaint portal, and institutional checks—is now hollow following UGC's 2022 outsourcing.
- **Campus culture:** Ragging persists in both offline and online spaces due to hierarchical norms, fear of reprisal, and reliance on seniors—as documented by India Today and grassroots researchers.
- **Weak enforcement:** Even with zero-tolerance rules, complaints are poorly investigated or patronized to protect institutional prestige.

Solutions Suggested

- **Increase funding & transparency:** Court demanded UGC scale up anti-ragging budgets and resume annual surveys and helpline tracking.

ANRF Launches PM Professorships

What's New?

- The **Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF)** has launched the **Prime Minister Professorships** program to **enhance research and innovation** in **state universities** designated as "spoke" institutions under its **PAIR** initiative.
- The scheme invites **retired scientists, NRIs/PIOs/OCIs, and industry professionals** with strong R&D experience to serve as full-time **mentors and research leaders** in eligible universities.

What Are the Key Features?

- **Eligibility:** Includes **superannuated faculty**, overseas Indian-origin scientists, industry experts, and "Professors of Practice".
- **Host Institutions:** Only **Category A "spoke"** state universities under the PAIR program qualify.
- **Funding:**
 - **₹30 lakh/year** fellowship
 - **₹24 lakh/year** research grant
 - **₹1 lakh/year** institutional overhead
- **Tenure:** Up to **5 years**, full-time relocation required, no additional salary allowed.
- **Responsibilities:** Mentoring faculty and students, initiating frontier research, fostering cross-institutional and industry partnerships, building labs, facilitating 6-month internships.

PAIR Framework & Research Ecosystem

- **PAIR = Partnerships for Accelerated Innovation and Research:** a hub-and-spoke model pairing top-tier "hub" institutions (top 25 in NIRF or Institutes of National Importance) with less-endowed **state universities**.
- **Hubs** mentor up to 7 spokes, ensuring regional diversity, departmental collaboration, and research capacity building.

Why It Matters

- **Strengthens research culture** in state universities, aligned with **National Education Policy 2020**.
- **Utilises senior expertise** — retired and overseas scientists — to restore institutional memory and global best practices.
- **Large-scale investment:** ANRF was established via the **ANRF Act, 2023** with ₹50,000 crore outlay (₹14,000 crore govt funding).
- **Complements other programs:** like **PMRF** (PhD fellowships for IITs) but focuses on mentoring institutions rather than individuals.

Additional Info

- **ANRF Act, 2023:** Creates a statutory research ecosystem by replacing the **Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB)**.
- **PAIR grants:** IIT Indore received ₹100 crore to lead a PAIR network on sustainability and health across six universities.
- **Professors of Practice:** a new category introduced to infuse practical industry expertise into academia.

and **Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)** to embed context-driven learning.

Broader Context

- **Mission Karmayogi:** India's national bureaucratic capacity-building mission aimed at creating a **citizen-centric, performance-driven** administrative machinery.
- **Cooperative federalism:** Encourages a healthy competition between training institutes, akin to **Aspirational Districts**, promoting institutional excellence across regions.
- **Global recognition:** Nations like **Bangladesh, South Africa, and Maldives** are reportedly observing India's holistic reform model.

Why It Matters

- Transforms accreditation from a **compliance checklist** to a **culture of continuous improvement**, accountability, and innovation.
- Aligns CSTI training methodologies with **modern governance challenges**, blending traditional wisdom with digital competence.
- Empowers India to establish itself as a **global leader** in civil service training excellence and best practices.

Additional Info

- **CBC Leadership:**
 - Chair: **Adil Zainulbhai**
 - Member-HR: **Dr. R Balasubramaniam**
 - Member-Admin: **Dr. Alka Mittal**
 - CEO (Karmayogi Bharat): **V. Lalithalakshmi**
 - Joint Secretary: **Syama Prasad Roy**.
- **Previous NSCSTI 1.0:** Already accredited around **195 institutes** over two years.
- **Location:** Based at **CSOI, Vinay Marg, New Delhi**, a central training hub for senior civil servants.

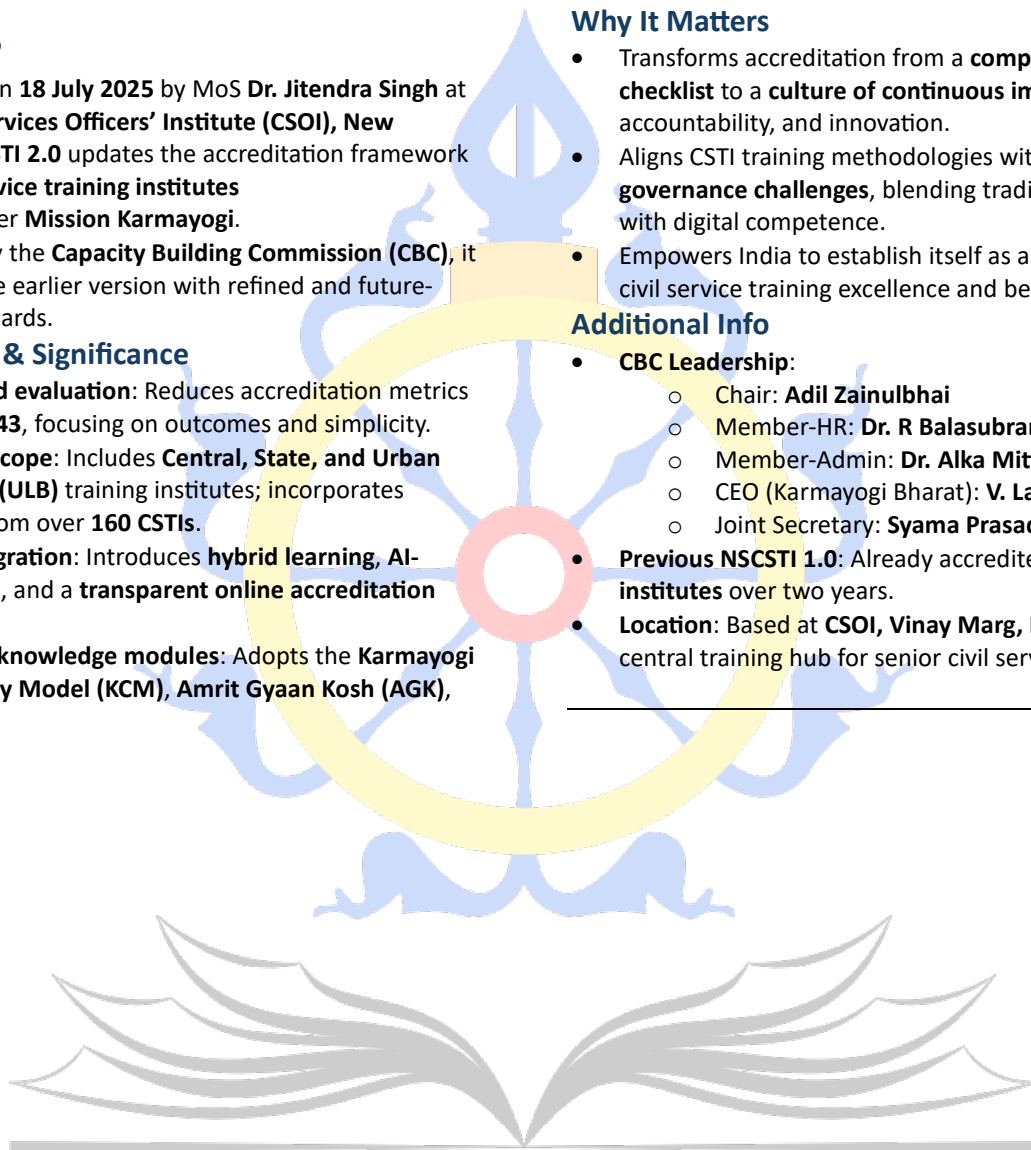
NSCSTI 2.0 Revolutionizes Civil Services Education

What's New?

- Launched on **18 July 2025** by MoS **Dr. Jitendra Singh** at the **Civil Services Officers' Institute (CSOI), New Delhi**, **NSCSTI 2.0** updates the accreditation framework for **civil service training institutes (CSTIs)** under **Mission Karmayogi**.
- Released by the **Capacity Building Commission (CBC)**, it replaces the earlier version with refined and future-ready standards.

Key Features & Significance

- **Streamlined evaluation:** Reduces accreditation metrics from **59 to 43**, focusing on outcomes and simplicity.
- **Expanded scope:** Includes **Central, State, and Urban Local Body (ULB)** training institutes; incorporates feedback from over **160 CSTIs**.
- **Digital integration:** Introduces **hybrid learning**, **AI-based tools**, and a **transparent online accreditation portal**.
- **Innovative knowledge modules:** Adopts the **Karmayogi Competency Model (KCM)**, **Amrit Gyaan Kosh (AGK)**,



Economy & Finance

“Unicorn Surge” – India Ranks 3rd in Hurun Global Unicorn Index 2025

What’s New?

- The **Hurun Global Unicorn Index 2025**, released in June 2025, identifies **1,523 unicorns** worldwide—privately held startups worth at least \$1 billion—together valued at approximately **\$5.6 trillion**.
- India secures a **strong 3rd position**, housing **64 unicorns**, trailing only the **USA (758)** and **China (343)**.

Why It Matters

- **Global startup leadership**: Ranking third underscores India’s emergence as a robust **innovation hub** and growing magnet for venture capital.
- **Economic significance**: These unicorns span **fintech, gaming, edtech, AI, and deep tech**, signaling India’s deepening prowess in next-gen technologies.
- **City-based clustering**: Key innovation centres include **Bengaluru (#7 globally)**, **Mumbai (#22)**, and **Gurugram (#27)**, showcasing the growing importance of multiple regional startup ecosystems.

Startup Hubs & Leading Unicorns

- **Bengaluru** leads India’s unicorn count with **36**, followed by **Mumbai (22)** and first-time entry from **Gurugram (27)**.
- Notable unicorns include **Zerodha (\$8.2 bn)**, **Dream11 (\$8 bn)**, and **Razorpay (\$7.5 bn)**, primarily in fintech and gaming.

Global & Sectoral Trends

- India’s **unicorn count rose modestly**, maintaining 3rd rank amidst global expansion—US and China continue to dominate.
- The **global unicorn ecosystem** is spreading fast: now active in **52 countries** and **307 cities**, with 2025 witnessing **203 newly minted unicorns**, averaging one every two days.
- Fast-growing sectors: **Fintech (197 unicorns globally)**, followed by **SaaS** and **AI**—India’s strengths align well with these global trends.

Additional Info

- The **Hurun Global Unicorn Index** has operated since **2017**, documenting private unicorn growth and valuation changes annually.
- Globally, average unicorn age is around **10.6 years**, with **SpaceX, OpenAI, ByteDance** dominating top ranks by valuation.
- Beyond unicorns, India ranks **3rd in tech startup funding**, raising **US \$4.8 billion H1 2025**, further cementing its financial and innovation credibility.

“Real-Time Fraud Shield” – RBI Directs Banks to Integrate DoT’s FRI System

What’s New?

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** issued an advisory urging all banks—including **Scheduled Commercial**

Banks, Small Finance Banks, Payments Banks, and Co-operative Banks—to integrate the **Financial Fraud Risk Indicator (FRI)** developed by the **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** into their systems.

- The FRI, launched in **May 2025** by DoT’s Digital Intelligence Unit, assigns risk levels—**Medium, High, or Very High**—to mobile numbers based on data from telecom and cybercrime platforms.

Why It Matters

- **Real-time fraud mitigation**: Banks can now automatically screen mobile numbers during transactions and block or flag suspicious activity immediately.
- **Tech-enabled governance**: Adoption of FRI embodies the **“zero-trust” cybersecurity model**, emphasizing proactive defense in India’s financial infrastructure.
- **Cross-sector synergy**: This step marks significant inter-agency collaboration—**telecom (DoT)** and **finance (RBI)**—to combat digital fraud at scale.

How FRI Works

- Classifies mobile numbers by analyzing inputs from:
 - **National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (I4C)**
 - **DoT’s Chakshu platform**
 - **Bank, NBFC, UPI, and telecom reporting**
 - **Mobile Number Revocation Lists**
- Enables API-based integration for instant alerts and screening in banking workflows.

Early Adopters & Use Cases

- Leading banks (e.g., **HDFC, ICICI, PNB**) and UPI platforms (**PhonePe, Paytm, Google Pay**) have already adopted FRI to delay or block high-risk transactions and prompt verification pop-ups.
- **PhonePe Protect** was one of the first to employ FRI to proactively block transactions tagged “Very High” risk.

Broader Policy Context

- Ties into RBI’s **July 2024 Master Directions** and January 2025 guidelines stressing **fraud risk governance, early detection systems, and zero-trust frameworks**.
- Aligns with RBI’s broader cybersecurity stance, advocating **AI-aware defenses** and stringent oversight of third-party dependencies.

“Tax Parity Boost” – NPS-Style Tax Relief Extended to Unified Pension Scheme

What’s New?

- The **Ministry of Finance** officially extended **tax benefits** available under the **National Pension System (NPS)** to the newly introduced **Unified Pension Scheme (UPS)** for central government employees.
- Under this, employees choosing **UPS** will receive tax deductions on contributions:
 - Under **Section 80CCD(1)** – for employee’s own contribution.
 - Under **Section 80CCD(1B)** – additional ₹50,000.

- Under **Section 80CCD(2)** – employer's (government) contribution.

Why It Matters

- **Tax equity:** Employees under UPS now enjoy the same **₹2 lakh combined tax deduction limit** (under 80C, 80CCD) as NPS subscribers.
- **Promotion of UPS adoption:** Tax incentives aim to encourage central government employees to opt for UPS, reinforcing the government's push for a **secure and transparent pension system**.
- **Retirement planning effectiveness:** Enhances the financial appeal of UPS, thereby supporting employees' long-term retirement savings goals.

UPS Overview & Eligibility

- **Unified Pension Scheme** introduced on **1 April 2025** as an optional pension model under NPS framework.
- Covers around **2.3 million central government employees**, including new recruits and current NPS subscribers choosing to switch.
- It offers features like assured pension, death gratuity, and minimum pension benefits, bridging the gap between **NPS and Old Pension Scheme (OPS)**.

Lump Sum, Pension Top-Up & Gratuity

- Employees retired before **31 March 2025** with **10+ years of service** or their spouses can opt for:
 - A **one-time lump sum**, based on service duration and salary.
 - **Monthly top-up** if current NPS annuity is lower than UPS entitlement.
 - **Gratuity benefits** (up to ₹25 lakhs) and **death gratuity**, similar to OPS, adopted under UPS.

Option Window & Implementation Support

- Employees had a **one-time window** until **30 June 2025** to opt into UPS; amendments may extend this deadline due to limited uptake.
- Claims by retirees were accepted via offline/online channels through **NSDL-PFRDA's portal**.

Key Challenges

- **Import dependency:** Feedstock imports drive the \$31 billion deficit.
- **Infrastructure gaps:** Chemical clusters are fragmented; port links and logistics inefficient.
- **Low R&D:** India spends only **0.7% of turnover** on R&D, vs **2.3% global average**.
- **Skill shortage:** A **30% deficit** especially in areas like green chemistry, nanotech, and safety.
- **Regulatory delays:** Environmental clearances and approvals impede project rollout.

How India Plans to Overcome

- **Chemical Hubs & clusters:** Create world-class industrial zones, revamp existing ones, backed by a central Chemical Fund and empowered committees.
- **Port infrastructure:** Form "Chemical Committees" at ports, upgrade 8 priority clusters, and improve logistics connections.
- **Opex subsidies:** Incentivise increased production, import substitution, and exports.
- **Fast-track clearances:** Streamline environmental and regulatory approvals.
- **Skill and R&D push:** Collaborate with academia for curricula on polymers, process safety, petrochemistry; increase tech transfer.
- **FTAs and trade facilitation:** Embed sector-specific clauses in Free Trade Agreements, simplify origin documentation.

Additional Info

- **India's current position:** Sixth-largest chemical producer globally, third in Asia, contributing around **7% to GDP** with a \$220 billion market.
- **Sector segments:**
 - **Petrochemicals** (\$65–75 billion),
 - **Specialty chemicals** (\$40–45 billion, over half of chemical exports),
 - **Inorganics** (\$15–20 billion), plus fertilizers, pharma, personal care (\$90 billion).

NITI Aayog's Vision: Transform India's Chemical Industry to a \$1 Trillion Powerhouse

What's New?

- On **July 3, 2025**, **NITI Aayog** released its flagship report titled "*Chemical Industry: Powering India's Participation in Global Value Chains*". The vision: scale India's chemical sector from a **\$220 billion domestic market** to **\$1 trillion by 2040**, increasing its share in global value chains (GVCs) from **3.5% to 12%**.

Why It Matters

- India currently has a **\$31 billion trade deficit** in chemicals due to heavy dependence on **imported feedstock and specialty chemicals**, coupled with low **R&D investments**, limited **skilled manpower**, outdated infrastructure, and regulatory hurdles.
- With reforms, the sector could generate **7 lakh new jobs by 2030**, narrow or eliminate the trade deficit, and position India as a **global chemical manufacturing hub**.

NBFC Education Loans to Grow 25% in FY26 Despite US Policy Headwinds

What's New?

- **Crisil Ratings** reports that **NBFCs' education-loan AUM** is projected to grow by **25% in FY26**, slowing from ~50% the previous fiscal due to **stricter visa/immigration policies in the US and Canada**.
- Despite the slowdown, the total AUM is expected to rise from approximately ₹64,000 crore (FY25) to ₹80,000 crore in FY26.

Causes of Slowdown

- Tighter **US visa appointments** and changes to the **Optional Practical Training (OPT)** program have resulted in a **30% drop in disbursements** for US-bound students. Canada faces similar constraints.
- In **Gujarat**, FY25 education-loan growth dipped to **single digits**—a 2.7% rise in the number of loans and 6.5% increase in disbursements (~₹2,078 crore)—attributed to these tighter immigration norms.

How NBFCs Are Adapting

- Firms are **diversifying** into other destinations—UK, Germany, Ireland—and boosting **domestic lending**.
- Asset quality remains stable**, with ~85% of AUM still under moratorium, and the **non-performing assets (NPAs)** under watch.

Sector Outlook & Macro Environment

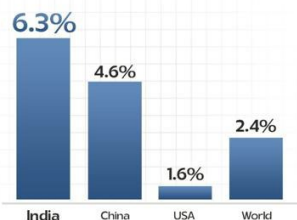
- While overall NBFC loan growth moderated to ~17% in FY25 from ~21% in FY24, large NBFCs expect recovery in FY26–27 with growth sustained between **18–25%**.
- The **finance ministry** and **RBI** are working on easing financing conditions, which may support NBFC credit.

India: Beacon of Growth Amid Global Volatility

What's New?

- Real GDP growth** reached **6.5% in FY 2024–25**, making India the **fastest-growing major economy**, a pace the **RBI** expects to continue into 2025–26.
- RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra** reaffirmed that India remains a **key global growth engine**, bolstered by strong domestic fundamentals even as global turbulence persists.
- The **UN, IMF, and World Bank** forecast growth between **6.2–6.5% through 2026**, contrasting starkly with global averages of ~3%—solidifying India's exceptional performance.

Global Economic Growth Projections for 2025

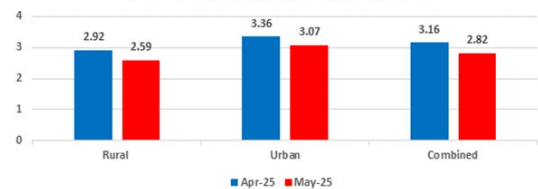


Source: World Economic Situation and Prospects 2025 (Mid Year Update)

Why It Matters

- Economic resilience:** Amid global slowdown, trade tensions, and financial volatility, India's growth stands out as a rare bright spot.
- Macro-balanced expansion:** Growth is fuelled by robust **rural consumption (70% of GDP)**, **capex**, and **city spending**, aided by tame **CPI inflation (2.82% in May)** and soft food prices (**0.99%**).
- Strengthened confidence:** High **FDI**, record **foreign exchange reserves (US\$702.8 billion)**, and a controlled **current account deficit (0.6% of GDP)** reflect investor trust.

Year on Year Inflation rate based on CPI



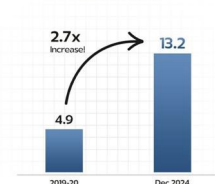
All India Inflation Rates for CPI(General) and CFPI



Strategic Drivers

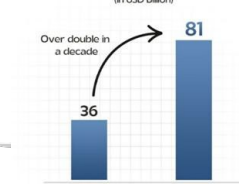
- Domestic Demand-Led Model:** India's internal market, fueled by rural and urban consumption, acts as a shock absorber in global downturns.
- Financial Stability & Reforms:** Proactive RBI stance—including a major rate cut—and structural reforms under **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** and **infrastructure push** ensure sustainable growth.
- Global Diversification:** India is expanding trade with new partners while maintaining global investor confidence amid crises.
- Emerging as a Global Player:** With the 4th-largest nominal GDP and surge in capital markets and services, India is cementing its global economic stature.

Growth of Retail Investors in India (Numbers in Crores)



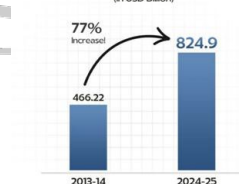
Source: Economic Survey of India (2024-25)

India's FDI Inflows (In USD Billion)



Source: Ministry of Commerce & Industry

India's Export Growth Over the Decade (In USD Billion)



Source: Ministry of Commerce & Industry

Quick-Commerce in India: Ready to Triple to ₹2 Lakh Crore by FY28

What's New?

- The **quick-commerce (Q-commerce)** sector in India saw gross order value (GOV) hit **₹64,000 crore in FY25**.

- A **CareEdge report** forecasts this could **nearly triple to ₹2 lakh crore by FY28**, reflecting a remarkable growth trajectory.

What Drives This Boom?

- **142% CAGR** between FY22–25, fueled by metro growth, digital penetration, and consumer preference for instant gratification.
- Expansion into **Tier-2/3 cities**, powered by rising internet use and digital adoption.

Revenue Model: Fees & Infrastructure

- **Platform fee income** soared from ₹452 crore (FY22) to ₹10,500 crore (FY25), and may reach **₹34,500 crore by FY28**.
- Growth in **dark stores**, with numbers doubling from 1,400 (FY23) to 3,072 (FY25); average revenue per store increased from ₹12 crore to ₹21 crore.

Challenges Emerging

- **Metro–non-metro gap:** Over **80% of GOV from metros**, with non-metros contributing only ~20%—due to low digital literacy, ingrained kirana culture, and higher delivery costs.
- **Structural strains:** Profit margins squeezed, dependency on gig workers high, price wars intense; sustainability is uncertain.

Strategic Outlook

- As a fraction of grocery retail, **Q-commerce accounts for only 1% of the ₹45 lakh crore sector**, indicating vast growth potential.
- Enterprises shifting towards **profitability and operational efficiency**, focusing on hyper-local models, private labels, and digital innovations (AI-based logistics, basket engineering).

Big Govt Payments Above ₹75 Crore Must Go Via RBI's e-Kuber from July 16

What's New?

- Effective **July 16, 2025**, all **central government ministries/departments** in India must process **payments above ₹75 crore** (to both public and private entities) **exclusively via RBI's e-Kuber platform**, per directives from the Department of Expenditure, issued on **July 1, 2025**.

What is e-Kuber?

- **e-Kuber** is the **core banking system** of RBI, designed for real-time centralized processing of government receipts and payments.
- It ensures real-time **consolidation, transparency, reconciliation efficiency**, and reduced errors.

Why It Matters

- **Enhanced Transparency & Control:** Centralized system allows real-time tracking, reducing leakages and unauthorized payments.
- **Reconciliation Efficiency:** Immediate recording and balance updates; reduces delays and mismatches in accounting.

- **Fiscal Discipline:** Supports better cash flow management and fiscal control through automated systems.

Policy & Operational Context

- This is a **logical extension** of the government's e-Kuber mandates—previously applied to Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) funds and government receipts.
- Streamlines central payments in alignment with the government's **Digital Governance** and **Transparent India** agenda.

RBI Data: Gold Reserves Up, Forex Reserves Slip to \$699.7 Billion

What's New?

- For the week ending **July 4, 2025**, India's **gold reserves** rose by **US \$342 million**, reaching **\$84.846 billion**.
- Meanwhile, **total foreign exchange reserves** declined by **US \$3.049 billion** to **\$699.736 billion**, falling from \$702.784 billion the previous week.

Why It Matters

- **Forex reserves** are vital buffers that provide stability to the **rupee**, safeguard **external debt obligations**, and maintain **market confidence**.
- The increase in **gold holdings** underscores RBI's ongoing strategy to diversify reserves and hedge against **currency and inflation risks**.
- The decline in **foreign currency assets**—mainly USD, EUR, GBP, JPY holdings—may reflect **RBI interventions** to moderate rupee volatility and manage global uncertainties.

Reserve Components Breakdown

- **Gold:** \$84.846 billion (+\$0.342B)
- **Foreign Currency Assets (FCAs):** ~\$591.287 billion (major contributor to the drop)
- **Special Drawing Rights (SDR):** Increased by \$39 million to ~\$18.868 billion
- **IMF Reserve Position:** Went up by \$107 million to ~\$4.735 billion

India Sees Deflation WPI & Retail CPI Slump in June 2025

What's New?

- **Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation** for June 2025 recorded a **negative 0.13%**, marking the first drop in 19 months – driven by sharp price declines in **vegetables (-22.65%)**, **fuel**, and **manufactured goods**.
- **Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation** plummeted to a **six-year low of 2.10%**, down from 2.82% in May, with **food inflation contracting by 1.06%**, driven largely by falling vegetable and cereal prices.

Why It Matters

- **WPI deflation** signals waning wholesale price pressures—beneficial for **input cost reduction** in industries.

- **Record low CPI** brings inflation close to RBI's lower tolerance limit (2%), opening room for **monetary easing**.
- Sharp food price negative inflation (-1.06% CPI, -22.65% WPI for vegetables) demonstrates the impact of good **monsoon and supply-side management**.

Broader Economic Implications

- With both WPI and CPI at multi-year lows, RBI may consider **policy rate cuts** to stimulate demand; markets are already pricing in possible action.
- **Equity markets** responded positively, as lower inflation supports **economic growth**, with Nifty futures trending upwards.
- **Core CPI inflation** (excluding food and fuel) remains moderate (~4.4–4.5%), indicating stable underlying demand.

NITI Aayog Releases 3rd Trade Watch

What's New?

- On **July 14, 2025**, NITI Aayog released the **third edition** of its **Trade Watch Quarterly** report for **Q3 FY25 (Oct–Dec 2024)**, presented by Member **Dr Arvind Virmani**, highlighting India's performance under global trade pressures.
- The report includes a special theme, **"Rebalancing the Trade Chessboard: Implications of US Tariff Realignment,"** analysing fresh US tariff policy and its impact on India's exports.

Trade Performance

- **Merchandise exports** rose by ~3% to **\$108.7 bn**, while **imports** grew ~6.5% to **\$187.5 bn**, expanding the trade deficit.
- **Services exports** surged **17%**, achieving a surplus of **\$52.3 bn**, underpinning India's trade resilience and reinforcing its edge in **digitally delivered services (DDS)** (~\$269 bn in 2024).

High-Tech and Manufacturing Sectors

- High-tech goods like **aircraft parts, electrical machinery, and arms/ammunition** saw ~10.6% **CAGR** since FY14, with certain products exhibiting **200% YoY export growth**.
- The US tariff reset improved India's **export competitiveness** across more than **100 product lines**, notably in **pharma, textiles, auto components, and electric goods**.

Why It Matters

- With shifts in global supply chains, India gained a **first-mover advantage** in sectors where US tariffs on other exporters increased.
- The strong **services surplus** cushions the widening goods deficit, showcasing the importance of **sectoral diversification** and policy focus on **high-value services**.

Policy Recommendations

- NITI Aayog advises investment in **logistics, market intelligence, and regulatory agility** to sustain export momentum in these newly favorable sectors.
- A separate **working paper** recommends a strategic **"dual-track"** trade policy—granting market

access in select **non-essential agricultural goods**, while strengthening **domestic competitiveness through structural reforms**.

1.4 Lakh New PMJDY Accounts Opened in Two Weeks

What's New?

- Since **1 July 2025**, the **financial inclusion saturation campaign** launched by the **Department of Financial Services (Finance Ministry)** has led to the opening of **1.39 lakh new PMJDY accounts** in just two weeks (43,447 camps conducted).
- Simultaneously, **5.4 lakh enrollments** were made under **PMJJBY, PMSBY, and Atal Pension Yojana (APY)**.

Why It Matters

- The campaign runs from **July 1 to September 30, 2025**, and aims to saturate all **Gram Panchayats and Urban Local Bodies** to ensure **universal financial access**.
- It emphasizes **financial literacy, last-mile reach, and integration of social security and pension coverage** for millions.

Broader Context

- **PM Jan Dhan Yojana**, launched in **2014**, offers **zero-balance bank accounts, ruPay debit cards, and access to credit, insurance, and pensions**, aiming to end financial exclusion.
- To date, over **55.4 crore accounts** have been opened, with **56% held by women**, and cumulative deposits exceeding **₹2.5 lakh crore**.
- However, a **World Bank report** highlights that **16% of accounts remain inactive**—compared to 3–4% in peer countries—underscoring the need for reactivation drives.

SEBI Launches VCF Settlement Scheme 2025

What's New?

- The **SEBI VCF Settlement Scheme 2025** opens on **July 21, 2025** and closes on **January 19, 2026**, offering a settlement opportunity for **venture capital funds (VCFs)** that have migrated to the **Alternative Investment Funds (AIF)** regime but failed to liquidate their schemes despite tenure expiry.
- SEBI will initiate action against non-compliant VCFs post **July 19, 2025**, marking the end of the migration grace period.

Who Can Apply & How?

- **Eligibility:** VCFs must have at least one **expired scheme**—post-migration —pending wind-up.
- **Application:** Submit the prescribed **settlement form** on SEBI's portal (from July 21), with a **₹25,000 non-refundable fee + 18% GST**.
- **Settlement Fee Structure:**
 - Base fee of **₹1 lakh** for up to 1 year delay.
 - Additional **₹50,000 per extra year or part thereof**.

- **Corpus-based slab** penalties range between ₹1 lakh and ₹6 lakh.

- **Pharma/chemicals** performed relatively better (−14.8%).

Why It Matters

- **Regulatory closure:** Addresses legacy non-compliance under the repealed 2012 VCF regulations and pending AIF transitions.
- **Investor protection:** Ensures expired VCFs exit cleanly, minimizing uncertainty for investors and safeguarding fund integrity.
- **SEBI enforcement authority:** Firms failing to apply face **enforcement actions**—penalties, prohibitions, and potentially being barred from future market activities.

Settlement Scheme in Perspective

- **Background:** VCF regulations were replaced by the AIF framework in May 2012; funds had an extension until July 19, 2025, to wind-up prior schemes.
- The scheme allows **sponsors/investment managers** to bear the settlement costs—not recoverable from investors—underlining accountability.
- This aligns with SEBI's broader goal of **market discipline and compliance** for alternate investment vehicles.

India Tops Investment Confidence in Q3 2025

What's New?

- India recorded a **12.6% year-on-year growth** in investment confidence in Q3 2025, ranking **highest among 32 economies** surveyed by **Dun & Bradstreet (D&B)**.
- Notably, this surge came despite a **1.4% quarter-on-quarter dip** in confidence, set against a **global decline of 13.1%** for the same period.

Confidence Indices & Drivers

- **Key sub-indices tracked:**
 - Capital expenditure
 - Workforce size
 - Supply chain stability
 - Tariff uncertainty
 - Domestic interest rates
- **Top concern:** **Supply chain stability** (46.8% of businesses flagged it as a major investment driver).
- **Least concern:** tariff unpredictability, aligning with domestic interest rate trends.

Global and Domestic Comparison

- **Advanced economies** (France, Japan, Germany, Spain) saw larger confidence drops.
- **Emerging markets** faced steeper declines:
 - Russia −26.1%, Brazil −23.9%, South Africa −20.7%.
- India, in contrast, bucked the trend with positive confidence growth.

Sector-wise Sentiment

- **Manufacturing** saw sharper dip (−17.2%) compared to **services** (−10.8%).
- Within manufacturing:
 - **Capital goods:** −33.1%
 - **Food processing:** −26.9%
 - **Automotive:** −26.4%

India Unveils Automotive Mission Plan for Global Leadership

What's New?

- The **Ministry of Heavy Industries** has launched **Automotive Mission Plan 2047 (AMP 2047)**, a strategic roadmap aligned with the '**Viksit Bharat @ 2047**' vision aiming to elevate India as a **global automotive power**.
- **Seven expert sub-committees**—comprising government officials, industry bodies (SIAM, ACMA, CII, FICCI), academia, and R&D institutes—have begun formulating milestones for **2030, 2037, and 2047**.

Mandate & Focus Areas

- **Sector-wide collaboration** involving ministries like **Power, Petroleum, Environment, DPIIT**, and departments of RT&H, Commerce—ensures a **multi-stakeholder approach**.
- **Key priorities:**
 - **Innovation & technology:** including EVs, fuel cells, ADAS, autonomous vehicles.
 - **Sustainability:** focus on clean mobility, charging infrastructure, domestic battery production.
 - **Export growth** and global market share enhancement.

Rationale & Legacy

- Builds upon **AMP 2006–16** and **AMP 2016–26**, which positioned India among the world's top three auto manufacturing hubs and contributed ~7.1% of GDP and ~12% of exports.
- Next phase aims to triple efforts by focusing on **quality, global standards, and future-readiness**.

Milestones & Implementation

- **Phased goals:**
 - **2030:** Ramp-up in EV adoption and infrastructure.
 - **2037:** Substantial increase in global market share and exports.
 - **2047:** Achieve leadership in innovation, technology, and manufacturing excellence.
- **Apex Committee**, led by Heavy Industries Secretary **Kamran Rizvi**, will validate and guide the plan.

India Leads Global Real-Time Payments with UPI

What's New?

- According to an **IMF report**, India has become the **world leader in real-time digital payments**, with **UPI processing 18.39 billion transactions** in June 2025.
- This marks a **32% year-on-year growth** (from 13.88 billion in June 2024).

UPI Ecosystem Highlights

- **491 million users** and **65 million merchants** now use UPI, connecting **675 banks** on one interoperable platform.
- In June, the system handled **₹24.03 lakh crore**, making up **85% of India's digital transactions**.
- UPI contributes nearly **50% of global real-time digital payments**, surpassing others like Visa.

Why It Matters

- **Supercharges financial inclusion:** Seamless digital payments reduce dependence on cash and cards.
- **Interoperability model:** Works across apps and banks via a unified interface—NPCI, RBI, fintechs teamwork ensures smooth operations.
- **Boosts economy:** Speed, low cost, and scale support MSMEs, e-commerce, and everyday transactions.

Global Impact & Expansion

- UPI is live in **seven countries:** UAE, Singapore, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, France, and Mauritius—marking its **Europe entry**.
- India is pushing for UPI adoption within **BRICS+**, improving cross-border remittances.

Additional Info

- **Launched in 2016** by NPCI atop the IMPS infrastructure and regulated by RBI.
- Built on the **India Stack:** Aadhaar e-KYC, Jan Dhan financial inclusion, DigiLocker, and FASTags.
- A June 2025 snapshot: **~18.67 billion transactions** (~₹25.14 trillion) per NPCI data.

Vadhavan Port to Boost India's Global Trade Footprint

What's New?

- The **Union Cabinet** has officially approved the construction of the **Greenfield Vadhavan Port** near Dahanu, Maharashtra, with a colossal investment of **₹76,220 crore**.
- The project is expected to add **23.2 million TEUs** of container handling capacity and boost total port throughput by **298 million tonnes per annum (MMT)**.
- Strategically positioned on the **India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)**, this deep-draft, offshore port signifies a major upgrade in India's maritime infrastructure.

Key Details & Infrastructure

- To be developed by **Vadhavan Port Project Ltd (VPPL)**, an SPV under **JNPA (74%)** and **Maharashtra Maritime Board (26%)**, following a **Landlord Port Model**.
- First phase targets completion by **2029/2030**, with **4 container terminals**, expanding to **9 terminals** by 2034.
- Port design includes:
 - **9 container terminals** (1 km wharves), **4 multipurpose berths**, **4 liquid-berths**, a **Ro-Ro berth**, and a **Coast Guard berth**.
 - **1,448 ha reclaimed**, **10 km offshore breakwater**, draft depth **~20 m** to accommodate ULCS vessels.

Strategic & Socio-Economic Impact

- Expected to **double India's container handling capacity**, strengthen global supply chains, and position India among **top 10 global ports**.
- Supports **PM Gati-Shakti logistics vision**, including road-rail connectivity via NHs and Dedicated Freight Corridor.
- Estimated to create **~12 lakh jobs** (direct & indirect) across maritime, logistics, skill development, and agribusiness sectors.

Community & Skill Development

- Diverse **MoUs** signed for:
 1. **YCMOU** – local vocational training.
 2. **DG Shipping & JNPA** – maritime-skilling via MTIs.
 3. **Sahyadri Farms** – rural entrepreneurship in agri-value chain.
 4. Heavy-vehicle & mechanical training via NGOs.
 5. **WhatsApp chatbot** for youth engagement.

RBI's Financial Inclusion Index Reaches 67 in FY25

What's New?

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** released its **Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index)** for FY 2024-25, showing a **rise to 67.0** from **64.2** in March 2024—a **4.3% increase**.
- Growth was recorded **across all three sub-indices: Access, Usage, and Quality**.

Breakdown of the Index

- **Access** (35% weight): Infrastructure and reach—bank branches, ATMs, BC points.
- **Usage** (45% weight): Actual utilisation—active accounts, credit uptake, insurance, digital transactions.
- **Quality** (20% weight): Measures financial literacy, consumer protection and service delivery quality.
- The latest improvement was driven mainly by **Usage and Quality dimensions**, indicating deeper and more meaningful engagement.

Why It Matters

- Reflects a shift from **mere access to active and trusted usage**, vital for **financial inclusion success**.
- Demonstrates the impact of initiatives such as:
 - **PM-Jan Dhan Yojana** (558.3 million accounts; 311.3 million held by women; 372.6 million rural accounts).
 - **UPI and digital banking**, financial literacy drives, and stronger consumer protection frameworks.

Boosting Jobs: PM Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana

What's New?

- The **Labour Ministry** announced the **PM Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (PM-VBRY)**, an **employment-linked**

incentive scheme, effective from **August 1, 2025**, aiming to create over **3.5 crore jobs** in two years.

- Approved by the **Union Cabinet**, the scheme has an outlay of **Rs 99,446 crore** and targets **first-time employees** and **employers** with financial incentives.
- Focuses on **formal job creation**, especially in the **manufacturing sector**, with benefits for jobs created between **August 1, 2025, and July 31, 2027**.

What is the PM Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana?

- A government initiative under the **Viksit Bharat** vision to promote **formal employment** and **social security** across sectors.
- **Part A (First-time Employees)**: Offers **one-month EPF wage** (up to **Rs 15,000**) in two instalments to employees earning up to **Rs 1 lakh** monthly, registered with **EPFO**. The first instalment is paid after **6 months** of service, and the second after **12 months** upon completing a **financial literacy programme**. A portion is saved in a **deposit account** to encourage savings.
- **Part B (Employers)**: Provides up to **Rs 3,000 per month** for two years per additional employee hired, with extended incentives (up to four years) for **manufacturing sector** employers. Small firms (up to 50 employees) need to hire at least **two additional workers**, while larger firms (50+ employees) need **five**.
- Payments are processed via **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** using the **Aadhaar Bridge Payment System**.

Implementation and Monitoring

- The **Ministry of Labour and Employment** oversees the scheme, with the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs** identifying eligible firms.
- **AI-driven technologies** and **foolproof systems** will monitor hiring to prevent misuse, ensuring only genuine new hires qualify.
- The scheme is part of a broader **Rs 2 lakh crore package** for employment and skilling, targeting opportunities for **4.1 crore youth**.

Additional Info

- **Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)**: A statutory body under the **Ministry of Labour and Employment**, managing provident fund, pension, and insurance schemes for formal sector employees. It ensures **social security** through mandatory contributions from employees and employers.
- **Viksit Bharat Initiative**: A government vision for a developed India by 2047, focusing on economic growth, sustainability, and inclusive development, with employment as a key pillar.
- **Ministry of Labour and Employment**: Responsible for labour welfare, social security, and employment generation policies. It administers schemes like **Atmanirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana (ABRY)**, a predecessor to PM-VBRY.
- **Manufacturing Sector**: Contributes **~17% to India's GDP** and is a priority for job creation due to its potential for large-scale employment and economic growth.

GST Burden and RBI Liquidity Injection: Key Updates

What's New?

- A study reveals India's **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** is **moderately progressive**, but the **bottom 50% consumers** face a similar tax burden as the **middle 30%**, while the **top 20%** pay **10%** of their consumption as GST.
- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** conducted a **two-day variable rate repo (VRR) auction** on July 23, 2025, injecting **Rs 50,000 crore** to manage **liquidity deficits** after the **weighted average call rate (WACR)** surged to **5.73%**, exceeding the **repo rate (5.50%)** and **Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) rate (5.75%)**.

Understanding GST and Its Impact

- **GST** is a **unified indirect tax** introduced in 2017 to replace multiple taxes, aiming for a **single market** and **simplified tax structure**.
- **Study findings**:
 - **Bottom 50%** (poorest consumers) spend **7%** of consumption on GST, similar to the **middle 30%**.
 - **Top 20%** bear a higher burden at **10%**, indicating **moderate progressivity**.
 - **Post-tax consumption inequality** has decreased, showing **redistributive effects**.
- **Challenges**:
 - **Complex tax slabs** (e.g., 5%, 12%, 18% for popcorn variants) create confusion and compliance burdens.
 - **Lower-income groups** face disproportionate impact from tax on **essentials**.

RBI's Liquidity Management

- **Variable Rate Repo (VRR) Auction**:
 - Conducted to inject **short-term liquidity** when **WACR** exceeded the **Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) corridor**.
 - Received bids of **Rs 71,902 crore** against **Rs 50,000 crore** notified, with a **cut-off rate of 5.53%** and **weighted average rate of 5.58%**.
- **Context**:
 - **Tax outflows** (e.g., GST, advance tax) reduced system liquidity from **Rs 4.25 lakh crore** (July 4) to **Rs 2.42 lakh crore** (July 22).
 - High **call rates** (up to **5.85%**) and **tri-party repo rates (TREPs)** (**5.72%**) prompted RBI action to align rates with the **repo rate**.
- **Purpose**: Ensure **monetary policy transmission** and maintain rates within the **LAF corridor** (repo rate to MSF rate).

Additional Info

- **Goods and Services Tax Council**: A **constitutional body** under Article 279A, chaired by the **Union Finance Minister**, with state finance ministers as members. It decides **tax rates, exemptions, and slab structures**.
- **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**: India's **central bank**, responsible for **monetary policy, liquidity management, and financial stability**. Key tools

include **repo rate** (5.50%), **reverse repo rate**, **MSF** (5.75%), and **Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)**.

- **Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF)**: RBI's framework to manage **short-term liquidity** through **repo** (lending) and **reverse repo** (absorbing) operations.
- **Economic Context**: India's **post-pandemic recovery** is **K-shaped**, benefiting the wealthy while challenging the poor, increasing focus on **equitable tax systems** and **liquidity management**.

- **SME barriers**: Low intent to buy due to **perceived non-necessity**, **lack of risk-management expertise**, and **margin pressures**, with **70% of micro/small enterprises** purchasing insurance only for **regulatory/client mandates**.
- **Solutions**: **Tailored products**, **digital platforms**, and **insurance literacy** to enhance adoption, especially for **SMEs** and **low-income segments**.

Strategic and Economic Context

- **Regulatory support**: The **Union Budget 2025** raised the **FDI cap** in insurance from **74% to 100%** for companies investing all premiums in India, attracting **Rs 54,000 crore (US\$ 6.5 billion)** in FDI over the past nine years. The **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)** promotes **innovative products** and **digital outreach**.
- **Market landscape**: India has **57 insurance companies** (24 life, 34 non-life), with **Life Insurance Corporation (LIC)** holding **60% market share** in life insurance premiums. Private players like **SBI Life**, **HDFC Life**, and **ICICI Prudential Life** lead in premium collection.
- **Past performance**: Between **FY 2020–2024**, total premiums grew from **Rs 7.8 lakh crore** to **Rs 11.2 lakh crore**, with **non-life premiums** (health, motor, crop) rising **19.5% in FY24** to **Rs 1.14 lakh crore**.
- **Government schemes**: **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)** boosted **crop insurance**, while **Ayushman Bharat (PMJAY)** provides **Rs 5 lakh health cover** to **44.6 crore people**.

India's Insurance Sector Set to Double to Rs 25 Lakh Crore by 2030

What's New?

- On **July 26, 2025**, the **Insurance Brokers Association of India (IBAI)**, in collaboration with **McKinsey & Company**, unveiled a report titled "**Leading the Path to Insurance for All: Broker of the Future**" during IBAI's **24th Foundation Day** in **Mumbai**, projecting India's insurance sector to grow from **Rs 11.2 lakh crore** in 2024 to **Rs 25 lakh crore** by 2030, a **123% increase**.
- **Insurance penetration** is expected to rise from **3.7%** in 2024 to **5%** by 2030, nearing the global average of **6.8%**, driven by **digital expansion**, **regulatory reforms**, and **rising demand** across **retail** and **SME segments**.
- The report, launched by **Maharashtra Governor C.P. Radhakrishnan**, aligns with the government's vision of "**Insurance for All by 2047**", emphasizing the role of **insurance brokers** in bridging access gaps.

Key Insights from the Report

- **Growth drivers**:
 - **Retail segment**: Gross Written Premiums (GWP) expected to double to **Rs 21 lakh crore** by 2030, with **90% driven by life insurance**. The **mass-market segment** (basic insurance needs) will contribute **45%** of premiums, while **ultra-high-net-worth (UHNH)** and **high-net-worth (HNI)** individuals (assets over **Rs 8.5 crore**) will account for **20%**.
 - **Institutional segment**: Non-life GWP projected to nearly triple to **Rs 2.8 lakh crore**, with **health** and **property** lines driving **80%** of premiums. **SMEs**, currently contributing **10%**, are expected to grow **4–5 times**, particularly in **17 city clusters** across industries like **textiles**, **automotives**, and **pharmaceuticals**.
- **Challenges**:
 - **Protection gap**: Only **50% of Indians over 18** have **life insurance**, and **40%** have **health insurance** (drops to **25%** without government schemes). Among **UHNH/HNI**, **60%** believe ideal life cover should be **10 times their salary**, but only **30%** have it.
 - **Rural access**: **65% of India's population** lives in rural areas, contributing **45% of GDP**, but only **2% of life insurance branches** are rural-based.

India's Skilled Workforce Fuels Remittance Leadership and GCC Growth

What's New?

- On **July 30, 2025**, a report by the **Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA)** highlighted India's position as the **world's leading remittance recipient**, receiving **\$135 billion** in 2024, driven by its **skilled workforce** in **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries**, the **US**, and other regions, per **World Bank** data. India's remittances are projected to reach **\$160 billion by 2027**.
- The report, released during a **New Delhi event**, also projected that **Global Capability Centres (GCCs)** in India will contribute **2% of India's GDP** (approximately **\$103 billion**) and create **2.8 million jobs** by 2030, with **1,700 GCCs** in **2023–24** expected to grow to **2,200**.
- **Md. Sajid Khan**, ACCA India Director, emphasized India's **young, educated workforce**, **stable business environment**, and **digital transformation** as key drivers, with **20,000 global leadership roles** projected to be based in India by 2030.

What are Remittances and GCCs?

- **Remittances**: Funds sent by **migrant workers** to their home country, with India's **10 million-strong diaspora** in **GCC countries** (e.g., **UAE**, **Saudi Arabia**), the **US**, **UK**, and **Canada** contributing significantly.

In **2024**, India's remittances surpassed **Mexico (\$70 billion)** and **China (\$50 billion)**, accounting for **3.7% of GDP**.

- **Global Capability Centres (GCCs)**: Also known as **Global In-house Centres (GICs)** or **Captive Centres**, these are **MNC-owned hubs** leveraging India's talent for **innovation, R&D, and global operations**. In **FY24**, GCCs generated **\$64.6 billion in export revenue**, a **40% increase** from \$46 billion in **FY23**.
- **Key highlights**:
 - **Cities**: **Bengaluru** leads with **487 GCCs** (29% of India's total), followed by **Hyderabad (273)**, **NCR (272)**, **Mumbai (12%)**, **Pune (11%)**, and **Chennai (10%)**.
 - **Sectors**: Growth in **finance, technology, healthcare, and manufacturing**, with finance roles shifting to **business partnering, data analytics, and cost transformation**.
 - **Tier-II expansion**: Cities like **Coimbatore, Ahmedabad, and Jaipur** are emerging as GCC hubs, driven by **infrastructure and cost advantages**.

Strategic Importance

- **Remittance impact**: Supports **household incomes, rural economies, and foreign exchange reserves**, with **UAE (18%), US (15%), and Saudi Arabia (11%)** as top sources. Remittances bolster India's **economic stability**, funding **education, healthcare, and MSMEs**.
- **GCC growth**: Evolved from **back-office hubs** to **innovation centers**, GCCs drive **services exports and high-skill jobs**, with **53% of global GCCs** (1,700 of 3,200) based in India. The **NASSCOM** estimate projects **1,900 GCCs** by 2030, creating **3 million jobs** (slightly higher than **ACCA's** estimate).
- **Policy support**: **FDI reforms, Digital India, and Skill India** initiatives, along with **state-level incentives**, attract MNCs. The **Union Budget 2025** emphasized **digital infrastructure and skilling** to sustain GCC growth.
- **Challenges**: Addressing **skill gaps, improving rural connectivity, and managing visa restrictions** in countries like the **US** to maintain remittance flows.

and whole-time directors) from **8 to 10 years**, aligning with the **97th Constitutional Amendment**.

- **Public Sector Banks (PSBs)** can now transfer **unclaimed shares, interest, and bond redemption proceeds** to the **Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF)**, aligning with **Companies Act, 2013** practices, and offer **remuneration to statutory auditors** to improve audit independence.

What is the Banking Laws (Amendment) Act, 2025?

- **Overview**: The Act introduces **19 amendments** across five key legislations: **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, Banking Regulation Act, 1949, State Bank of India Act, 1955, and Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Acts, 1970 and 1980**. Sections **3, 4, 5, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20** will be enforced from **August 1, 2025**.
- **Key provisions**:
 - **Substantial Interest**: Raises the threshold from **Rs 5 lakh** to **Rs 2 crore** to reflect current economic conditions, redefining significant shareholding influence in banks.
 - **Cooperative Bank Tenure**: Extends director tenure to **10 years**, enhancing **management stability** in line with the **97th Constitutional Amendment (2011)** for cooperative societies.
 - **PSB Reforms**:
 - Aligns **auditor appointments** for **State Bank of India (SBI)** and other nationalized banks (e.g., **PNB, BoI**) with **Companies Act, 2013**, allowing banks to set auditor fees.
 - Mandates transfer of **unclaimed funds** (e.g., dividends, bond proceeds) to the **IEPF**, protecting investors and ensuring unclaimed assets are utilized for public education.
 - **Capital Norms**: Updates **minimum paid-up capital** requirements for banks, modernizing outdated financial thresholds.
- **Significance**: Strengthens **regulatory oversight**, improves **audit quality**, and enhances **depositor and investor protection**, aligning India's banking with **global best practices**.

Banking Laws (Amendment) Act, 2025: Key Provisions Effective from August 1

What's New?

- On **July 29, 2025**, the **Ministry of Finance** notified that key provisions of the **Banking Laws (Amendment) Act, 2025**, enacted on **April 15, 2025**, will take effect from **August 1, 2025**, through **Gazette Notification S.O. 3494(E)**. The Act aims to enhance **governance standards, depositor protection, and audit quality** across India's banking sector.
- The amendments revise the **"substantial interest"** threshold from **Rs 5 lakh** to **Rs 2 crore**, unchanged since **1968**, and extend the tenure of **cooperative bank directors** (excluding Chairperson

Strategic Importance

- **Governance and stability**: The amendments address **outdated regulations**, promoting **transparency and accountability** in **PSBs, cooperative banks, and private banks**.
- **Depositor protection**: Transferring unclaimed funds to the **IEPF** safeguards investor interests, with **Rs 1,534 crore** already transferred by PSBs as of **2024**.
- **Audit quality**: Empowering PSBs to remunerate auditors attracts **high-quality professionals**, reducing risks of financial mismanagement, critical after past **NPA crises** (e.g., **Rs 10.4 lakh crore** in **2018**).
- **Challenges**: Ensuring **uniform implementation** across diverse banking sectors, addressing **cooperative bank**

mismanagement, and building public awareness of IEPF claims.

State Finances Reveal Mixed Economic Trends for FY2025

What's New?

- On July 30, 2025, an analysis of state finances for FY2025, covering 17 major states (representing 90% of India's GDP), highlighted a widening fiscal deficit to Rs 9.5 trillion (3.2% of Gross State Domestic Product, GSDP) from Rs 7.8 trillion (2.9% GSDP) in FY2024, driven by higher revenue expenditure and lower-than-expected capital expenditure (capex).
- Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist at ICRA, noted that Central government assistance has boosted state capex, but limited borrowing space and a rising revenue deficit (funding less productive expenses) constrain fiscal health. The provisional actuals (PA) for FY2025 showed capex at Rs 7.4 trillion, up Rs 678 billion from FY2024, but Rs 1.1 trillion below Revised Estimates (RE).
- Beyond FY2026, the 16th Finance Commission and Pay Commission recommendations, along with changes to GST compensation cess, will shape state finances, urging incentives for maximizing capex within fiscal limits.

What Do State Finances Indicate?

- Fiscal trends:**
 - Fiscal deficit:** Increased to 3.2% of GSDP in FY2025 from 2.9% in FY2024, contrasting with the Centre's fiscal compression (targeting 4.9% of GDP in FY2025). The 17 states include major economies like Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh, but exclude smaller states like Assam and Sikkim.
 - Revenue deficit:** A higher share of fiscal deficit funded revenue expenditure (e.g., salaries,

subsidies), reducing the capex share to 78% in FY2025 from 80–90% during FY2022–24, signaling less productive spending.

- Capex shortfall:** States undershot Revised Estimates by Rs 1.1 trillion, unlike the Centre's capex overshoot, indicating implementation challenges despite Central schemes like 50-year interest-free loans.

Key observations:

- Central support:** Schemes like Gati Shakti and urban infrastructure funds drove state capex, but execution delays and state-specific priorities led to underspending.
- GST compensation:** Ending in 2026, the GST cess impacts states' revenue, requiring fiscal adjustments to maintain capex.
- Future outlook:** The 16th Finance Commission (effective FY2027) and Pay Commission salary revisions will strain budgets, necessitating revenue mobilization and capex prioritization.

Strategic Importance

- Economic impact:** State finances reflect 90% of India's GDP, making their health critical for national growth. The capex slowdown risks stalling infrastructure and job creation, while rising revenue deficits limit productive investments.
- Policy implications:** States must balance revenue spending (e.g., welfare schemes like Ladki Bahin in Maharashtra) with capex to sustain growth, especially as GST compensation ends. Central incentives for fiscal discipline are key.
- Challenges:** Addressing execution bottlenecks, aligning state budgets with Central schemes, and preparing for post-2026 fiscal constraints amid global trade risks (e.g., potential \$30 billion export loss due to US tariffs).

Science & Technology

“One-Stop Rail Travel” – Indian Railways Launches RailOne Super-App

What's New?

- In July 2025, Indian Railways unveiled its much-anticipated RailOne super-app (also known as “SwaRail”), developed by the **Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS)**, consolidating all passenger services—ticketing, PNR enquiry, live train tracking, platform tickets, food-on-board, parcel, and complaint redressal—into a **single unified app**.

Why It Matters

- **Unified user experience:** Seamless integration via **single sign-on**, replacing multiple apps like RailConnect, UTS, NTES, Rail Madad.
- **Simplified journey planning:** Features include **reserved and unreserved ticket booking, live train status, coach position, platform tickets, e-catering, parcel services, and damage claims**—all through one interface.
- **Enhanced reliability:** Acts as a backup during high traffic periods (e.g., festivals and holidays) when legacy apps face strain, thereby ensuring **system robustness and customer convenience**.

Tech & Governance Backbone

- Built by CRIS under the Ministry of Railways, leveraging existing IRCTC credentials for easy onboarding, and supports **m-PIN/biometric authentication, wallet integration, and multilingual support**.

Migration Strategy & App Consolidation

- While **IRCTC Rail Connect** remains operational, RailOne offers redundancy during peak usage and sets a roadmap to eventually **merge standalone apps (UTS, NTES, Rail Madad)** into this centralized system.
- The integrated model aligns with India's **digital governance objectives**, improving **efficiency, reducing app clutter, and boosting digital literacy**.

Additional Info

- The earlier apps—**RailConnect, UTS Mobile, NTES, and Rail Madad**—facilitated specific tasks, but their fragmentation complicated user experience.
- IRCTC continues managing ticketing, maintaining its infrastructure while RailOne adds broader services for passenger convenience.

- This is the first documented case of an altermagnet exhibiting different charge carrier types—**electrons in-plane** and **holes cross-plane**—making it a single material with both p-type and n-type behavior.

Why It Matters

- **Simplified device architecture:** CrSb's dual conductivity could eliminate the need for separate p-type and n-type materials in semiconductor devices, reducing complexity and cost.
- **Pioneering spintronic applications:** As an **altermagnet**, CrSb combines the advantages of ferromagnets (spin control) and antiferromagnets (no external magnetic signature), ideal for next-gen electronics.
- **Room-temperature viability:** CrSb exhibits strong altermagnetic effects at temperatures **twice that of room temperature**, ideal for practical device settings.

Understanding Altermagnetism

- **Altermagnets** are a new class of materials with **zero net magnetization** externally yet unique internal spin structures combining ferromagnetic and antiferromagnetic traits.
- These materials are at the forefront of **spintronics**, promising faster, more energy-efficient memory and logic devices compared to traditional electronics.

DDCP in CrSb

- In **in-plane conduction**, electrons (n-type behavior) dominate.
- In **cross-plane conduction**, holes (p-type behavior) take precedence.
- This anisotropic duality is rare in solids and offers **built-in p-n junction functionality without heterostructures or doping**.

Material Advantages

- Composed of **earth-abundant, non-toxic elements**—favorable for sustainable electronics.
- High spin-splitting energy ($\sim 30\times$ room temperature), ideal for **practical application**.

Additional Info

- Similar breakthroughs in **2D altermagnets** (e.g., MnTe) were recently reported using **X-ray microscopy** in Sweden, confirming altermagnetism at nanoscale.
- **Global interest:** Over 200 research papers on altermagnetism in the past year—a sign of intense scientific focus.
- CrSb's DDCP breakthrough could significantly influence **spintronics, thermoelectrics, photovoltaics, and energy-efficient tech**, aligning with research interests in GS-III (science & tech) and GS-II (innovation policy) contexts.

“Magnetic Duality” – Revolutionary Altermagnet Discovery in CrSb for Future Electronics

What's New?

- Scientists at **S N Bose National Centre for Basic Sciences**, supported by the **Department of Science & Technology**, have discovered a unique **direction-dependent conduction polarity (DDCP)** in the altermagnetic material **chromium antimonide (CrSb)**.

“Green Charge Revolution” – Indian Scientists Pioneer Next-Gen Supercapacitor Materials

What’s New?

- Researchers at **Centre for Nano & Soft Matter Sciences (CeNS)**, Bengaluru, in collaboration with **Aligarh Muslim University**, have developed a **lanthanum-doped silver niobate (AgNbO_3)** material, demonstrating **100% coulombic efficiency** and **excellent charge retention**, powering an LCD prototype—marking a breakthrough in supercapacitor tech.
- Simultaneously, a team from **Nagaland University**, alongside **Visvesvaraya Technological University** and others, has patented an **aminated graphene** electrode using a simple, scalable method with 2.2 V window, ~50 Wh/kg energy density, >98% capacity retention over 10,000 cycles—boasting a 5× jump in energy density over conventional materials.

Why It Matters

- **Bridging tech gaps:** Traditional supercapacitors offer fast charges but limited energy storage; these innovations deliver both **high energy density** and **rapid power delivery**, crucial for **EVs, grid storage, and portable devices**.
- **Eco-friendly advantage:** Both materials use **non-toxic, lead-free** components (AgNbO_3 , graphene), aligning with **green energy goals**.
- **Commercial promise:** Proven stable performance through extensive cycles and real-world demonstrations (LCD powering) suggest readiness for scaling.

Lanthanum-Doped AgNbO_3 (CeNS Initiative)

- **Material innovation:** La modifies AgNbO_3 nanoparticles to shrink size, increase surface area, and boost conductivity.
- **Performance metrics:** Achieved **118% capacity retention** and 100% efficiency, tested in supercapacitor prototype powering electronics.
- **Research yield:** Published in the *Journal of Alloys and Compounds*, indicating academic credibility and global relevance.

Aminated Graphene (Nagaland University Breakthrough)

- **Scalable fabrication:** Single-step aminated graphene from reduced graphene oxide at moderate temperature/pressure—no rare Earths.
- **High performance:** Offers 2.2 V window, ~50 Wh/kg energy density, >98% retention after 10k cycles.
- **Patented & poised for commercialization:** Indian patent acquired; international filing underway—ready for EV, telecom backup, and renewable storage use.

Additional Info

- **Global trend:** Supercapacitor research focuses on asymmetric devices combining metal oxides and carbon materials for balanced power and energy—lanthanum-doped AgNbO_3 and aminated graphene align with this trend.

- **Policy linkages:** R&D backed by **DST**, aligning with national priorities like **Clean Energy Transition, Atmanirbhar Bharat, and Make in India**.
- Similar work at **ARCI-IIT Hyderabad**: MnO_2 -carbon devices achieved 90 Wh/kg energy density at 3,300 W/kg power with high cycle life.
- **IIT Guwahati’s MXene–CNF design** achieved 96% capacitance retention after 20,000 cycles — another example of India’s rising supercapacitor innovation landscape.

Pocket-Sized Sensor Tracks Toxic Sulfur Dioxide (SO_2) at Trace Levels

What’s New?

- Scientists at the **Centre for Nano and Soft Matter Sciences (CeNS)**, Bengaluru—under the **DST**—have developed a **low-cost, pocket-sized sensor** that can detect **toxic sulfur dioxide (SO_2)** at extremely **low concentrations (as low as 320 ppb)**.
- The sensor combines **nickel oxide (NiO)** as the **receptor** and **neodymium nickelate (NdNiO_3)** as the **transducer**, enabling **real-time monitoring** with an easy-to-understand **visual alert system: green (safe), yellow (warning), red (danger)**.

Role of National Institute – CeNS & DST

- **CeNS** is an **autonomous research institution** under the **Department of Science & Technology (DST)**, focused on **nanomaterials and soft-matter science**.
- Its mission includes translating **material science breakthroughs** into **affordable, real-world applications**, such as this sensor.

Why Detect SO_2 at Trace Levels?

- **SO_2** , released from **vehicles, industrial processes, and coal combustion**, is a **harmful air pollutant** triggering **throat irritation, asthma attacks, and long-term lung damage**.
- Standard monitoring systems are often **expensive, energy-intensive, or unable to detect low-level SO_2** —limiting early detection and public safety.

How the Sensor Works

- **NiO** chemically reacts with **SO_2** (acts as receptor).
- **NdNiO_3** converts this reaction into a clear **electrical signal** (acts as transducer).
- The device shows real-time data via **easily readable alerts**, making it usable even by **non-experts**.

Applications & Impact

- **Urban air quality:** can monitor **SO_2** in cities and public spaces.
- **Industrial safety:** ideal for factories, power plants, and enclosed work areas.
- **Public health tool:** helps prevent exposure in vulnerable environments.
- **Portable & cost-effective:** supports widespread adoption and **early warning systems**.

Additional Info

- **SO_2 health norms:** Long-term 8 h exposure limit ~2 ppm, short-term 10 min limit ~5 ppm.

- **Existing sensors:** Commercial SO₂ sensors often require **high operating temperatures**, leading to **higher power use**, **shorter lifespan**, and are **less safe** in explosive environments. The new sensor avoids these drawbacks.
- **Earlier tech:** BARC developed a **room-temperature SnO₂ sensor** detecting 2 ppm SO₂, but the CeNS sensor offers **higher sensitivity (320 ppb)** and **pocket-sized portability**.

C-FLOOD: India's Web Portal for Village-Level Flood Forecasting

What's New?

- Union Jal Shakti Minister **C. R. Patil** launched **C-FLOOD**, a **web-based unified inundation forecasting system** that provides **48-hour flood forecasts** down to the **village level** for enhanced disaster preparedness.
- The portal currently covers the **Mahanadi, Godavari, and Tapi** river basins, with plans to expand nationwide.

Role of the Portal

- Developed by **C-DAC (Pune)** and the **Central Water Commission (CWC)**, with input from **NRSC (ISRO)** under the **National Hydrology Project**.
- Powered by **2-D hydrodynamic modelling**, run on **supercomputers** under the **National Supercomputing Mission (NSM)** jointly led by **MeitY** and **DST**.
- Integrates **real-time hydrological data**, **satellite images**, and **digital elevation models** to generate accurate **inundation maps** and **water-level alerts**.

Why This Matters

- By offering **48-hour advance warnings**, C-FLOOD enables **early evacuations**, **resource deployment**, and **infrastructure protection** at the local level.
- Covers over **40 million hectares (≈12% of India)** that are flood-prone—now with **village-level granularity**.
- Serves as a **central decision-support tool** for **disaster management authorities**, improving **coordination** and **timely responses**.

Additional Info

- **CWC:** Nodal body under Ministry of Jal Shakti responsible for flood warnings and water resource management.
- **C-DAC:** Develops high-performance computing systems and hydrological models.
- **NRSC (ISRO):** Provides remote-sensing data under the National Hydrology Project.
- **NSM:** Launched in 2015 by MeitY and DST to build nation-wide supercomputing capacity.
- **NDEM:** Portal where flood forecasts are integrated for national emergency response.
- **2-D Hydrodynamic Modelling:** Simulates water flow across landscapes to predict flood spread and depth.

Kalaa Setu & Bhasha Setu: Govt's Push for AI-Powered Multilingual Content in India

What's New?

- The **Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB)**, through its **WaveX Startup Accelerator (under WAVES initiative)**, has launched two AI innovation challenges:
 - **Kalaa Setu** – focused on **text-to-video**, **text-to-graphics**, and **text-to-audio** generation for Indian languages.
 - **Bhasha Setu** – aimed at real-time **translation**, **transliteration**, and **voice localization** across at least **12 Indian languages**.

Objectives & Scope

The dual challenges aim to:

- **Bridge India's linguistic digital divide** by enabling **emotionally nuanced, region-specific content** in local languages for varied audiences (farmers, students, senior citizens).
- Provide scalable tools for key agencies—**AIR, DD, PIB**—to generate **real-time multimedia content** across text, audio, graphic, and video formats.

How It Works

- No minimum eligibility—open to startups across maturity levels.
- **Kalaa Setu** demands:
 - Automated **video, graphics**, and **audio** generation from textual inputs.
 - Emphasis on regional context, tone, and cultural relevance.
- **Bhasha Setu** requires:
 - Real-time **translation, transliteration, speech-to-speech**, and **voice cloning** capabilities.
 - Support for emotional expression and regional accents.
- Startups must submit functioning **Minimum Viable Concepts (MVC)** by **July 30, 2025** (Kalaa) and **July 22, 2025** (Bhasha).

Benefits & Incentives

- Top startups get to:
 - **Sign an MoU** with MIB.
 - **Pilot with AIR, DD, and PIB** for integration into national messaging.
 - Gain **incubation support**, including mentorship, infrastructure, and entry into WaveX's innovation ecosystem.

Why It Matters

- India has **22 scheduled languages** and hundreds of dialects—public information often fails to reach its **last-mile demographics**.
- These AI solutions can democratize access to **weather alerts, agriculture advisories, health guidelines**, and **educational content**, fostering **inclusion and social empowerment**.
- Supports national policies such as **Digital India, Bhashini**, and **AI for All**, strengthening India's linguistic and digital sovereignty.

Global GenAI Spending to Hit \$14.2 B by 2025 for Models; Total Market Nears \$644 B

What's New?

- A **Gartner report** reveals that **end-user spending on specialized GenAI models** (like domain-specific models) will reach **\$14.2 billion in 2025**, with **\$1.1 billion** going to domain-specific language models.
- Meanwhile, **overall GenAI investment** across infrastructure, devices, software, and services is projected at **\$644 billion** in total spending for 2025—a 76.4% increase from 2024.

Key Insights

- **Foundation vs Domain Models:**
 - **Foundation models** (e.g., LLMs) remain the primary focus and will see continued investment.
 - By 2027, over **50%** of enterprise GenAI models will be **domain-specific**, sharply up from just **1%** in 2024.
- **Hardware Dominance:**
 - Around **80%** of GenAI spending in 2025 will be on **hardware**—servers, AI-enabled PCs, smartphones.
- **Shifting Strategy:**
 - Enterprises are moving from custom internal AI builds to **off-the-shelf GenAI solutions** for faster deployment and more predictable ROI.
- **The “Paradox”:**
 - Despite some disappointment in early GenAI projects, investment continues strongly as model providers ramp up performance and reliability efforts.

Simplified Summary

- **\$14.2 billion:** targeted end-user spending on GenAI models in 2025.
- **\$644 billion:** total ecosystem spending across hardware, software, and services.
- Sharp rise in **domain-specific model** adoption is anticipated.
- Majority of investment still flows into **hardware**, embedding AI into everyday devices and infrastructure.

India Unveils “Quantum Cyber Readiness” Whitepaper for Secure Digital Future

What's New?

- On **July 11, 2025**, the **Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY)**, **CERT-In**, and cyber-security firm **SISA** jointly released a whitepaper titled *“Transitioning to Quantum Cyber Readiness”*.
- **S. Krishnan**, Secretary MeitY, stressed that **quantum resilience is a strategic imperative**, highlighting India's preparedness as digital operations expand into **AI, ICT, and quantum domains**.

Why It Matters

- **Quantum computers** can break current cryptographic systems, threatening the security of banking, telecom, healthcare, and government communications.
- The initiative is aligned with India's **National Quantum Mission (to 2030–31)** and fortifies the country's **cyber sovereignty**.

Key Recommendations

1. Risk Assessment & Awareness

- The whitepaper starts with **comprehensive impact assessments**, urging regular **quantum-readiness audits** of existing ICT systems.

2. Post-Quantum Cryptography (PQC) Adoption

- It outlines **phased migration pathways** for sectors to replace current encryption with **quantum-resistant algorithms**, fitting into existing compliance frameworks.

3. Sector-Specific Guidance

- Offers tailored plans for **banking, telecom, healthcare, and government institutions**, recognizing diverse needs and infrastructure differences.

4. Layered Rollout Strategy

- Advocates a systematic approach: starting with **risk awareness**, progressing through **PQC integration**, and eventually reaching **compliance**.

5. Indigenous Solutions & Collaboration

- Research, development, and implementation of **homegrown cryptographic tools** are prioritized, reducing dependency on foreign technologies.
- Calls for collaboration across **industry, academia, and government bodies** to build a robust quantum-safe ecosystem.

India's Tech Roadmap: The Bigger Picture

- Reflects earlier initiatives: MeitY's **2024 draft roadmaps** for critical areas like cryptography, IoT, mobile security, and quantum tech through 2047.
- Builds on the establishment of the **MeitY Quantum Computing Applications Lab** (in partnership with AWS) to provide national access to quantum infrastructure.

Indian Railways & DFCCIL Deploy AI-based Inspection System for Enhanced Safety

What's New?

- On **July 11, 2025**, Indian Railways signed an MoU with **DFCCIL** to launch the **Machine Vision-Based Inspection System (MVIS)**—an AI/ML-powered train undercarriage monitoring solution.
- Under the agreement:
 - DFCCIL will handle procurement, installation, testing, and commissioning of **four MVIS units** alongside track sections.
 - The MoU was signed by senior officials: Sumit Kumar (Railway Board) and Jawahar Lal (DFCCIL).

How MVIS Works

- **High-resolution cameras** installed wayside scan moving trains' undercarriages in real-time.

- The AI system detects issues like **loose hangings, missing components, damaged springs, or broken axle-box covers**, and generates **instant alerts** for preventive action.
- It automates processes previously done manually, boosting **efficiency, reliability, and preventive maintenance**.

Why It Matters

- The system marks a **historic first** for Indian Railways in integrating AI-driven safety checks along freight corridors.
- It strengthens the vision of **Digital & Predictive Maintenance**, reducing dependence on human inspections.
- Aligns with the “**Make in India**” and **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** programs by leveraging domestic R&D (IISc-incubated startup L2MRail).

Broader Technological Momentum

- Builds on a 2022 MoU between DFCCIL and IISc (L2MRail) to prototype MVIS and broken-rail detection tools.
- India is also piloting other AI-based systems in the East Central Railway zone, like AI engines detecting fire hazards, brake faults, and alarm-chain pulls at Ara depot.

Global Optical Clock Comparison Sets Stage to Redefine the Second

What's New?

- For the **first time**, scientists have conducted a **coordinated comparison of 10 state-of-the-art optical atomic clocks across six countries**, spanning thousands of kilometers.
- Published in **Optica (June 2025)**, the study confirms the **remarkable precision and consistency** of optical clocks, paving the way for the **redefinition of the SI second**.

Why It Matters

- **Optical clocks** operate on frequencies $\sim 100,000\times$ higher than cesium-based clocks, enabling **femtosecond-level accuracy**—they would drift by just one second over billions of years.
- A precise **global time standard** is crucial for **GPS, telecommunications, financial trading, fundamental physics, and climate science**.
- A **redefined second**—based on optical frequencies—will update the time standard for the first time in over 50 years.

Technical Highlights

- The experiment established **38 optical-frequency ratios** between clocks (e.g., strontium lattice, ytterbium/indium ion), with **unparalleled low uncertainty**.
- Clocks were linked using **satellite transmission (e.g., GPS)** and **high-speed optical fiber networks**, overcoming the challenge of intercontinental synchronization.

Scientific & Practical Implications

- Enables **ultra-precise applications**: from testing **Einstein's relativity** and **detecting gravitational waves**, to mapping Earth's geopotential differences.
- Facilitates a **new global time scale** based on optical precision—known as **T(Opt)**—to eventually replace **UTC** within a few years.
- Helps resolve inconsistencies among national standards and supports global scientific coordination.

“Shubh Aarambh” – Shubhanshu Shukla Returns Safely After ISS Mission

What's New?

- Indian astronaut **Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla** returned to Earth on **July 15, 2025**, after an 18-day mission aboard the **International Space Station (ISS)** under the **Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-4)**, marking **India's first presence on the ISS**.
- The **SpaceX Crew Dragon ‘Grace’ capsule** safely splashed down off the coast of San Diego following a 22-hour descent.

Why It Matters

- **First Indian on ISS**: Shukla becomes the **second Indian in space** (after Rakesh Sharma, 1984) and the first to live and work on the ISS.
- **Boost for Gaganyaan**: His successful mission provides valuable **microgravity data**, experience, and credibility to **ISRO's Gaganyaan** crewed mission planned for **2027**.
- **Visionary milestone**: PM **Narendra Modi** called it the “**auspicious beginning**” (“**Shubh aarambh**”) of a new era in India's space journey.

Key Highlights

- **Experiments onboard ISS**: Shukla conducted over **60 microgravity experiments**, including **7 ISRO-designed studies** on stem cells, muscle atrophy, and crewed spaceflight protocols.
- **Training & funding**: Mission cost $\sim ₹500$ crore ($\sim US\$65$ million), with training by ISRO/NAF and no remuneration for Shukla.
- **International collaboration**: Shared the capsule with NASA veteran Peggy Whitson and astronauts from Poland and Hungary, reflecting **global space cooperation**.
- **National celebration**: PM Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, and UP CM Yogi Adityanath praised Shukla, underscoring national pride and public enthusiasm.

India Pioneers First AI-Powered Traditional Knowledge Digital Library

What's New?

- On **July 12, 2025**, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** published a technical brief, “Mapping the Application of Artificial Intelligence in Traditional Medicine,” noting India's groundbreaking **Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL)** as the world's first

national-level digital repository integrating **AI with traditional medicine systems**.

- WHO recognised India's leadership in digitising **Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani, Sowa Rigpa, and Homeopathy**, and leveraging **AI tools** like genomics-based diagnostics and machine-learning-enabled semantic text analysis.

Why It Matters

- **Preserve & protect heritage:** TKDL helps **prevent biopiracy** by translating ancient formulations (e.g., Ayurgenomics, herbal remedies) into multilingual, patent-readable formats.
- **Modern research gateway:** With AI-driven classification and analysis, researchers can explore ancient texts for novel treatments, strengthening **Ayush's integration with modern healthcare**.
- **Global first:** India represents the **first country** to launch such a comprehensive, AI-integrated, traditional knowledge database—endorsed by WHO.

How It Works

- **Coverage:** Includes thousands of formulations and practices encoded from Sanskrit, Persian, Tamil, etc., translated into English, French, German, Spanish, Japanese.
- **Patent protection:** Accessible to international patent offices (EPO, USPTO, UKIPO, etc.) for **prior art verification**, helping reject illegitimate patents.
- **AI capabilities:**
 - Supports **diagnostic algorithms** (e.g. tongue/pulse analysis).
 - Enables **Ayurgenomics**—integrating genomics and Ayurvedic profiling for personalised care.
 - Facilitates **semantic parsing**, chemical pathway mapping, and cross-system insights across Ayurveda, TCM, Unani, Homoeopathy.

Broader Context & Related Initiatives

- Developed in **2001** by **CSIR and Ministry of Ayush**, TKDL already protects formulations and yoga postures from patent misuse.
- TKDL complements initiatives like the **Vedic Heritage Portal, Global Centre for Traditional Medicine**, and the IKS division under NEP 2020, reinforcing India's curriculum blend of ancient wisdom and modern education.

- DIGIPIN development was collaboratively done with **IIT Hyderabad** and **ISRO's National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC)**, following an open-source model accessible to all stakeholders.
- DHRUVA introduces the concept of "**Address-as-a-Service (AaaS)**", offering secure, **consent-based sharing** of address information for seamless public–private sector integration.
- The policy includes provisions under the **Post Office Act, 2023** for governance, grievance redressal, user consent, and standard-setting.

Why This Matters: Context & Strategic Implications

- Indian addresses are often inconsistent—pin-codes cover large areas (~170 km²), and descriptions rely on landmarks, causing delivery and service inefficiencies; annual losses estimated at ₹83,000–₹1.16 lakh crore (~0.5% of GDP).
- DHRUVA positions address management as a **foundational public infrastructure**, comparable to Aadhaar, UPI, and Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, thus enhancing governance, logistics, emergency response, and inclusion.
- DIGIPIN, with its **precise grid-based structure**, is especially suited for rural areas, informal settlements, and institutions that lack formal street addresses.
- Firms like **Genesys International** are integrating DIGIPIN into **2D/3D mapping platforms**, enabling smart-city pilots, real-time address lookup, and AI-driven service delivery.

Additional Info

- **DHRUVA:**
 - Launched **May 2025** by the Department of Posts.
 - Aims to create interoperable, geocoded address infrastructure with user consent mechanisms.
 - Builds a **governance entity**, sets standards, and ensures legal backing through the **Post Office Act, 2023**.
- **DIGIPIN:**
 - Introduced on **27 May 2025**.
 - A 10-character alphanumeric code representing a **4 m × 4 m grid cell**.
 - Covers India's entire geography including maritime zones, with grid structure based on latitude (2.5°–38.5° N) and longitude (63.5°–99.5° E).
 - **Open-source**, created in collaboration with **IIT Hyderabad** and **ISRO–NRSC**.
- **Address-as-a-Service (AaaS):**
 - A structured protocol for secure, consent-based sharing of DIGIPIN address information across sectors, enabling logistics, e-commerce, emergency services, financial inclusion, etc..
- **Policy & Privacy:**
 - Consent-driven data sharing model.
 - Address data is **not linked to personally identifiable information**, nor retained centrally beyond permissioned use.

DHRUVA Launch: India's Leap to Geo-Coded Addressing with DIGIPIN

What's New?

- The **Department of Posts**, under the **Ministry of Communications**, has released the **DHRUVA policy framework** (Digital Hub for Reference & Unique Virtual Address) in **May 2025**, aimed at establishing a **national digital public infrastructure (DPI)** for addressing.
- At the core of DHRUVA is **DIGIPIN** (Digital Postal Index Number), launched officially on **27 May 2025**, a **10-character, open-source geo-coded code** that uniquely identifies every **4 m × 4 m grid** across India, including maritime areas.

- Designed with a **federated architecture** to ensure user privacy and security.

NISAR Satellite Launch: A Landmark in Indo-US Space Collaboration

What's New?

- On **July 30, 2025**, the **NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR)** satellite was successfully launched from the **Satish Dhawan Space Centre** in **Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh**, aboard the **GSLV-F16 rocket** at **17:40 IST (12:10 GMT)**, marking a historic milestone in **Indo-US space cooperation**.
- The **\$1.5 billion mission**, the costliest Earth observation satellite to date, combines **NASA's L-band** and **ISRO's S-band** radar systems, enabling **centimeter-level tracking** of Earth's surface changes, with data freely accessible within **1–2 days** (near real-time for emergencies).
- **Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh** described it as "India's scientific handshake with the world," aligning with **PM Narendra Modi's Vishwa Bandhu** vision, emphasizing global data sharing for **disaster management, agriculture, and climate monitoring**.

What is the NISAR Mission?

- **NISAR** (NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar) is the first joint **Earth observation satellite** developed by **ISRO and NASA**, weighing **2,392 kg** and placed in a **sun-synchronous polar orbit** for a **3-year mission**. It scans Earth's **land and ice surfaces** every **12 days**, orbiting every **97 minutes**.
- **Key features:**
 - **Dual-band radar:** NASA's **L-band** (penetrates vegetation) and ISRO's **S-band** (monitors soil/surface changes) use **SweepSAR technology** with a **12-meter unfurlable antenna** for high-resolution, all-weather imaging.
 - **Applications:** Tracks **earthquakes, landslides, glacial melt, sea-level rise, crop growth, and land subsidence**, generating **85 terabytes of data daily** to support **disaster response, climate models, and urban planning**.

- **Open-data policy:** Data is globally accessible, benefiting **developing nations** and enabling **real-time emergency responses**.

- **Significance:** The mission, a decade in development, marks ISRO's first use of a **GSLV rocket** for a **sun-synchronous orbit**, showcasing India's growing **space technology prowess**.

Strategic Importance

- **Indo-US collaboration:** NISAR symbolizes a **decade-long partnership**, strengthening **bilateral ties** post **PM Modi's February 2025 US visit**, where **2025** was hailed as a **pioneering year** for civil space cooperation.
- **Global impact:** Provides **unprecedented radar data** for **climate change mitigation, disaster preparedness, and sustainable resource management**, benefiting **global research and policymaking**.
- **India's space diplomacy:** ISRO's **433 foreign satellite launches** for **34 countries** and collaborations with **France, Japan, and others** position India as a **global space leader**, with NISAR paving the way for **private sector involvement** (e.g., **Bellatrix Aerospace, Indian Space Association**).
- **Economic potential:** Supports **agriculture** (crop yield forecasts), **infrastructure** (dam/bridge monitoring), and **aviation/shipping** (fog-penetrating radar), driving **economic resilience**.

Additional Info

- **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO):** Founded in **1969**, ISRO operates under the **Department of Space**, with the **Satish Dhawan Space Centre** as its primary launch site. It has a **100% success rate** for **GSLV launches** in recent years.
- **NASA:** The **US National Aeronautics and Space Administration**, established in **1958**, contributes the **L-band SAR and Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) expertise** to NISAR.
- **GSLV-F16:** A **Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle** with a **4-tonne capacity**, used for the first time to place a satellite in **sun-synchronous orbit**, a technical milestone for ISRO.
- **Vishwa Bandhu:** India's foreign policy vision of being a **global partner**, reflected in NISAR's **open-data approach** and **international collaboration**.

Agriculture

India's Maize Ambition: Doubling Output & Boosting Farmer Prosperity

What's New?

- Union Agriculture Minister **Shivraj Singh Chouhan** inaugurated the **11th India Maize Summit** in New Delhi, organized by **FICCI** in partnership with the **Indian Institute of Maize Research (IIMR)**. The summit unveiled a bold roadmap to nearly **double maize production to 86 million tonnes by 2047**, up from 42.3 Mt currently.
- A multi-pronged strategy was introduced, including **lab-to-land campaigns**, farmer education, improved seed systems, and digital technologies.

India's Maize Journey

- Production growth:** From ~10 Mt in the 1990s to 42.3 Mt today, reflecting a massive expansion in area and output.
- Productivity concern:** Current yields are 3.7 t/ha, well below global standards. Key states like **Bihar** and **West Bengal** are outperforming the average.

Government Initiatives & State-Level Impact

- Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan:** ~11,000 agricultural scientists deployed to 7,000–8,000 villages to expedite application of lab research in farmers' fields.
- UP's Accelerated Maize Program:** Cultivation soared to 540,000 ha across 24 districts, yielding ~34 q/ha (with expectations to reach 40 q/ha). The state now hosts 15 maize-processing firms exploring value-added sectors like bioplastic fibers. MSP-supported procurement and quality seed access are key measures.

Strategic Drivers

- Seed & R&D push:** ICAR-IIMR has developed 265 maize varieties (77 hybrids, 35 bio-fortified). Target productivity: 10–11 t/ha (rabi-spring) & 7–8 t/ha (kharif) hybrids with high fermentable starch (64–65%) to support **E30 ethanol blending**.
- Market outlook:** Maize is now India's fastest-growing cereal—with acreage rising 31% to 12 M ha and production up 75% to over 40 Mt in a decade. Its consumption is rising at 6.7% annually, outpacing 5.8% production growth. The **poultry (51%)** and **ethanol (18%)** sectors are primary consumers.
- Sustainable practices:** Emphasis on **climate-smart agriculture**, resisting soil overuse, enhancing cost efficiency, and ensuring environment-friendly growth.

Cabinet Approves PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana to Boost 100 Agri Districts

What's New?

- On **July 16, 2025**, the **Union Cabinet**, led by PM Modi, approved the **Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana (PMDDKY)** for a **six-year period (FY 2025–26 to FY 2030–31)**, with an annual outlay of **₹24,000 crore**.

- The scheme targets **100 underperforming agricultural districts**, benefiting approximately **1.7 crore farmers**.

Key Objectives

- Improve farm productivity** through **crop diversification**, **sustainable practices**, and **soil & water conservation**.
- Augment post-harvest infrastructure** at the panchayat/block level to reduce losses.
- Enhance irrigation facilities** and **access to short- and long-term credit**, ensuring financial stability for farmers.
- Implementation will involve **convergence of 36 central schemes across 11 ministries**, in collaboration with **state governments** and **private sector partners**.

Institutional Framework & Monitoring

- Master plans will be prepared by **District Dhan-Dhaanya Samitis** featuring district collectors and progressive farmers, aligning local plans with national goals like **organic farming** and **Atmanirbhar Bharat**.
- A **digital dashboard** will track **117 key performance indicators (KPIs)** monthly, overseen by committees at **district, state, and national levels**, aided by NITI Aayog and Central Nodal Officers.

OECD–FAO Outlook Reveals India's Role in Next Food Decade

What's New?

- The **OECD–FAO Agricultural Outlook 2025–2034** projects a **14 % rise in global agricultural and fish production** over the next decade, driven primarily by **productivity gains in middle-income countries**.
- Animal-source food** (meat, dairy, fish) consumption is expected to rise by **6 % per capita globally**, with **lower-middle-income** regions like **India and Southeast Asia** witnessing a **25 % jump to 364 kcal/day**.
- Global GHG emissions** from agriculture may increase by **6 %**, but can be cut by **7 % below current levels** if productivity improves by **15 %** and clean-tech is widely adopted.

Production & Productivity

- Strong **yield improvements** in cereals (1.1 % p.a.) with area expansion at just 0.14 % p.a..
- Global pulses supply** to grow by **26 Mt**, with **India contributing ~8 Mt** due to hybrids, mechanization, MSP and procurement.
- Milk production growth** led by **India and Pakistan**, with milk yields rising 1.8 % p.a..
- Meat output** to grow by **17 %**, while **livestock numbers increase by 7 %**, aided by improved slaughter yields.

Trade & Prices

- Trade remains key:** ~22 % of all food calories to cross borders; real prices slightly decline, pressuring smallholders.
- Fertilizer shocks** in India could raise rice prices up to **6–13 % globally** between 2025–28.

- **Pulses trade** to reach **23 Mt** by 2034 (from 20 Mt), with Canada, Australia, and Russia as exporters.

Sustainability & Emissions

- Agricultural GHG emissions projected to grow **6 %**, but intensity declines with better practices.
- If combined with a **15 % productivity boost** and emission-reduction tech, emissions could fall **7 % below current levels by 2034**.

Biofuels & Other Commodities

- **Biofuels demand** up by **0.9 % annually**, driven by India, Brazil, and Indonesia.
- **Cotton use** to grow **1.2 % p.a.**, with India overtaking China as a top processor.

Additional Info

- **OECD**: Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development; **FAO**: UN's Food & Agriculture Org.
- Outlook uses the **Aglink-Cosimo model**, combining commodity, trade, macro, and policy data.
- Policy focus: **rule-based trade** essential for food security; disruption risks include climate events and fertilizer policy shifts.
- India's strategic roles:
 - **Largest pulses and milk producer**
 - **Rapid animal-source food demand growth**
 - **Growing biofuel market** due to energy and emissions priorities.

Cabinet Approves Rs 6,520 Crore for Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana

What's New?

- On **July 31, 2025**, the **Union Cabinet**, chaired by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**, approved a total outlay of **Rs 6,520 crore** for the **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY)** during the **15th Finance Commission Cycle (2021–26)**, including an additional **Rs 1,920 crore** to boost the **food processing sector**. The decision was announced by **Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw** in **New Delhi**.
- The funding allocates **Rs 1,000 crore** to establish **50 Multi-Product Food Irradiation Units** under the **Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition Infrastructure (ICCVAI)** scheme and **100 NABL-accredited Food Testing Laboratories** under the **Food Safety and Quality Assurance Infrastructure (FSQAI)** scheme, aligning with the **Union Budget 2025** announcements.
- An additional **Rs 920 crore** will support projects under various **PMKSY component schemes**, with **Expressions**

of Interest (EOIs) to be invited from eligible entities nationwide, approved after scrutiny per scheme guidelines.

What is PMKSY?

- **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY)**, launched in **2017** under the **Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI)**, aims to create **modern infrastructure** and **efficient supply chains** for the food processing sector, enhancing **farmers' income**, **food safety**, and **export potential**.
 - **Key components**:
 - **ICCVAI**: Supports **cold chain infrastructure** and **food irradiation units** to preserve perishable goods, with the **50 new units** expected to create a **preservation capacity** of **20–30 lakh tonnes annually**, based on food types.
 - **FSQAI**: Focuses on **food safety** through NABL-accredited labs, with **100 new labs** to ensure compliance with **FSSAI standards** and supply of safe food.
 - Other schemes include **Mega Food Parks**, **Agro-Processing Clusters**, and **Backward-Forward Linkages**, promoting **value addition** and **job creation**.
 - **Significance**: PMKSY reduces **post-harvest losses** (estimated at **Rs 92,000 crore annually**), supports **rural employment**, and boosts **food exports**, with India's processed food market valued at **\$260 billion** in 2024.
- ### Strategic Importance
- **Economic impact**: The enhanced outlay strengthens **food processing infrastructure**, creating **direct and indirect jobs** (e.g., **1.2 lakh jobs** from past PMKSY projects) and supporting **MSMEs** in rural areas.
 - **Farmer benefits**: Improves **farm gate prices** by linking farmers to **processing units** and **export markets**, aligning with **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** and **Processing for Prosperity**.
 - **Food safety**: The **100 NABL-accredited labs** will enhance **testing capacity** for contaminants, ensuring **consumer safety** and boosting **export compliance**.
 - **Challenges**: Streamlining **EOI approvals**, ensuring **private sector participation**, and addressing **regional disparities** in cold chain infrastructure.

Important Days

“Balance & Believe” – Commemorating National Chartered Accountants Day (CA Day)

What’s New?

- **CA Day** is observed every year on **1 July** to celebrate the founding of the **Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI)**, which was established on **1 July 1949** by the Indian Parliament under the **Chartered Accountants Act, 1949**.
- This year marks the **77th CA Day**, with ICAI organizing grand celebrations at **Bharat Mandapam, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi**, honoring exceptional contributions of CAs.

Why It Matters

- **Regulatory milestone:** Before ICAI's foundation, India lacked a unified regulatory framework for the accounting and auditing profession.
- **Professional integrity:** ICAI sets rigorous **ethical standards**, maintains a **Code of Conduct**, and regulates audits via overseeing bodies like **NFRA**.
- **Economic keystone:** CAs ensure **financial transparency, tax adherence**, and strong **governance**, playing crucial roles in **business decisions** and **economic stability**.

Historical Context & Profession Building

- Accounting was unregulated until **1948**, with earlier systems like a diploma in accountancy (1918) and a register of “Registered Accountants” (1930).
- ICAI emerged from an expert committee recommendation, transitioning from colonial structures to an **autonomous regulatory body**.

Professional Stature & Global Integration

- ICAI is the **second-largest** accounting body in the world, with over **400,000 members**.
- It is a founding member of international bodies like **IFAC, SAFA, CAPA**, and maintains **Mutual Recognition Agreements** with global counterparts.

Roles & Evolution of CAs

- Chartered Accountants safeguard **audit integrity, tax planning, internal controls, risk management**, and **strategic finance**.
- They uphold **core values** of impartiality and transparency—reflecting ICAI's Upanishadic motto “Ya esha supteshu jagriti” (“Awake in those who sleep”).
- ICAI adapts its curriculum and training to emerging trends such as **AI, blockchain**, and **data analytics**.

Minister and a celebrated physician—India set this observance in **1991** to honor his legacy and the medical profession's contributions across the country.

- In **2025**, the theme is **“Behind the Mask: Who Heals the Healers?”**, highlighting the mental health, well-being, and support systems needed for doctors themselves.

Why It Matters

- **Tribute to Dr. B.C. Roy:** He was instrumental in founding institutions like the Indian Medical Association and AIIMS, and received the **Bharat Ratna** in 1961.
- **Celebrates medical selflessness:** Especially amid the COVID-19 pandemic, doctors have shown extraordinary dedication and faced personal risks.
- **Focus on doctor welfare:** The 2025 theme draws attention to doctors' **mental and physical stress**, calling for better support and recognition.

Historical Context

- July 1 was chosen in memory of Dr. Roy to mark his many professional and public service achievements.
- Before the official observance, Indian medical communities informally celebrated the day since the early 1990s.

Role of the Indian Medical Association (IMA)

- IMA plays a major coordinating role, organizing **appreciation events, awards, seminars**, and **health camps** on this day.
- Hospitals and governments also use this day to recognize outstanding doctors and push for enhanced **working conditions** and **public health awareness**.

Significance & Symbolism

- The **“Behind the Mask”** theme underscores caring for the caregivers, sending a clear message that **doctor well-being matters for healthcare system resilience**.
- The **red carnation**, symbolizing **sacrifice and admiration**, is often used to honor doctors on this day.

“Unified Tax Triumph” – Celebrating GST Day 2025: Eight Years of Transformative Tax Reform

What’s New?

- **GST Day** is celebrated annually on **1 July** to mark the historic launch of the **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** in India on **1 July 2017**, initiated under **Arun Jaitley** and the 101st Constitutional Amendment Act.
- **2025 marks the 8th anniversary** of GST's rollout, highlighting its evolution from a complex reform to a backbone of India's tax framework.
- Ahead of this year's celebrations, the **CBIC launched “GST Pakhwada”** from **16–30 June**, organizing outreach and help-desk events across zones to strengthen taxpayer awareness.

“Healers Honored” – Commemorating National Doctors’ Day

What’s New?

- **National Doctors’ Day** is celebrated every year on **1 July**, marking the birth *and death* of **Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy** (1882–1962), former West Bengal Chief

Why It Matters

- **Simplification through unification:** GST subsumed various indirect taxes—such as excise, VAT, service tax, octroi—into a **dual CGST–SGST model**, significantly reducing tax cascading and improving compliance.
- **Boosting the formal economy:** The number of active taxpayers has risen to **1.51 crore**, supported by record annual collections of **₹22.08 lakh crore in 2024–25**, showcasing enhanced compliance and economic activity.
- **Ease of doing business:** By abolishing interstate check-posts, simplifying returns, and enabling input tax credits, GST has improved logistics efficiency—cutting transport times by ~20%—and lowered business costs.

Digital & Administrative Ecosystem

- The **GST portal**, edu-oriented GST pakhwada, e-invoicing, and help-desk initiatives ensure robust taxpayer communication and support.
- **CBIC’s “GST Pakhwada”** events enhance public interface, resolving taxpayer issues and answering queries. States like **Prayagraj** leveraged this for massive collections—₹357 crore in May 2025, nearly doubling YoY during the **Maha Kumbh**.

Global & Constitutional Underpinnings

- GST’s foundation lies in the **101st Amendment Act (2016)**, ratified by parliament and over half the states, instituting it as a **destination-based tax**.
- The **GST Council**, comprising central and state finance ministers, oversees tax slabs (0%, 5%, 12%, 18%, 28%) to streamline rates and include mechanisms like cess on sin goods.

Ongoing Reforms & Challenges

- A **Group of Ministers (GoM)** is working to rationalize GST rates and the **Revenue Neutral Rate**, expected to reduce complexity by cutting slabs and aligning with **FM Sitharaman’s rationalisation agenda**.
- Despite progress, issues remain: frequent rate revisions, technical GSTN glitches, delayed refund processes, and occasional compliance penalties—banking penalties highlight need for system strengthening.

World Population Day 2025: Empowering Youth for the Families They Choose

What’s New?

- **World Population Day**, observed annually on **July 11**, commemorates the UNDP’s 1989 initiative and the world reaching **5 billion people on July 11, 1987**.
- The **2025 theme**—“Empowering young people to create the families they want in a fair and hopeful world”—highlights the biggest-ever youth cohort and stresses the need for **reproductive rights, healthcare, education, and choice**.
- **UN Secretary-General António Guterres** underscored that youth demand a “just, inclusive, and sustainable” future, urging nations to invest in systems enabling informed family decisions.

Why It Matters

- **Global population** now exceeds **8.2 billion**, and is projected to reach ~9.7 billion by 2050.
- Nations face **dual demographic challenges**: rapid growth in developing countries and **declining fertility**, especially in developed nations—a looming risk of **population collapse**.
- Youth must navigate **economic uncertainty, gender inequality, health crises, and climate change**, making **empowerment and choice central** to sustainable development.

Real-World Actions & Awareness

- In **Madurai, Tamil Nadu**, about **500 participants** (health workers, students) joined a **rally** to promote reproductive health, family planning, and the prevention of child marriages.
- Data from **Nashik, Maharashtra**, shows **39% of its 7.5 million population** is under 24—emphasizing the importance of youth-tailored policies.

Additional Info

- **Day of 5 Billion (1987)** led to the UNDP’s annual observance.
- Topics raised include family planning, maternal/child health, gender equality, and sustainable resource management—closely tied to **SDGs 3, 5, 10, 12, and 13**.

World Youth Skills Day 2025

What’s New?

- **World Youth Skills Day** is celebrated annually on **July 15**, first declared by the **UN General Assembly in December 2014** and first observed in **2015**.
- **2025 marks the 10th anniversary** of the observance and the **5th anniversary** of UNESCO’s Global Skills Academy.
- The theme this year is “**Youth Empowerment Through AI and Digital Skills**”, spotlighting the vital need for digital and AI literacy in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

Why It Matters

- Equipping youth with **future-ready skills** is essential for **employment, entrepreneurship, and decent work**—key pillars of **SDG 4 (Quality Education)** and **SDG 8 (Decent Work)**.
- Around **450 million young people** (7 in 10 globally) remain **economically disengaged** due to skill gaps.
- The theme underscores how **AI and digital tools** are reshaping education, employment, and development—while also highlighting the need to **address digital divides and biases**.

Key Focus Areas

- **Digital literacy:** Foundational for AI-enabled learning and participation in modern societies.
- **Soft skills:** Communication, adaptability, and teamwork remain critical alongside tech skills.
- **Technical & vocational skills:** Including AI, coding, cybersecurity, immersive learning (VR), and data science aligned to labour market needs.

- **Equity & inclusion:** Focus on closing gender, geographic, socioeconomic divides in access to digital empowerment.

Institutional & Global Context

- UNESCO-UNEVOC is hosting hybrid events at the **Learning Planet Institute (Paris)** and **UN Headquarters (New York)**, featuring global dialogues on AI-driven skills development.
- UN Secretary-General António Guterres emphasized that **skills are engines of empowerment**, stressing human-centered digital education that is creative, critical, and empathetic.

Nelson Mandela International Day 2025

What's New?

- **Nelson Mandela International Day** is observed annually on **18 July**, marking the birth of **Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela** in **1918**, the former President of South Africa and Nobel Peace Prize laureate.
- Officially declared by the **UN General Assembly** in **November 2009**, the first global observance took place on **18 July 2010**.
- The campaign encourages everyone to spend **67 minutes** on acts of service—symbolic of Mandela's **67 years of public service**.

Theme & Activities

- **2025 Theme:** "The power to end poverty is in our hands," emphasizing **grassroots action** to address inequality and lack.
- **Global examples:**
 - In **Johannesburg**, chefs prepared **67,000 liters of soup** for the undernourished using rescued food, marking the initiative's sixth year.
 - Various **NGOs** highlight volunteerism and community engagement, including distributions of care packages to survivors of violence.

National Broadcasting Day

What's New?

- **23 July** marks **National Broadcasting Day**, commemorating the date in **1927** when the **Indian Broadcasting Company Ltd (IBC)** aired its first radio broadcast from **Bombay station**, followed by **Calcutta**.
- This historic launch signaled the birth of organized radio services in India, setting the stage for its evolution into **All India Radio (AIR)** in **1936**.

Key Milestones

- **June 1923:** Bombay Presidency Radio Club began experimental broadcasts during the British era.
- **July 1927:** IBC started two stations—**Bombay (23 July)** and **Calcutta (26 August)**.
- **March 1930:** IBC went bankrupt; the government took over operations.
- **April 1930 – May 1932:** Indian State Broadcasting Service (ISBS) operated experimentally.

- **June 1936:** ISBS was renamed **All India Radio (AIR)**, later branded **Akashvani** in **1956**.

Why It Matters

- **Radio as a unifying medium:** Provided real-time news, education, entertainment, health, and agricultural guidance, particularly for **rural India**.
- **Freedom struggle role:** Propagated the message of revolt and national unity when print was censored.
- **Cultural legacy:** AIR hosts programming in **23 languages and 179 dialects**, reaching **over 99% of India's population**.

Additional Info

- **Prasar Bharati Archives** (formed in 2018) preserve rare radio recordings—political speeches, interviews, and cultural content dating from the 1930s onward.
- **Post-independence expansion:** AIR launched **Vividh Bharati** in 1957 and became a pioneer in **satellite and educational broadcasting**.
- **Technology progression:** Moved from **AM (SW/MW)** to **FM** in **1977**, later adding digital and online streaming.

Income Tax Day 2025: Digital Reforms Powering Taxpayer Participation

What's New?

- **India commemorates the 166th Income Tax Day** on **24 July 2025**, marking the introduction of income tax during British rule in **1860** by Sir James Wilson.
- **Record ITR filings:** A total of **9.19 crore returns filed in FY 2024–25**, up 36% from 6.72 crore in FY 2020–21.
- **Gross direct tax collections** surged from ₹12.31 lakh crore in FY 2020–21 to **₹27.02 lakh crore by FY 2024–25** (provisional).
- The **Income Tax Bill, 2025**, aims to revamp the archaic 1961 Act into a concise, user-friendly legal framework, currently under Select Committee review.
- CBDT announced **AI-driven crackdown on tax evasion**, using data analytics in anticipation of the new law rollout.
- In **Kochi**, the I-T Department organized an observance event featuring Chief Guest **Mohanlal**, launching a new department website, cultural performances, and messaging from CBDT officials.

Why It Matters: Background & Key Developments

Evolution of Tax Administration

- **Income Tax Day**, observed since **2010**, commemorates tax's evolution from colonial imposition to India's digitally driven compliance system.
- Milestones include the **Income-tax Act 1922**, erection of the **CBDT** (1924), and tech advances: **computerization (1981)** → **CPC Bengaluru (2009)** → **e-filing, TRACES, TIN 2.0**.

Key Digital Tools for Taxpayers

- **Project Insight** integrates PAN, GSTN, banking, and property records to detect discrepancies proactively.
- **Pre-filled ITR forms, AIS & TIS statements**, and **e-Verification** streamline filing and refunds.

- Initiatives like **NUDGE campaigns** promote voluntary compliance via behavioural prompts rather than punitive measures.

Budget 2025–26 Reforms

- Under the **new tax regime**, income up to ₹12 lakh is **tax-free**, and including ₹75,000 standard deduction, **income up to ₹12.75 lakh** is fully exempt.
- **TDS/TCS thresholds raised**, extended filing window from 2 to **4 years**, and exemptions for **NSS withdrawals** post-August 2024.
- The **New Income Tax Bill** proposes enhanced powers for transparency—including access to taxpayers’ digital data (emails, social media, trading info)—raising privacy concerns.

First International Day for Judicial Wellbeing

What’s New?

- The **United Nations General Assembly** declared **July 25** as the **International Day for Judicial Wellbeing** on **March 4, 2025**, marking its first observance on **July 25, 2025**.
- The day commemorates the **Nauru Declaration on Judicial Wellbeing**, adopted on **July 25, 2024**, at a **Regional Judicial Conference** in **Nauru**, highlighting the **mental, physical, and emotional health** of judges as critical to **judicial integrity** and the **rule of law**.
- A **2021 Global Judicial Integrity Network survey** revealed that **69% of judges** found discussing **mental health** taboo, **83%** reported insufficient support, and **89%** knew colleagues experiencing **stress, sadness, or anxiety**.

What is Judicial Wellbeing?

- **Judicial wellbeing** refers to the **mental, physical, and emotional health** of judges, essential for maintaining **judicial independence, integrity, and efficiency** in delivering justice.
- Key challenges:
 - **High workloads, complex cases, and tight schedules** lead to **burnout** and **secondary trauma**.
 - **Technological advancements** (e.g., **social media, AI**) and **socio-political pressures** increase stress.
 - **Stigma** around seeking support hinders judges from addressing **mental health issues**.
- The **Nauru Declaration** outlines seven principles:
 - **Destigmatize** judicial stress.
 - Promote **shared responsibility** among judges, courts, and institutions.
 - Foster a **supportive judicial culture** with **holistic strategies** (awareness, prevention, intervention).

Global Context and Initiatives

- The **UN Resolution A/RES/79/266**, initiated by **Justice Rangajeeva Wimalasena** (Nauru Court of Appeal) and supported by the **UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**, was adopted with near-unanimous support (160+ countries, 1 against, 3 abstentions).

- The **International Conference on Judicial Integrity and Wellbeing** in **Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea** (August 20–22, 2025), aims to develop **tools and strategies** for integrating wellbeing into court systems.
- **Judicial Support Network (JSN)**, founded by **Judge Kalyani Kaul KC** (England and Wales), contributed to the **Nauru Declaration**, fostering global collaboration among judges.

Additional Info

- **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**: A UN agency combating **illicit drugs, crime, and corruption**, supporting **judicial integrity** through initiatives like the **Global Judicial Integrity Network**.
- **United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC)**: Adopted in **2003**, its **Article 11** emphasizes **judicial integrity** to prevent corruption and ensure **access to justice**.
- **Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct (2002)**: A global framework for **judicial ethics**, emphasizing **independence, impartiality, and wellbeing** (Paragraph 194).
- **Nauru**: A small Pacific island nation, with a judiciary led by the **Court of Appeal**, playing a pivotal role in global **judicial wellbeing** advocacy.
- **Global Judicial Integrity Network**: Launched by **UNODC**, it connects judges worldwide to share best practices on **judicial ethics and wellbeing**.

World Drowning Prevention Day 2025: Saving Lives Through Stories

What’s New?

- **World Drowning Prevention Day 2025**, observed on **July 25**, adopted the theme “**Your Story Can Save a Life – Drowning Prevention Through Shared Experiences**”, emphasizing **personal stories** to raise awareness and promote **water safety**.
- The **World Health Organization (WHO)** reported over **3 million drowning deaths** in the past decade, with **300,000 annual deaths**, including **80,000 in South-East Asia**, making it a leading cause of death for **children aged 1–14**.
- The **76th World Health Assembly** (May 2023) adopted a resolution titled “**Accelerating Action on Global Drowning Prevention**”, proposed by **Bangladesh and Ireland**, urging action through **2029**.

Understanding Drowning and Its Impact

- **Drowning** is defined by the **WHO** as “the process of experiencing **respiratory impairment** from submersion or immersion in liquid,” causing **7% of injury-related deaths** globally.
- **Risk factors**:
 - **Children (5–14 years)**: Account for **23.4% of drowning deaths** in the Eastern Mediterranean, with **boys** at twice the risk.
 - **Rural areas and migrants**: Lack access to **safety measures** and face higher exposure to **unsafe water bodies** (e.g., ponds, rivers).

- **Other factors:** Flash floods, overcrowded boats, alcohol use, and lack of supervision increase risks.
- **Global trends:** Drowning deaths have decreased since 2000, but low-income countries have rates **3.2 times higher** than high-income ones.

Prevention Strategies and Success Stories

- **WHO's six evidence-based interventions:**
 - Install **barriers** to restrict access to hazardous water bodies.
 - Provide **safe childcare spaces** (e.g., crèches) for preschool children.
 - Teach **swimming** and **rescue skills** to children and communities.
 - Train bystanders in **safe rescue** and **resuscitation**.
 - Enforce **safe boating** and **ferry regulations**.
 - Improve **flood risk management**.
- **Success stories:**
 - **Bangladesh:** The **Anchal day-care model** protects **1–5-year-olds**, and **SwimSafe** trained over **700,000 children** in water safety.
 - **Thailand:** The **Merit Maker program** reduced child drowning deaths by **57%** (from 1,500 to under 700 annually) through **CPR training** and **public campaigns**.
 - **Australia:** 30 years of **water safety education** aims to halve drownings by **2030**.

- Key challenges: **Extreme terrain** (altitudes above **18,000 feet**), **sub-zero temperatures**, and **limited technological support** tested the resilience of Indian forces.

Commemorative Events and Initiatives

- **National War Memorial, New Delhi:** Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh**, Chief of Defence Staff General **Anil Chauhan**, and **Tri-Service Chiefs** paid homage.
- **Drass, Kargil:** Union Minister **Mandaviya**, Minister of State **Sanjay Seth**, and Ladakh Lieutenant Governor **Brig (Retd) B D Mishra** joined locals and martyrs' families in a **padyatra** and **wreath-laying ceremony**.
- **New Initiatives:**
 - **e-Shradhanjali app:** For tributes to martyrs.
 - **QR code-based audio gateway:** Shares **Kargil War stories**.
 - **Indus Viewpoint:** Provides access to the **Batalik sector** near the **Line of Control (LoC)**.
- **Indian Air Force:** Released a video, "**The War Diary in Photographs**", highlighting **Operation Safed Sagar**.

Additional Info

- **Kargil War Memorial:** Located in **Drass, Ladakh**, it honors the **527 martyrs** and serves as a **tourist attraction** near the **LoC**, showcasing military history.
- **Indian Armed Forces:** Comprise the **Army, Navy, and Air Force**, with the **President** as the **Supreme Commander**. The **Ministry of Defence** oversees operations.
- **Operation Vijay:** A landmark operation demonstrating **jointness** among the **Army and Air Force**, reclaiming strategic posts like **Point 4875** and **Batalik**.
- **Batalik Sector:** A key battleground in the **Indus River valley**, critical for its proximity to **Leh** and **Baltistan**, now a site for **strategic tourism**.

Kargil Vijay Diwas 2025: Honoring Heroes of 1999

What's New?

- On **July 26, 2025**, India marked the **26th Kargil Vijay Diwas**, commemorating the victory in the **1999 Kargil War** against Pakistani intruders, with tributes led by **President Droupadi Murmu**, **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**, and **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh**.
- Ceremonies at the **Kargil War Memorial** in **Drass, Ladakh**, saw **Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya**, **Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi**, and others honor **527 martyrs**, with a **padyatra** and **helicopter flower showers** symbolizing national gratitude.
- **Operation Sindoor**, a recent **surgical strike**, was hailed by **General Dwivedi** as a "new normal," showcasing India's proactive stance against terrorism.

What was the Kargil War?

- Fought from **May to July 1999** in the **Kargil sector** of **Jammu and Kashmir**, it involved Pakistani troops and militants infiltrating **strategic heights** (e.g., **Tiger Hill, Tololing**) to disrupt the **Srinagar-Leh highway**.
- **Operation Vijay:** Launched by the **Indian Army**, supported by the **Indian Air Force** (**Operation Safed Sagar**), it reclaimed all positions after nearly **three months** of high-altitude combat, with **527 Indian soldiers** martyred.

World Nature Conservation Day 2025: India's Green Push

What's New?

- **World Nature Conservation Day 2025**, observed on **July 28, 2025**, adopted the theme "**Connecting People and Plants: Exploring Digital Innovation in Wildlife Conservation**", emphasizing **technology-driven conservation** like **AI, GIS, and drones**.
- India highlighted its **environmental initiatives**, including the **National Mission for Green India (GIM)**, **Namami Gange Mission**, and **Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE)**, to promote **sustainable practices** and combat **climate change, deforestation, and biodiversity loss**.
- Over **1 million species** face extinction globally, with India's efforts focusing on **forest restoration, river rejuvenation, and community-driven conservation** to ensure **ecological balance**.

What is World Nature Conservation Day?

- Observed annually on **July 28**, it raises awareness about protecting **natural resources** (air, water, soil,

forests) and **biodiversity** to ensure a **sustainable future**.

- Key objectives:
 - Promote **sustainable practices** like **recycling**, **tree planting**, and **reducing carbon footprints**.
 - Address **environmental threats**: **climate change**, **pollution**, **deforestation**, and **habitat loss**.
 - Encourage **community participation** through **education**, **workshops**, and **clean-up drives**.
- Originated in the **1970s** with the rise of global environmental movements, notably linked to the **1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment** in **Stockholm**.

India's Conservation Initiatives

- **National Mission for Green India (GIM)**: Part of the **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)**, it aims to increase **forest cover** by **5 million hectares**, restore **degraded forests**, and protect **biodiversity**.
- **Namami Gange Mission**: Focuses on **cleaning** and **rejuvenating** the **Ganga River**, addressing **pollution**, protecting **wetlands**, and preserving **aquatic biodiversity**.
- **Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE)**: Introduced by PM **Narendra Modi** at **COP26, Glasgow (2021)**, it promotes **eco-friendly habits** like avoiding **single-use plastics**, conserving **water**, and using **public transport**.
- **Community efforts**: **Tree planting**, **green marathons**, and **digital campaigns** (e.g., using **AI** and **GIS** for wildlife monitoring) engage **youth** and **indigenous communities**.

Additional Info

- **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)**: Launched in **2008**, it includes **eight missions** (e.g., **Green India**, **Solar Mission**) to address **climate change** and promote **sustainable development**.
- **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**: Founded in **1948**, it supports global conservation efforts, influencing India's **biodiversity policies** and **protected areas** like **Sundarbans** and **Western Ghats**.
- **India's Biodiversity**: Hosts **4 biodiversity hotspots** (**Himalaya**, **Indo-Burma**, **Sundaland**, **Western Ghats**) and **91 Ramsar Sites**, critical for **global ecosystems**.
- **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**: Oversees **conservation policies**, **wildlife protection**, and initiatives like **GIM** and **Namami Gange**.

and **systemic barriers** (including **stigma**) to achieve **hepatitis elimination** by **2030**.

- The **World Health Organization (WHO)** reported **304 million people** live with **chronic hepatitis B (HBV)** or **C (HCV)**, causing **1.3 million deaths annually** (**3,500 daily**), surpassing **HIV**, **tuberculosis**, and **malaria** combined.
- In India, **40 million** have **chronic HBV**, and **6–12 million** have **HCV**, with **Bihar**, **Punjab**, **Haryana**, and **tribal areas** like **Odisha** and **Madhya Pradesh** showing high prevalence (up to **12%**).

What is Hepatitis and World Hepatitis Day?

- **Hepatitis** is **liver inflammation**, often caused by **viral infections** (hepatitis A, B, C, D, E), leading to **cirrhosis**, **liver cancer**, or **liver failure**. **HBV** and **HCV** cause **90% of hepatitis-related deaths**.
- **World Hepatitis Day**: Established by the **World Health Assembly** in **2010**, observed on **July 28** to honor **Dr. Baruch Blumberg**, who discovered **HBV** in **1967** and developed its vaccine, earning the **Nobel Prize** in **1976**.
- **History**:
 - Began as **International Hepatitis C Awareness Day** on **October 1, 2004**, by **European and Middle Eastern patient groups**.
 - Shifted to **May 19** in **2008** by the **World Hepatitis Alliance**, then to **July 28** in **2010** for global alignment.
- **Objectives**: Raise **awareness**, promote **testing**, **vaccination**, and **treatment**, and reduce **stigma** to eliminate hepatitis as a **public health threat** by **2030**.

India's Efforts and Global Context

- **India's Burden**: With **2–4% HBV prevalence**, India is in the **intermediate endemic range**. The **Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP)** includes **HBV vaccination** since **2007**, but **awareness** and **adult coverage** remain low.
- **Initiatives**:
 - **National Viral Hepatitis Control Program (NVHCP)**, launched in **2018**, provides **free testing** and **treatment** for **HBV** and **HCV**, targeting **high-risk groups** like **pregnant women** and **blood transfusion recipients**.
 - **Community campaigns**: **Free screening camps**, **webinars**, and **social media drives** (e.g., **#HepCantWait**) raise awareness.
- **Global Efforts**: **WHO** promotes **vaccination** (only **45% of babies** receive **HBV vaccine** within **24 hours**), **safe injection practices**, and **antiviral treatments** (e.g., **HCV cure rates exceed 95%**). **Egypt** reduced **HCV prevalence** through coordinated action.

Additional Info

- **World Health Organization (WHO)**: Leads global health campaigns, including **World Hepatitis Day**, one of **11 official health days**, and sets the **2030 elimination goal** via the **Global Health Sector Strategy on Viral Hepatitis**.
- **World Hepatitis Alliance (WHA)**: A **400-member NGO network** across **120 countries**, coordinating awareness

World Hepatitis Day 2025: Breaking Down Barriers

What's New?

- **World Hepatitis Day 2025**, observed on **July 28, 2025**, adopted the theme "**Hepatitis: Let's Break It Down**", urging action to dismantle **financial**, **social**,

events like torchlight processions and landmark illuminations (e.g., Burj Khalifa in yellow and blue).

- **Hepatitis Types:**
 - **A and E:** Spread via **contaminated food/water**, cause **acute infections** (78,000 deaths in 2019).
 - **B and C:** Spread via **blood, unsafe injections, or mother-to-child**, cause **chronic infections** and **liver cancer**.
 - **D:** Only infects **HBV carriers**, classified as **carcinogenic** in 2025 by IARC.
- **India's NVHCP:** Managed by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, it integrates hepatitis care into **primary health centers** and addresses **stigma**.

population grew from **2,967** in 2018 to **3,682** in 2022, a **24% increase**.

- **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA):** Conducts **tiger census** every four years using **M-STRIPES technology**, supports **anti-poaching patrols**, and promotes **community engagement** through **eco-development committees**.
- **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA):** Launched in 2023 in New Delhi with **\$100 million seed funding**, it unites **11 countries** to combat **illegal trade** and enhance **conservation capacity**.
- **Community initiatives:** Programs like **Uttar Pradesh's Bagh Mitra app** and **Karnataka's MM Hills reserve** focus on **corridor connectivity** and **local involvement**.

Global Tiger Day 2025: A Roar for Conservation

What's New?

- **Global Tiger Day 2025**, observed on **July 29, 2025**, adopted the theme "**Harmony in Coexistence**", emphasizing the role of **indigenous communities** and **local stakeholders** in sustainable **tiger conservation**.
- India, home to **75% of the world's wild tigers** (3,682 as per the **2022 census**), celebrated its success in doubling its tiger population from **1,411** in 2006 to **3,682** in 2022, driven by **Project Tiger** and **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** efforts.
- The day highlighted global challenges like **poaching, habitat loss, and human-wildlife conflict**, with **13 tiger-range countries** recommitting to the **Tx2 goal** of doubling tiger numbers.

What is Global Tiger Day?

- **Global Tiger Day**, also known as **International Tiger Day**, is observed annually on **July 29** to raise awareness about **tiger conservation** and protect their **natural habitats**. It was established in 2010 at the **Saint Petersburg Tiger Summit** in Russia, where **13 tiger-range countries** (e.g., India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Russia) set the **Tx2 goal** to double the global wild tiger population by 2022.
- **Objectives:**
 - Prevent **tiger extinction** by addressing **poaching, illegal trade, and habitat destruction**.
 - Promote **habitat restoration** and **corridor connectivity** for genetic diversity.
 - Engage **communities** and **youth** through **education, tree-planting drives, and digital campaigns** (e.g., [#InternationalTigerDay](#)).
- **Significance:** Tigers, as **keystone species**, regulate **prey populations** and maintain **forest ecosystems**, supporting **biodiversity** and **climate stability**. Their survival benefits **human communities** through **ecological balance**.

India's Conservation Efforts

- **Project Tiger (1973):** Launched to create **58 tiger reserves** across **18 states** (as of **March 2025**), providing **safe breeding grounds**. India's tiger

Global Context and Challenges

- **Global tiger population:** Down from **100,000** a century ago to **~4,000** today, due to **deforestation, poaching, and human-wildlife conflict**.
- **Threats:** **Illegal trade** (e.g., tiger skins, bones) by **organized crime networks**, as noted by **UNODC**, and **habitat loss** remain critical issues.
- **Global efforts:** The **World Wildlife Fund (WWF)** promotes the **Double Tigers campaign**, investing in **rangers** and **protected areas**. Events in **Bangladesh, Nepal**, and non-tiger-range countries like the **UK** and **US** include **wildlife documentaries** and **awareness parades**.

World Day Against Trafficking in Persons 2025: Combating Organized Crime

What's New?

- **World Day Against Trafficking in Persons 2025**, observed on **July 30, 2025**, adopted the theme "**Leave No One Behind**", focusing on **strengthening law enforcement** and **victim-centered approaches** to dismantle **organized trafficking networks**. The **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)** emphasized the role of **technology** and **cross-border cooperation** in tackling this crime.
- Globally, **over 200,000 victims** were detected between **2020–2023**, with **74% of cases** linked to **organized crime**, per the **2024 UNODC Global Report**. Women and girls remain the **most detected victims** (49% women, 23% girls), primarily for **sexual exploitation** (59%) and **forced labor** (34%).
- India launched **awareness campaigns** and **training programs** for law enforcement, aligning with the **UN's call** for proactive investigations and victim support.

What is World Day Against Trafficking in Persons?

- Established by the **UN General Assembly** in 2013 via resolution **A/RES/68/192**, observed annually on **July 30** to raise awareness about **human trafficking**, promote **victim rights**, and combat **organized crime**. It stems from the **2010 Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons**, urging coordinated global measures.

- **Objectives:**
 - **Awareness:** Educate communities on **trafficking risks** through campaigns like **#EndHumanTrafficking** and the **Blue Heart symbol**, representing solidarity with victims.
 - **Prevention:** Strengthen **law enforcement**, **cross-border cooperation**, and **technology use** (e.g., digital forensics) to disrupt trafficking networks.
 - **Victim support:** Ensure **justice**, **protection**, and **rehabilitation** for survivors, especially **women**, **children**, and **migrants**.
- **Global scale:** Trafficking generates **\$236 billion** annually, victimizing **28 million people**, with **141 countries** reporting cases. **Children** (one-third of victims) face **forced labor**, **child marriage**, or **recruitment as soldiers**.

India's Efforts and Global Context

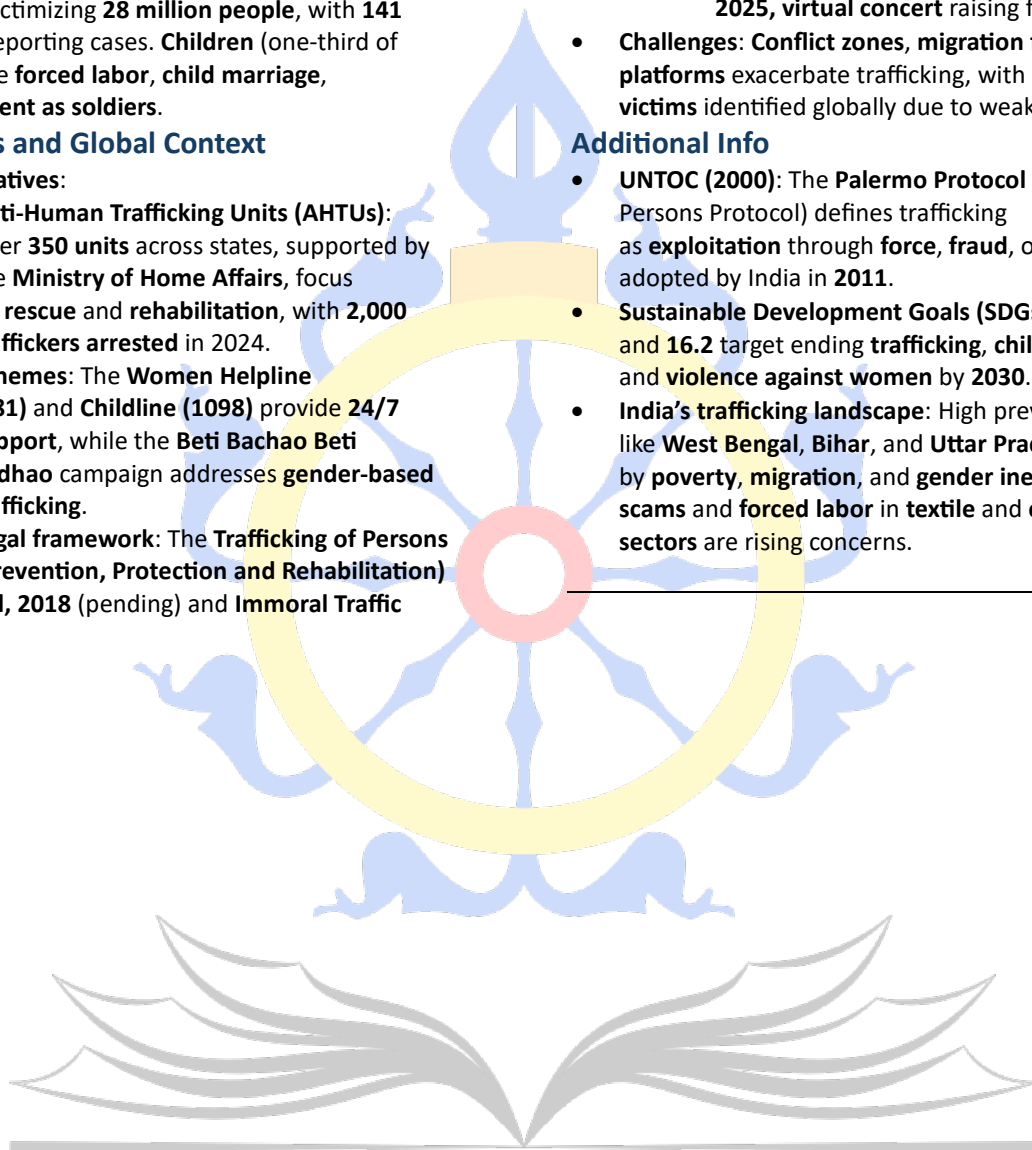
- **India's initiatives:**
 - **Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs):** Over **350 units** across states, supported by the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, focus on **rescue** and **rehabilitation**, with **2,000 traffickers arrested** in 2024.
 - **Schemes:** The **Women Helpline (181)** and **Childline (1098)** provide **24/7 support**, while the **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao** campaign addresses **gender-based trafficking**.
 - **Legal framework:** The **Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018** (pending) and **Immoral Traffic**

(Prevention) Act, 1956 govern anti-trafficking measures.

- **Global efforts:**
 - **UNODC:** Oversees the **UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC)** and its **Trafficking in Persons Protocol**, assisting countries with **legal frameworks**.
 - **Inter-Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking (ICAT):** Formed in **2007**, includes **ILO**, **IOM**, **UNICEF**, **UN Women**, and others, coordinating global responses.
 - **UN Voluntary Trust Fund:** Supports **victim rehabilitation**, with events like the **July 30, 2025, virtual concert** raising funds.
- **Challenges:** **Conflict zones**, **migration flows**, and **digital platforms** exacerbate trafficking, with **less than 0.5% of victims** identified globally due to weak enforcement.

Additional Info

- **UNTOC (2000):** The **Palermo Protocol** (Trafficking in Persons Protocol) defines trafficking as **exploitation** through **force**, **fraud**, or **coercion**, adopted by India in **2011**.
- **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** Goals **5.2**, **8.7**, and **16.2** target ending **trafficking**, **child labor**, and **violence against women** by **2030**.
- **India's trafficking landscape:** High prevalence in states like **West Bengal**, **Bihar**, and **Uttar Pradesh**, driven by **poverty**, **migration**, and **gender inequality**. **Online scams** and **forced labor** in **textile** and **construction sectors** are rising concerns.



Defence

“Shakti VIII” – Indo-French Military Drill Strengthens Strategic Interoperability

What’s New?

- The **8th edition** of Exercise Shakti concluded on **1 July 2025** at **Camp Larzac, France**, wrapping up two weeks (18 June–1 July) of intensive joint military training between India and France.
- The exercise involved **90 Indian Army personnel**, mostly from the **Jammu & Kashmir Rifles**, and **500 French troops**, including the elite **13e Demi-Brigade of the French Foreign Legion**.

Why It Matters

- **Enhancing tactical readiness:** Focused on **sub-conventional warfare** in semi-urban terrain, the exercise centred on close-quarter combat, night operations, and counter-terror drills under **UN Chapter VII parameters**.
- **Building interoperability:** High-intensity combined arms exercises simulated real collisions; featured **electronic warfare (EW)**, **counter-UAS**, and **joint field manoeuvres**, boosting technical synergies.
- **Diplomatic significance:** Reinforces the deepening **Indo-French defence relationship** alongside naval (Varuna) and air (Garuda) collaborations, strengthening India’s strategic footprint in the **Indo-Pacific region**.

Joint Tactical Modules

- **Phase I (18–21 June)** at Aveyron – infantry drills, shooting coordination.
- **Phase II (22–26 June)** at Hérault – semi-urban operations, day/night manoeuvres, obstacle navigation.
- Specialized modules: **EW**, **Counter-UAS**, and **joint military decision-making process** exercises.

Participants & Commanders

- Indian contingent led by **Col. H.V. Kalia**; key visit by Ambassador **Sanjeev Singla** boosted troop morale.
- French contingent headed by **Col. Benjamin Brunet**, commander of 13e DBLE.

Wider Strategic Context

- Shakti is part of the **multi-domain Indo-French military synergy**: follows **Varuna** (naval) and **Garuda** (air), with India and France cooperating since 2001.
- Aligns with shared objectives under **UN peace enforcement frameworks** and strengthens bilateral defence diplomacy.

INS Nistar Inducted: India’s First Indigenous Diving Support Vessel

What’s New?

- Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL) officially **delivered INS Nistar**, India’s first fully indigenous **Diving Support Vessel (DSV)**, to the **Indian Navy** during a ceremony at

Visakhapatnam. The delivery vaulted HSL from building smaller vessels to complex naval platforms.

About INS Nistar (Nistar-class DSV)

Specifications:

- Displacement: ~9,350 t, Length: 118 m, Beam: 22.8 m.
- **DPII Dynamic Positioning System** enables station-keeping during deep-sea operations.
- Equipped with **submersible decompression chamber**, **diving bell**, **15 t crane**, **Remotely Operated Vehicles (OROVs)**, and helipad.
- Serves as **mother ship** for **Deep-Submergence Rescue Vehicle (DSRV)**, capable of rescue operations up to 650 m deep.

Strategic Roles

- **Submarine rescue:** Supports distressed subs and crew evacuation via DSRVs.
- **Deep-sea diving:** Enables missions like underwater repairs, salvage, and patrols.
- **Search & Rescue (SAR) and Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO):** Enhances HADR capabilities.
- **Scientific & survey missions:** Sustained deployments bolster Indo-Pacific presence.

Indigenous Manufacturing & ‘Make in India’ Impact

- Approximately **75–80% indigenisation** achieved, involving over **120 MSME vendors**.
- Marks HSL’s newfound ability to build **complex, strategic naval vessels**, underlining the success of **Aatmanirbhar Bharat**.

Operational Milestones

- **Sea trials** (May 2024): Tested air/mix-gas diving systems and OROVs; March 2025: diving bell and saturation diving trials at 75 m depth.
- **Delivered:** 08 July 2025 to Indian Navy.

“Prachand Shakti” – Indian Army Unveils Next-Gen Warfare in Meerut

What’s New?

- On **July 15, 2025**, the **Ram Division** of the Indian Army conducted “**Prachand Shakti**”, a high-impact demonstration at the **Kharga Corps Field Training Area, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh**, showcasing the integration of **disruptive technologies** into **Strike Corps** operations.

What Was Demonstrated?

- **Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)** such as drone swarms for real-time **reconnaissance**.
- **Loitering munitions**, providing **precision strikes** behind enemy lines.
- **AI-driven systems** for command, control, and targeting.
- **Autonomous combat platforms** boosting infantry **survivability** and **speed**.

Strategic Significance

- Marks a shift toward **multi-domain warfare**, integrating land, air, space, and cyber aspects.
- Highlights Army's '**Year of Tech Absorption**' under Aatmanirbhar Bharat—prioritising **homegrown innovation**.
- Reinforces the **proactive conventional warfare** doctrine (e.g., Cold Start), where **Strike Corps** are armed for deep, rapid offensives.

India Tests Prithvi-II & Agni-I Ballistic Missiles Successfully

What's New?

- India's **Strategic Forces Command** conducted **back-to-back night trials** of two **short-range ballistic missiles**—**Prithvi-II** and **Agni-I**—from the **Integrated Test Range (ITR)**, Chandipur, Odisha, on **17 July 2025**.
- MoD confirmed both missiles met all **operational and technical parameters**, strengthening India's **missile readiness**.

Missile Details & Strategic Role

- **Prithvi-II:**
 - **Range:** ~350 km with a payload capacity of **500–1,000 kg**.
 - **History:** First tested in 1996; inducted in 2003; routinely tested under SFC.
 - **Capability:** Carries conventional and nuclear warheads; enhances tactical flexibility.
- **Agni-I:**
 - **Range:** 700–900 km; payload ~1,000 kg.
 - **Role:** Forms a critical element of India's **nuclear deterrence triad**, capable of both conventional and strategic missions.

Defence Context & Deterrence

- Both launches were executed under the **Strategic Forces Command**, reaffirming India's **nuclear command control** and **second-strike capability**.
- These tests follow the **Akash Prime** high-altitude interceptor launch in **Ladakh**, reflecting India's holistic focus on strengthening both **strike and air defence capabilities**.
- The test series comes after May 2025 **cross-border tensions** (Operation Sindoor), reinforcing India's posture.

Technological & Infrastructure Insights

- **ITR Chandipur**—managed by **DRDO** since 1982—is India's premier **missile test facility**.
- Constant testing underscores India's **indigenous defence ecosystem**, involving **DRDO**, **Strategic Forces Command**, and **industry partners**.

New Delhi, organised by the **National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS)** with **Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU)** as knowledge partner. The fortnight-long event was inaugurated by **Deputy NSA T.V. Ravichandran**.

- **Over 800 cyber-professionals** from government, critical-infrastructure PSUs, defence, law-enforcement, CERT-In, start-ups and academia are taking part, almost 30 % more than the 2024 edition.
- The exercise theme—“**Enhancing the Nation's Cyber Resilience through Pro-active Capacity Building**”—focuses on **live-fire simulations** against IT & OT networks, an **AI-integrated cyber range**, and a **Strategic Decision-Making Exercise (STRATEX)** for senior leadership.

Programme Highlights

- **Cyber-range drills:**
 - **Ransomware on power-grid SCADA**, **deep-fake disinformation**, **autonomous malware** and **API-supply-chain attacks** are among the 40 scenario injects.
- **CISO Conclave:** 150 CISOs from ministries and Fortune-500 companies share zero-trust & quantum-safe migration playbooks.
- **Start-up Pavilion:** The **Bharat Cyber-security Start-up Exhibition** showcases 60 indigenous tools (SOAR, SIEM-AI, 5G-secure OT gateways) aligned with **Digital India** self-reliance goals.
- **Capacity Building & Stakeholders**
 - **Skill tracks (12 days)** cover **Malware Reverse Engineering**, **Cloud Forensics**, **IoT-SCADA Defence**, and **Quantum-Resistant Crypto**.
 - **Women-in-Cyber cohort:** 25 % of seats reserved for women officers, echoing MeitY's **Nari Shakti in Tech** initiative.
 - Collaboration with **FICCI-CII cyber task-forces** ensures industry best-practice infusion.

Strategic Context & Policy Linkages

- Fits into the draft **National Cyber-security Strategy** (awaiting Cabinet nod) and supports the **Cyber Suraksha Bharat** roadmap under the **Digital India Act 2025**.
- Complements earlier drills—**Bharat NCX 2024** trained 600+ practitioners and fed lessons into CERT-In advisories.
- Aligns with international cooperation: India has run tabletop exchanges with **Quad partners** and will demo NCX results at the **Global Cyber-Resilience Summit 2025**.

Additional Info

- **Lead agencies:** NSCS (planning), CERT-In (technical injects), DRDO-CAIR (AI red-team tools), and NIC (Gov Cloud range).
- **Venue:** Hybrid model—physical hub at RRU's Delhi campus plus **24x7 virtual range** on NIC-cloud, enabling pan-India remote participation.
- **Outcome metrics:** Teams must reduce “mean-time-to-detect” below **8 minutes** and “mean-time-to-respond” below **30 minutes** across

Bharat NCX 2025 Strengthens National Defences

What's New?

- The **Bharat National Cyber-security Exercise (Bharat NCX 2025)** opened on **21 July 2025** in

scenarios; best performers receive **National Cyber Shield awards** on 2 August.

India's Breakthrough in Drone Warfare: ULPGM-V3 Test

What's New?

- On **July 25, 2025**, the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** successfully conducted flight trials of the **UAV-Launched Precision Guided Missile (ULPGM)-V3** at the **National Open Area Range (NOAR)** in **Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh**.
- The **ULPGM-V3**, an extended-range variant (also called **ULM-ER**), enhances **India's drone warfare capabilities** with a **10 km range**, **imaging infrared (IIR) seeker**, and **dual-thrust propulsion** for day and night operations.
- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh** praised the DRDO, **Adani Defence**, **Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL)**, and **MSMEs** for advancing **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** (self-reliant India).

What is the ULPGM-V3?

- The **UAV-Launched Precision Guided Missile (ULPGM)-V3** is a **12.5 kg fire-and-forget missile** designed for **unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs)** to strike **static and moving targets** with high accuracy.
- Key features:
 - Range: 10 km** (day: 4 km, night: 2.5 km for earlier variants, extended in V3).
 - Guidance: Imaging infrared (IIR) seeker** and **radio frequency (RF)** for precision targeting.
 - Propulsion: Dual-thrust solid propulsion** for enhanced range and speed.
 - Warheads: Multiple configurations** to engage diverse targets, including **armoured vehicles** and **fortifications**.
- Developed from **ULPGM-V2** by **DRDO's Terminal Ballistics Research Laboratory (TBRL)**, showcased at **Aero India 2025**.

Strategic Importance

- Modern warfare:** UAV-launched missiles are **cost-effective** compared to ground-based or fighter jet-launched systems, ideal for **inaccessible terrains** along the **Line of Control (LoC)** with Pakistan and **Line of Actual Control (LAC)** with China.
- Recent context:** India's use of **drones** in **Operation Sindoor** and plans to acquire **31 Predator drones** from the US highlight the growing role of **unmanned systems** in defence.
- Testing facility:** Conducted at **NOAR**, a 2,200-acre advanced range in **Kurnool**, also used for **directed-energy weapons** trials, showcasing India's **high-tech testing infrastructure**.-shebang

Additional Info

- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO):** India's premier defence R&D agency, responsible for developing **indigenous defence technologies** like missiles, aircraft, and radar systems.

- National Open Area Range (NOAR):** Located in **Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh**, managed by **Defence Electronics Research Laboratory (DLRL)**, a key facility for testing advanced defence systems.
- Aatmanirbhar Bharat:** India's policy for **self-reliance** in defence manufacturing, involving **private industries** (e.g., **Adani Defence**, **BDL**) and **MSMEs**.
- Global Context:** UAV-launched missiles are critical in modern warfare, with countries like the **US** (Predator drones) and **Israel** leading in such technologies.

Operation Mahadev: Neutralizing Pahalgam Attack Mastermind

What's New?

- On **July 28, 2025**, Indian security forces executed **Operation Mahadev**, neutralizing **three Pakistani terrorists**, including **Suleiman Shah** (alias **Hashim Musa**), the alleged mastermind of the **April 22, 2025, Pahalgam attack** that killed **26 civilians** in **Baisaran Valley, Jammu and Kashmir**.
- The operation, conducted in the **Dachigam forests** near **Srinagar**, involved a joint team of the **Indian Army (24 Rashtriya Rifles, 4 Para)**, **J&K Police**, and **CRPF**, recovering **17 grenades**, one **M4 carbine**, and two **AK-47 rifles**.
- The operation followed a **14-day pursuit**, triggered by a **Chinese satellite phone** detected on **July 11**, with intelligence from **local nomads** and intercepted communications confirming terrorist presence.

What is Operation Mahadev?

- A **counter-terrorism operation** launched by the **Chinar Corps** in the **Lidwas-Harwan area** near **Dachigam National Park**, aimed at eliminating terrorists linked to the **Pahalgam attack**.
- Key details:
 - Intelligence-driven:** Began after detecting a **satellite phone** in **Baisaran**, with further inputs confirming movement in **Dachigam forests**.
 - Swift execution:** Contact established at **11:30 AM**, with all three terrorists neutralized by **12:37 PM** using **surprise tactics** and **drone surveillance**.
 - Terrorist profiles:** **Suleiman Shah**, a **Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)** commander and former **Pakistan Army** operative, was involved in the **Pahalgam attack** and **Z-Morh tunnel killings (2024)**. The other two, **Abu Hamza** and **Yasir**, are also linked to **LeT** and possibly **Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM)**.
- The operation continues to track remaining associates, with **body identification** ongoing to confirm links to the **Pahalgam attack**.

Strategic and Political Context

- Pahalgam Attack:** Claimed by **The Resistance Front (TRF)**, an **LeT offshoot**, it targeted tourists in **Baisaran Valley**, dubbed "mini Switzerland," prompting a **Rs 20 lakh reward** by **J&K Police** for information on **Suleiman Shah**.

- **Operation Sindoor:** India's broader surgical strike response to the attack, debated in **Parliament** on **July 28, 2025**, with **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh** defending its success, while the opposition, led by **Rahul Gandhi**, questioned its scope.
- **NIA Involvement:** The **National Investigation Agency** arrested two locals, **Parvaiz Ahmad Jothar** and **Bashir Ahmad**, in **June 2025** for harboring the attackers, aiding identification of the terrorists.

Additional Info

- **Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT):** A **Pakistan-based terrorist group**, responsible for major attacks like **2008 Mumbai** and **Pahalgam 2025**, often operating through proxies like **TRF**.
- **Chinar Corps:** The **Indian Army's 15 Corps**, based in **Srinagar**, oversees counter-terrorism operations in **Jammu and Kashmir**, critical for **LoC security**.
- **National Investigation Agency (NIA):** Established under the **NIA Act, 2008**, it investigates **terrorism-related cases** across India, coordinating with state police.
- **Dachigam National Park:** A **protected area** near **Srinagar**, often used as a hideout by terrorists due to its **dense forests** and proximity to **20 km** from the city center.

DRDO's Pralay Missile: Successful Twin Tests Boost India's Defence

What's New?

- On **July 28 and 29, 2025**, the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** conducted two consecutive successful flight tests of the **Pralay missile** from **Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Island** off the **Odisha coast**, validating its **maximum (500 km)** and **minimum (150 km)** range capabilities with **pinpoint accuracy**.
- The tests, part of **User Evaluation Trials**, confirmed the missile's **trajectory precision** and **subsystem performance**, monitored by **Integrated Test Range (ITR)** sensors, including **ship-based instruments** near the impact point.
- **Defence Minister Rajnath Singh** and **DRDO Chairman Dr. Samir V. Kamat** lauded the tests, noting their role in paving the way for the missile's **induction into the Indian Armed Forces** in the near future.

What is the Pralay Missile?

- **Pralay** is an **indigenously developed, quasi-ballistic, surface-to-surface missile** designed for **high-precision strikes** in conventional battlefield scenarios, with a **range of 150–500 km** and a **payload capacity of 500–1,000 kg**.
- **Key features:**

- **Solid-fuel rocket motor** with **advanced navigation and avionics**, enabling **mid-flight trajectory changes** to evade **missile interceptors**.
- **Multiple warhead capability:** Can carry **conventional** or potentially **nuclear warheads**, targeting **radar installations, command centers**, and other **military assets**.
- **High mobility:** Mounted on a **twin-launcher system** on a **high-mobility vehicle**, allowing **rapid deployment** along active borders like the **LoC** and **LAC**.

- **Development:** Led by **Research Centre Imarat (RCI)** with contributions from **Advanced Systems Laboratory, Armament Research and Development Establishment, Bharat Dynamics Limited**, and **Bharat Electronics Limited**.

Strategic Importance

- **Tactical edge:** Pralay is India's response to **Pakistan's tactical nuclear capabilities**, offering **precision strikes** with a **Circular Error Probable (CEP) of ≤10 meters** and a **launch preparation time** of under **10 minutes**.
- **Regional context:** Strengthens India's **deterrence** along the **Line of Control (LoC)** and **Line of Actual Control (LAC)**, countering threats from **China** and **Pakistan**.
- **Aatmanirbhar Bharat:** Showcases India's **self-reliance** in defence technology, with contributions from **DRDO labs, industry partners**, and **MSMEs**, reducing reliance on foreign systems.
- **Test significance:** The successful trials, witnessed by **Indian Army, Indian Air Force**, and **industry representatives**, mark a step toward **operational deployment**, enhancing **battlefield flexibility**.

Additional Info

- **Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Island:** Located **10 km** off **Odisha's coast** in the **Bay of Bengal**, it is a key testing site for **DRDO's missile programs**, equipped with **advanced tracking and telemetry systems**.
- **Integrated Test Range (ITR):** A **DRDO facility** in **Chandipur, Balasore**, it conducts **missile testing** with **radar, electro-optic systems**, and **ship-based sensors** for precise data collection.
- **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO):** India's premier **R&D agency** under the **Ministry of Defence**, responsible for developing **missiles, aircraft, and radar systems** like **Agni, Prithvi**, and now **Pralay**.
- **Previous tests:** Pralay's earlier successful tests in **December 2021** demonstrated its **dual-configuration capability**, proving **precision and lethality** for heavier payloads.

International Relations

“Stronger Together” – India Hosts 23rd OPCW Asia Regional Meeting to Bolster Chemical Weapons Convention

What’s New?

- India hosted the **23rd Regional Meeting of National Authorities in Asia**, organized by the **Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)**.
- Attended by senior representatives from Asian States Parties, the meeting focused on enhancing **implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)**, including national legislation, inspections, declarations, capacity-building, and cooperation.

Why It Matters

- **Strengthening non-proliferation:** As an **original signatory and active CWC participant**, India showcased its leadership in chemical safety, disarmament, and industrial regulation.
- **Regional cooperation:** The meeting facilitated exchange of best practices among State Parties on **Article VI (declarations and inspections)** and **Article VII (national legislation)**, deepening sub-regional partnerships.
- **Capacity building:** India and the OPCW’s Technical Secretariat discussed **mentorship programmes**, legislative gaps, and tailored support through the OPCW’s **National Implementation Framework**.

National Authority & India’s Role

- India’s **National Authority for Chemical Weapons Convention (NACWC)**, under the Cabinet Secretariat, coordinates CWC implementation nationally and with the OPCW.
- India reaffirmed commitments via its **28th Conference of States Parties**, highlighting assistance to Kenya and advocating for universal adoption and verification efficiency.

OPCW Framework & Regional Mechanisms

- OPCW holds regional meetings in **Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America**, focusing on sharing challenges and promoting legislative and technical cooperation.
- In previous Central Asian workshops, OPCW partnered with **UNICRI** to improve chemical security, enforcement, and prosecution frameworks—model paradigms for Asia.

Global Governance & Treaty Context

- The **Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)**, effective since 29 April 1997, prohibits development, production, and use of chemical weapons—backed by OPCW’s Nobel Prize-winning verification regime.
- OPCW’s mandate aligns with Articles VI–VII: **declaration, inspections, destruction verification**, and **national legal enforcement**, critical in non-proliferation architecture.

Additional Info

- India has contributed to OPCW’s **ChemTech Centre and Associate Programme**, training labs and national experts from developing countries.
- India has pledged funds (e.g., €10,000) for OPCW **capacity-building and assistance programs**, reflecting proactive support for global chemical security.

Quad Launches Critical Minerals Initiative to Counter China’s Dominance

What’s New?

- At the **Quad Foreign Ministers’ Meeting** held in **Washington, D.C. on July 2, 2025**, leaders from **India, the U.S., Australia, and Japan** launched the **Quad Critical Minerals Initiative**.
- This strategic move aims to **strengthen economic security and resilience** by **securing and diversifying** supply chains of **critical minerals and rare earths**—key for EVs, batteries, drones, semiconductors, and military tech.

Why the Focus on Critical Minerals?

- Minerals like **lithium, nickel, graphite, and rare-earth elements** are essential for advanced technologies.
- **China currently dominates** both mining and midstream processing for these minerals, raising concerns about **price manipulation, supply disruptions, and coercive trade practices**.
- Quad ministers cited alarm over **“abrupt constriction”** and **long-term reliability** of critical mineral supply chains.

Quad’s Strategy & Scope

- The initiative will encompass **mineral recovery, exploration, mining, processing, refining, and investment mobilization** in cooperation with **private sector** stakeholders.
- It is part of a **broader Quad agenda** including **maritime security, emerging technologies, logistics networks, and infrastructure development** like the upcoming **Quad Ports of the Future Partnership** (conference in Mumbai, Oct 2025).

Strategic Significance

- The move reflects Quad’s shift from rhetoric to **“action-oriented cooperation”**—aimed at **reducing dependence on China**, strengthening **supply chain resilience**, and ensuring **economic and national security**.
- Ministers also voiced concern about **China’s assertiveness** in the **East and South China Seas**, reinforcing the initiative’s geopolitical underpinnings.

BRICS Summit 2025: Climate Finance, Expansion & UN Reforms Take Centre Stage

What's New?

- At the **2025 BRICS Summit in Rio**, the bloc issued a strong collective call urging **rich nations** to provide **significant climate-finance** support to aid Global South climate transition efforts. They backed **Brazil's Tropical Forests Forever Facility**, with **China and UAE** signaling investment intentions.
- **Indonesia officially joined** as the **first Southeast Asian full member**, expanding BRICS to **11 countries**: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE, Ethiopia, Iran, and Indonesia.
- BRICS leaders **endorsed India and Brazil's aspiration for UNSC reforms**, and supported India's bid to host **COP-33**, showing unity in pushing for a stronger Global South voice.

Climate Finance Push

- The Summit's **joint communiqué** reaffirmed that **developed nations** bear the primary responsibility to **finance mitigation and adaptation** in less wealthy countries, citing unmet obligations under the **Paris Agreement** and the **UNFCCC**.
- Leaders criticized policies like **EU carbon border taxes** and anti-deforestation laws as **protectionist**, signaling resistance to unilateral environmental measures.
- Momentum is building behind the establishment of the **Tropical Forests Forever Facility**, aimed at conserving rainforests, with backing from within BRICS and potential global co-funding.

Expansion & Geopolitical Reach

- **Indonesia's entry** reflects BRICS' first expansion since 2010 (South Africa), reinforcing its identity as a **Global South coalition**.
- The **bloc now accounts for ~50% of global population and ~35% of world GDP**, signaling its rise as a multipolar voice challenging Western dominance.

UN Reform & Climate Leadership

- BRICS explicitly **endorsed India and Brazil's push** for a **reformed, expanded UN Security Council** to better reflect current global realities.
- They also backed **India's bid to host COP-33**, a critical opportunity to keep climate finance and global cooperation on the agenda.

Additional Info

- **BRICS Origins & Membership**: Founded in 2009 (Brazil, Russia, India, China), expanded in 2010 (SA), and again since 2023 (Egypt, UAE, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia) and now Indonesia.
- **Climate finance context**: Developed countries promised \$100 bn/year by 2020 under Copenhagen Accord; BRICS pushing for \$300 bn/year target at COP implementations.
- **Global governance reforms**: BRICS calls include **IMF quotas, multilateral bank reform, UNSC enlargement**, reinforcing Global South representation.

India Launches Cancer Care Training Programme for BIMSTEC Nations

What's New?

- India inaugurated a **Specialized Cancer Care Training Programme** at **Tata Memorial Centre (TMC), Mumbai**, targeting healthcare professionals from **BIMSTEC member countries**—Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Nepal.
- The initiative was first announced by **Prime Minister Modi** during the **6th BIMSTEC Summit** and is being implemented by the **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** in collaboration with the **Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)**.

Programme Structure & Participants

- A total of **21 participants**—4 from Bangladesh, 6 each from Bhutan and Myanmar, and 5 from Nepal—have joined the **four-week intensive training** at TMC, focusing on **Radiation Oncology, Nuclear Medicine, and Radiology**.
- TMC Director **Dr Sudeep Gupta** revealed that this is the **initial phase** of a broader plan spanning **12 modules**, to be conducted across **nine TMC units** nationwide on a **rotational basis**.

Purpose & Strategic Vision

- This programme aims to **bridge regional disparities** in oncology care by providing **hands-on training, observerships**, and mentorship, nurturing future **collaborative networks** in cancer research and treatment across BIMSTEC nations.
- It aligns with India's broader **BIMSTEC capacity-building agenda**, including the **BODHI initiative, skills development**, and healthcare cooperation outlined in a **21-point action plan** unveiled by PM Modi in April 2025.

Why It Matters

- CDC State-of-the-art facilities at Tata Memorial Centre, the country's top oncology hub under the **Department of Atomic Energy**, make it a natural pick for sharing expertise.
- Regional impact: cancer burden is rising across South and Southeast Asia; this training builds **domestic capacity**, fostering **early detection, improved treatment outcomes**, and **cross-border research** collaboration.
- Coherent policy: the initiative is part of PM Modi's vision to foster **healthcare linkage** and build **centres of excellence** in the region, including traditional medicine and disaster management.

Additional Info

- **Tata Memorial Centre (TMC)**: Consists of 10 institutes across India; it's the nation's premier cancer hospital, offering subsidized care to around **60% of patients** and leading innovations such as **pet/CT, proton therapy**, and **CAR-T trials**.
- **BIMSTEC**: Sub-regional intergovernmental organization including **Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand**, focusing on multi-sectoral cooperation.

- **DAE & MEA joint initiative:** Reflects India's emphasis on **science diplomacy** and **regional capacity building** via its nuclear and health agencies.

India Champions Maritime Safety & Gender Inclusivity at IMO's 134th Council Session

What's New?

- India, represented by **TK Ramachandran (Shipping Secretary, MoPSW)**, made strong interventions at the **134th IMO Council Session (July 7–11, 2025)** hosted in London.
- Key demands:
 - **Investigate recent container vessel incidents** in Indian waters caused by **undeclared hazardous cargo**, structural failures (e.g., MSC ELSA 3 sinking in May 2025, WAN HAI 503 fire/explosion in June 2025).
 - Strengthen international standards for **packaging, stowage, declaration**, especially for **lithium-ion batteries** and **IMDG cargo**.
 - Propose **IMO-led global investigations** to develop **best practices** in container ship safety.

Gender Inclusivity Push

- India highlighted its **"Sagar Mein Samman"** initiative (launched Nov 25, 2024, DG Shipping), aimed at fostering **female seafarer participation** and leadership.
- Emphasized a **650% increase** in Indian women seafarers, aligning with the **IMO Gender Inclusion Strategy** and India Vision @2047.
- India reaffirmed its commitment to IMO efforts on **maritime safety, environmental protection, and inclusive sectoral growth**.

Broader Significance

- Signals India's growing **leadership** within IMO as it proposes global safety mechanisms and champions gender equality.
- Aligns with the broader **International Women in Maritime** movement backed by the Ministry's "Sagar Mein Samman" policy unveiled in May 2025.
- The push for **hazardous cargo regulation** reflects India's strategic interest in safeguarding its maritime zone and marine ecology.

BRICS Rejects EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)

What's New?

- During the **BRICS summit in Rio de Janeiro (July 2025)**, member nations issued a strong statement condemning the **EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)** as **"unilateral, punitive and discriminatory protectionist measures"**.
- The group labeled CBAM as a pretext for environmental protection and asserted it threatens the economic

growth and climate transition efforts of **developing countries**.

Why It Matters

- **CBAM** imposes a **carbon tariff on imports** (steel, cement, aluminium, etc.) whose production results in higher emissions than EU standards—aiming to prevent **carbon leakage** from EU to low-regulation countries.
- BRICS argues that the mechanism undermines the **principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR)** under the **Paris Agreement**, by shifting emission reduction burdens onto developing economies.
- They claim it **distorts international trade**, violates **WTO principles**, and can hamper **fair energy transitions**.

Broader Demands by BRICS

- BRICS called for **increased climate finance from developed countries**, specifically urging **doubling of adaptation funds** from 2019 levels by 2025.
- They demanded that developed nations **bridge pre-2020 mitigation gaps** and deliver on both **emission cuts** and **financial commitments** ahead of 2050.

"Peace Through Diplomacy" – UNSC Adopts Resolution on Peaceful Disputes

What's New?

- On **22 July 2025**, the **UN Security Council** unanimously passed **Resolution 2788 (2025)**, sponsored by **Pakistan**, calling for stronger mechanisms for **peaceful settlement of international disputes**.
- The resolution was adopted during a session **presided over by Pakistan's FM Ishaq Dar**, coinciding with Pakistan's non-permanent **UNSC presidency for July**.

Resolution Highlights

- **Chapter VI emphasis:** Encourages the use of negotiation, inquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial recourse, and regional frameworks as outlined in **Article 33 of the UN Charter**.
- Empowers the **UN Secretary-General** to support preventive diplomacy and mediation and requests a **report within one year** with recommendations to strengthen dispute-settlement tools.
- Urges **member states and regional/sub-regional bodies** to actively engage in and support peaceful conflict resolution.

Wider Context & India's Reaction

- The resolution was part of Pakistan's broader initiative during its UNSC presidency to spotlight **peaceful conflict resolution**, subtly referencing issues like **Kashmir** and **Palestine** without direct naming.
- **India's UN envoy**, Ambassador P. Harish, used the UNSC debate to rebuke Pakistan for allegedly **sponsoring terrorism** while advocating peace, and reaffirmed India's stance that disputes like Kashmir must be resolved **bilaterally**.
- **UN Secretary-General Guterres** emphasized at the meeting that global hotspots—**Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan**,

Haiti, Myanmar—highlight the critical role of diplomacy and international law.

Why It Matters

- **Affirms multilateral diplomacy:** Reinforces **Chapter VI** of the UN Charter as the cornerstone of non-violent dispute resolution—a key norm in international law and multilateralism.
- Highlights **evolving geopolitics:** Pakistan used its UNSC presidency to foreground the international conflict-resolution narrative, testing diplomatic strategies.
- Underlines **India's diplomatic stance:** India's response illustrates its policy of **bilateral dispute resolution**, reflecting principles of sovereignty and non-interference.

Additional Info

- **Article 33 (UN Charter):** Enumerates peaceful avenues like negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and settlement through regional bodies.
- **Pakistan's UNSC role:** Serving a two-year non-permanent term; July presidency provided the platform for this resolution.
- **Chapter VI vs VII:** Chapter VI seeks voluntary peace efforts, unlike Chapter VII which involves enforcement; this resolution maintains the preference for peaceful approaches.

34th WMCC Meeting: India–China Border Talks Signal Calibrated Stability

What's New?

- India and China held the **34th Meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination (WMCC)** on border affairs in **New Delhi on 23 July 2025**, reviewing the situation along the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)** and planning the **next round of Special Representatives (SR) talks** to be hosted in India later this year.
- The Indian delegation was led by **Gourangalal Das** (Joint Secretary, East Asia), while the Chinese side was headed by **Hong Liang** (Director-General, Boundary & Oceanic Affairs, Chinese MFA).
- Both sides **acknowledged general peace and tranquillity** prevailing along the border and affirmed plans to maintain **regular diplomatic and military-level contact through established mechanisms**.
- Discussions built on outcomes from the **23rd SR talks** and the **33rd WMCC meeting**, focusing on **effective border management** and ways to prevent friction at sensitive points.

Context & Significance

- The **WMCC** is an institutional dialogue platform established in **January 2012** to facilitate structured coordination on border affairs between India and China, led by mid-level officials from both countries, without addressing boundary resolution directly.
- Its 34th iteration underscores a **continued commitment to managing tensions**, after the 2020–21 border clashes, especially around friction zones in **eastern Ladakh** like **Demchok** and **Depsang**.

- India and China reached a **Border Patrol Agreement in October 2024** to restore pre-2020 patrolling rights in disputed sectors, helping ease tensions significantly.
- The upcoming **SR talks**, likely between India's **NSA Ajit Doval** and China's **Wang Yi**, will aim for a **framework for long-term engagement and de-escalation**.

Broader Developments & Diplomatic Signals

- Alongside the WMCC meeting, India announced the **resumption of tourist visas for Chinese citizens** from 24 July 2025—a move Beijing welcomed as “positive,” highlighting increased **people-to-people exchanges** as mutually beneficial.
- The discussions reflect a **gradual thaw in bilateral ties**, marked earlier by the resumption of **direct flights** in January 2025 and **PM Modi's upcoming SCO visit to China**, signalling cautious but deliberate diplomatic engagement.

Additional Info

- **Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination (WMCC):**
 - Created in **2012** for structured dialogue on **border management**, not boundary resolution.
 - Held so far 34 rounds; involves both diplomatic and military officials at joint-secretary and director-general levels.
- **Special Representatives (SR) Mechanism:**
 - Higher-level platform for boundary discussion, headed on Indian side by **NSA Ajit Doval**, and on Chinese side by **Foreign Minister Wang Yi**.
- **Line of Actual Control (LAC):**
 - Undemarcated boundary stretching over sectors in Ladakh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh; historically contested since the 1962 war.
- **2024 Border Patrol Agreement:**
 - Agreed in October 2024 to restore patrolling rights prior to 2020, easing friction and enabling limited disengagement from sensitive zones.

Landmark India–UK Free Trade Agreement Signed

What's New?

- On **24 July 2025**, Prime Ministers **Narendra Modi** and **Keir Starmer** formally signed the **India–UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** at **Chequers**, marking a historic milestone in bilateral trade relations.
- Negotiations between the two countries began in **January 2022**, and an “agreement in principle” was reached on **6 May 2025**.
- The deal is expected to **boost bilateral trade by £25.5 billion annually by 2040**, with a goal to **double trade to US \$120 billion by 2030**.
- The agreement will slash average **Indian tariffs on UK goods** from ~15% to ~3%, and **eliminate duties on 99% of Indian exports** to the UK, covering ~100% of trade value.

Key Provisions

- **Whisky & Alcohol:** Duties on **British Scotch whisky** will fall from **150% to 75% immediately**, reaching **40% within 10 years**; similar phased cuts on **gin, rum, brandy**.
- **Automobiles:** India will phase down **import duties on UK cars** (including luxury vehicles) to **10% within 5–15 years**, under **quota restrictions** (10,000 units rising to 19,000 by year five). Only select models qualify to preserve domestic IR competitiveness.
- **Exports from India:** Duty-free access to sectors like **textiles, apparel, gems, jewelry, leather, machinery, pharma, processed foods, and marine products**.
- **Trade Facilitation & Services:**
 - Customs simplification: electronic authentication, clearance within **48 hours**, periodic duty payments.
 - **Social security exemption** for Indian workers posted in the UK (up to three years), including yoga instructors, chefs, musicians.
 - Covers **trade in goods, services, digital trade, professional mobility, SPS standards, etc.**

Additional Info

- **India–UK FTA (CETA):**
 - Officially titled India – United Kingdom Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, signed **24 July 2025**.
 - Covers **chapters on goods, services, IPR, digital trade, labour, environment, and dispute settlement**.
- **Trade Context:**
 - Bilateral trade in FY 2024–25: **US \$23.16 billion**, with India enjoying a surplus of ~US \$5.94 billion.
 - UK is India's **sixth-largest investor**; India is one of the UK's top FDI sources.

India Reaffirms Support for Two-State Solution and Gaza Ceasefire

What's New?

- On **July 30, 2025**, India reiterated its strong support for a **two-state solution** to the **Israel-Palestinian conflict** at a **UN High-Level International Conference** on “The Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution,” co-chaired by **France** and **Saudi Arabia** in **New York**.
- **Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish**, India's Permanent Representative to the UN, called for an **immediate ceasefire** in Gaza, **unimpeded humanitarian aid**, and the **release of all hostages**, emphasizing that “intermittent pauses are not enough” to address the crisis, where **95% of hospitals** are damaged and **650,000 children** have lacked schooling for over **20 months**.

- India committed **\$160 million** to Palestinian development projects, including **\$40 million** currently active through partnerships with **UNRWA**, to support **education, healthcare, and economic rebuilding**.

Context of India's Stance

- **India's position:** India has consistently backed a **sovereign, viable, and independent Palestinian state** within **mutually agreed borders**, coexisting peacefully with Israel, while condemning **terrorism**, including the **October 7, 2023, Hamas attack** that killed **1,200** and took **250 hostages**.
- **Humanitarian crisis:** The **UN** and **WHO** report **62,000 deaths** in Gaza, including **50,000 children** killed or injured, with **875 deaths** near aid checkpoints, exacerbating **famine risks** and **unemployment (46%)**. India stressed **sustained aid** to address shortages of **food, fuel, and medical services**.
- **Conference significance:** The **July 28–30, 2025**, conference produced the **New York Declaration**, signed by **25 countries**, demanding an end to the Gaza war and **hostage release**. India hopes it will lead to “concrete steps” for a **Palestinian state**.

Strategic and Diplomatic Implications

- **India's balancing act:** India maintains **strong ties** with both **Israel** (defence, technology) and **Palestine** (historical support since recognizing the State of Palestine in **1988**), navigating tensions while protecting **economic interests** like the **India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC)**, stalled due to the conflict.
- **Global divide:** The **US** supports Israel's military actions, while **France, UK, Canada**, and others push for a **ceasefire** and **two-state solution**, creating a **Western rift**. India aligns with the latter, urging **dialogue** and **diplomacy**.
- **Regional stability:** India warned of **regional instability**, with **Gaza's blockade** (since **2007**) and **Israeli restrictions** on aid (e.g., **700 aid trucks** stalled) worsening the crisis. The **UN** and **Global South** (e.g., **Colombia**) advocate for **accountability**.

Additional Info

- **India's contributions:** Beyond **\$160 million** in aid, India supports **UNRWA** projects and trains **Palestinian diplomats**, reinforcing its role as the **first non-Arab state** to recognize Palestine.
- **UNTOC and ICAT:** The **UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime** and **Inter-Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking** inform India's broader **humanitarian framework**, though not directly linked to Gaza.
- **Israel's response:** Israel rejected claims of aid blockages, alleging **Hamas propaganda** and citing **4,500 aid trucks** entering Gaza, but **UN bottlenecks** remain a key issue.

International

Russia Becomes the First Country to Recognise Taliban Government of Afghanistan

What's New?

- Russia officially accepted the credentials of **Gul Hassan Hassan** as the Taliban's ambassador in Moscow, becoming the **first country globally** to formally **recognise the Taliban government** that returned to power in **August 2021**.
- According to the Russian Foreign Ministry, this recognition aims to enhance **bilateral cooperation in trade, energy, transport, agriculture, infrastructure, and counter-terrorism**.
- Russia had already **removed the Taliban from its terrorist list in April 2025**, and maintained its **embassy in Kabul** post-Western withdrawal.

Context & Implications

- **Historic shift:** During their previous rule (1996–2001), the Taliban were recognised only by **Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and UAE**.
- **Strategic motive:** Russia views the Taliban as an ally in combating **ISIS-K** and seeks to bolster **regional security**.
- **Diplomatic impact:** With Russia taking this official step, countries like **China, UAE, Pakistan, Uzbekistan**, which have informal ties, may be influenced to follow.
- **Human-rights concerns:** Western nations continue to withhold recognition due to Taliban's **severe restrictions on women's education, mobility, and public life**.

Additional Info

- **Taliban regime (Akhund cabinet):** Comprised only of male members; the **Ministry of Women's Affairs is abolished**.
- **Diplomatic norms:** Recognition involves formal **acceptance of credentials**, distinct from simply accepting diplomats. Russia opened its **Kabul embassy in 2021** and accredited Taliban envoys in Russia since 2022.
- **Soviet-Afghan links:** Russia (formerly USSR) fought a decade-long war in Afghanistan (1979–1989) against mujahideen—early Taliban predecessors.
- **Criteria for global recognition:** Western policy often demands Taliban allow **girls' education, women's rights, inclusive governance, and reduce terrorist affiliations**, none of which have substantially improved.

- The **average global liveability score** remained steady at **76.1/100**, with improvements in education, healthcare, and infrastructure countered by a decline in **stability** owing to geopolitical unrest.

Top 10 Most Liveable Cities

- **Copenhagen, Denmark** claimed the top position, scoring a perfect **100 in stability, education, and infrastructure** and an overall index score of **98/100**.
- Vienna (Austria) and Zurich (Switzerland) tied for **2nd place (97.1)**, followed by **Melbourne (97.0)**, **Geneva (96.8)**, **Sydney (96.6)**, **Osaka & Auckland (96.0)**, **Adelaide (95.9)**, and **Vancouver (95.8)**—the only North American city in the Top 10.

Worst (Least Liveable) Cities

- **Damascus, Syria** ranked last at **30.7**, plagued by war, infrastructure collapse, poor healthcare, and instability.
- Other low-ranked cities include **Tripoli (40.1)**, **Dhaka (41.7)**, **Karachi (42.7)**, **Algiers (42.8)**, **Lagos (43.5)**, **Harare (43.8)**, **Port Moresby (44.1)**, **Kyiv (44.5)**, and **Caracas (44.9)**.

Why It Matters

- Reflects **urban livability trends** amid rising global instability—highlighting that **smaller, well-managed cities with strong public infrastructure** tend to fare better.
- Confirms **Western Europe's dominance** in urban quality of life, the stable performance of Australia and Canada, and the ongoing challenges in **conflict-affected or overcrowded cities** in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

How the Ranking Works

- Each city was assessed on **30 sub-indicators** within five factors:
 - **Stability (25%)**
 - **Healthcare (20%)**
 - **Culture & Environment (25%)**
 - **Education (10%)**
 - **Infrastructure (20%)**

Global Liveability Index 2025: Defining the Best and Worst Cities to Live In

What's New?

- The **Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)** released its **2025 Global Liveability Index** ranking **173 cities** globally, based on **30 indicators** across **five categories**—**stability, healthcare, culture & environment, education, and infrastructure**.

Typhoon Danas Devastates Western Taiwan

What's New?

- **Typhoon Danas**, also called **Bising**, made a **rare west-coast landfall** in **Chiayi County** late on **6 July 2025**, with winds peaking around **220 km/h (135 mph)**—a historic intensity for the region.
- It tragically killed **two people**—one crushed by a falling tree, the other succumbing due to **respirator failure during a power outage**. Over **300–630 people** were **injured** across the island.
- Major infrastructure outages included **electricity to nearly 660,000 households**, widespread **telecom disruptions, transport halts**, and cancellations of **over 300 flights** and **dozens of ferry routes**.

How It Unfolded

- The **Central Weather Administration (CWA)** had issued both **sea and land warnings** from **5 July**, particularly for **southern counties** like Kaohsiung, Tainan, Chiayi, and Pingtung.
- Danas intensified into a **Category 2-equivalent typhoon** before striking the **densely populated west coast**, a deviation from typical eastern landfall patterns.

Damage & Disruptions

- **Landslides, floods, fallen trees:** Over **700 trees** uprooted; widespread structural damage including temples and poles.
- **Water and Power Cuts:** **60,000+ households** lost water in cities like Tainan and Taichung; **nearly 660,000 homes** faced prolonged power outages.
- **Transportation breakdown:** Rail, air, and sea networks severed—over **8,000 tourists stranded** on Penghu; inland evacuations of **3,400 people** from risk zones near Kaohsiung.
- **Agricultural hits:** Crop and facility damage exceeded **NT\$1 billion (~US\$34 million)**—especially in Chiayi, Tainan, Yunlin, and Pingtung, with losses reported for bananas, pomelos, bamboo shoots, and fisheries.

ICC Issues Arrest Warrants for Taliban Leaders Over Gender Persecution

What's New?

- The **International Criminal Court (ICC)**'s Pre-Trial Chamber II issued arrest warrants for two senior Taliban figures:
 - **Haibatullah Akhundzada**, Supreme Leader
 - **Abdul Hakim Haqqani**, Chief JusticeThey are charged with **crimes against humanity** for orchestrating **systematic persecution of women and girls**, alongside targeting LGBTQI+ individuals and those supporting gender rights in Afghanistan since the Taliban took power in August 2021.

Charges & Context

- The ICC asserts there is mounting evidence that under Taliban rule, women and girls were **deprived of basic rights**—education, employment, freedom of movement, voice, and even privacy—through edicts and decrees enforcing **gender apartheid**.
- Charges include **murder, torture, rape, enforced disappearance**, and specific persecution of gender-diverse persons and “allies of women”.

Taliban Response & Legal Implications

- The Taliban swiftly **rejected the ICC's jurisdiction**, claiming adherence to **Islamic Sharia**, dismissing the warrants as “nonsense”.
- Although ICC lacks its own enforcement mechanism, **member states are obliged** to arrest if these leaders enter their territory. However, past incidents (e.g., Netanyahu, Putin) suggest **limited enforcement likelihood**.

Why It Matters

- This is the **first time** the ICC has recognised **gender-based persecution**, including targeting LGBTQI+ individuals, as a crime against humanity, setting a powerful legal precedent.
- It sends a global message that **systemic oppression of women and gender minorities** warrants formal legal accountability—even without travel overseas.
- The warrants echo sustained **global condemnation**, including via **UN resolutions**, and reinforce **international legal mechanisms** against human rights abuses.

UNCTAD Report 2025: Global Economy Under Pressure

What's New?

- The **UNCTAD** report, *Trade and Development Foresights 2025: Under Pressure – Uncertainty Reshapes Global Economic Prospects*, presents a cautious outlook for 2025.
- It forecasts **global GDP growth slowing to 2.3 % in 2025**, breaching the 2.5 % recession threshold and signifying a potential global downturn.
- The earlier year, 2024, posted slightly stronger growth at 2.8 %, indicating the decline is abrupt and worrying.

Underlying Risks

- **Trade tensions** and geopolitical friction—especially tariff policies—have disrupted supply chains and shaken market stability.
- **Record-high policy uncertainty**, the highest this century, continues to deter investment and hiring decisions.
- **Financial market volatility** further adds to risk, creating a feedback loop that dampens real economic activity.

Impact on Developing Economies

- Emerging markets face a **‘perfect storm’**: weak domestic demand, high debt, and poor external financing.
- UNCTAD warns these conditions threaten to **reverse decades of development progress**.
- However, **South-South trade**—now one-third of global trade—emerges as a buffer, offering diversification and resilience.

Policy Recommendations

- **International coordination:** Strengthen cooperation to restore trust in trade and finance.
- **Focus on resilient infrastructure:** Shift fiscal priorities from military to health, climate, and inclusive growth.
- **Deepening regional trade:** Encourage South-South links and regional agreements to counteract global fragmentation.
- **Policy alignment:** Combine fiscal, monetary, and industrial strategies to foster long-term sustainable development.

UN-ITU Report Calls for Robust Global Measures Against AI-Driven Deepfakes

What's New?

- The **International Telecommunication Union (ITU)**, under the **United Nations**, published a report at the **AI for Good Summit (Geneva, July 11, 2025)** highlighting the urgent need for stronger global frameworks to detect and counter **AI-generated deepfakes**.

Why It Matters

- Deepfakes**—AI-generated images, videos, or audio impersonating real individuals—pose severe risks, including **election interference**, **financial fraud**, and **social distrust**.
- Trust in social media is plummeting, underscoring the need for platforms to provide **digital provenance**—timestamp, creator identity, and authorship metadata—to restore confidence.

Key Recommendations

- Digital verification tools** must be embedded by social media firms and content platforms as a standard across all multimedia types.
- Development of **watermarking standards**—especially for video content (which makes up ~80% of internet traffic)—to embed metadata for authentication.
- International cooperation** is vital: the report warns that fragmented solutions are ineffective, advocating for multilateral standard-setting bodies and harmonised norms.
- User education**, proactive safety protocols, and private–public collaboration are essential to empower users and keep pace with rapidly evolving AI.

Broader Context

- The ITU's deepfake findings build on its **May 2024 AI-for-Good workshop**, which explored watermarking, authentication, and multimedia integrity standards.
- The UN has repeatedly underlined deepfakes as threats to **information integrity**, democratic resilience, and gender-security dynamics—particularly noting their use in misinformation and hate content.

- Urban & tropical impact:** In tropical regions, exposure to dangerous heat may **double**, while in mid-latitudes it could become **3–10 times higher**.
- India's scenario:** Older adults are already experiencing **2–4 additional heatwave days annually** between 2013–2022 compared to 1986–2005.

Key Recommendations

- Age-friendly urban planning:** Adopt the “**15-minute city**” approach—ensuring essential services are accessible within a short walk or cycle to reduce elderly heat exposure.
- Enhanced green spaces:** Expand urban vegetation and pollution control to moderate city temperatures.
- Early warning & community engagement:** Strengthen **weather monitoring**, **heat-risk alerts**, and **community disaster preparedness**, especially for seniors.

Broader Climate Context

- Frontier Reports serve as UN's **foresight tool**, addressing emerging threats—from zoonotic pandemics to climate change impacts.
- UNEP highlights other concerns: **melting glaciers**, **chemical remobilization**, and **ageing dam risks**.

Talisman Sabre 2025: Australia Hosts Largest-Ever Drill Amid China Watch

What's New?

- On **July 13, 2025**, Australia launched **Talisman Sabre 2025**, the **11th and largest-ever edition** of its joint military exercise with the **U.S.**, involving **~35,000–40,000 personnel** from **19 countries** and observers from **3 others**.
- For the **first time**, exercises expanded beyond Australia into **Papua New Guinea**, signifying regional defense integration.

Key Elements & Strategic Highlights

- Live-fire drills** featuring **HIMARS** rockets (up to 400 km range), F-35B jets, surface-to-air missile systems, amphibious landings, and **space operations integration** for reconnaissance and targeting.
- Participation spans **military domains**—land, sea, air, space, and cyber—with emphasis on **multi-domain warfare** and interoperability.
- Involvement includes a **1,400-strong reservist task group** from the Australian Defence Force and the U.S. Coast Guard, tasked with community and infrastructure protection.

Why It Matters

- Regional deterrence:** Demonstrates collective resolve amid rising tensions in the **Indo-Pacific**, especially regarding **China's increasing assertiveness**.
- China's response:** Chinese surveillance ships are expected to monitor the drills—a consistent pattern since 2017; Australian officials are adapting accordingly.
- Australia's stance:** While strengthening alliances with the U.S. and partners, Minister Pat Conroy clarified

UN Frontier Report Warns of Rising Heat-Related Deaths Among the Elderly

What's New?

- The **UN Environment Programme's Frontier Report (2025)** titled “**The Weight of Time**” reveals that **annual heat-related deaths among people aged 65+ have increased by 85% since the 1990s**.
- With global temperatures rising **2 °C above pre-industrial levels**, heat-related fatalities among older adults could surge by a staggering **370% by 2050**.

Why It Matters

- Elderly physiology:** As people age, their **thermoregulatory efficiency declines**, making them **highly vulnerable** to heat stress—including cardiovascular and respiratory complications.

Australia won't pre-commit forces in any future conflict, upholding national sovereignty.

Broader Context

- **Multinational engagement:** Countries involved include Canada, UK, France, Germany, India, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, New Zealand, Norway, Netherlands, Philippines, Fiji, Indonesia, Tonga, Papua New Guinea; observers: Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei.
- The **UK Carrier Strike Group** (HMS Prince of Wales, escorts) is participating in its maiden Indo-Pacific deployment.
- The exercise aligns with evolving **Australian Defense Space Strategy**, integrating **real-time commercial space data** for improved situational awareness.

- **Debt burden** and weak access to affordable finance stifle crucial investments.
- Some countries are "**cherry-picking**" **SDGs**, prioritizing easier targets and neglecting hard-to-implement ones like environment and inclusion.

Calls to Action

- UN urges urgent **multilateralism**, **financial architecture reform**, **debt relief**, and **tripling MDB lending capacity**.
- Highlights the need for **integrated actions** across sectors—food systems, climate, digital access, education, health.
- The coming **HLPF (High-level Political Forum)** will emphasize these catalytic pathways.

Five Years Left: UN Declares Global Development Emergency

What's New?

- Only **35 %** of the 137 measurable **SDG targets** are on track or showing moderate progress, while **47 % are stalled** and **18 % are regressing**.
- Major concerns emerge in **SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)**, **SDG 4 (Quality Education)**, **SDG 6 (Clean Water & Sanitation)**, **SDG 8 (Decent Work)**, and **SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities)**, where **50–57 %** of targets are off-track or slipping backwards.
- UN Secretary-General **António Guterres** sounded the alarm: "**global development emergency**" calling for "urgency, unity and unwavering resolve".

Progress & Setbacks

- **Wins:**
 - **HIV infections down ~40%** since 2010;
 - **Maternal mortality fell** from 228 to 197 per 100,000 births; **under-5 mortality** from 43 to 37 per 1,000.
 - **92 % of world now has electricity**, and **internet use jumped from 40 % to 68 %** since 2015.
- **Challenges:**
 - **800 million** remain in **extreme poverty**; **~750 million face hunger**, with no improvement in 3 years.
 - Food-price inflation hits 60% of nations; rising debt servicing (~USD 1.4 trillion) shrinks fiscal space.
 - **Environmental goals lag:** SDG 12, 14, 15 have ~40 % of targets deteriorating.

Regional & Country Highlights

- **Europe & Nordics** lead: Finland #1, followed by Sweden and Denmark.
- **India** enters the **top 100 globally**, ranking **99th** with a **score of 66.95**—up from 109th in 2024.
- **East & South Asia** show fastest regional improvement since 2015.

Roadblocks to Progress

- Persisting **conflicts** (e.g., Gaza, Ukraine), **climate shocks**, and **inequalities** are undermining efforts.

Toxic Algae Devastates South Australia's Coastline

What's New?

- South Australia is witnessing a **massive toxic algal bloom**—spanning **4,500 km²**—since March 2025, declared a "**natural disaster**" by Premier Peter Malinauskas.
- The bloom has killed at least **400 marine species**, with over **13,800 animal carcasses** recorded; affected marine life includes fish, rays, sharks, octopuses, and invertebrates.
- The culprit: a **Karenia mikimotoi** bloom exacerbated by a **marine heatwave** (+2.5 °C above normal) and **nutrient runoff** from prior floods.

Impacts & Government Response

- Declared a natural disaster, with **A\$28 million** (A\$14m each from state & federal) allocated for **cleanup, research, monitoring, and business relief**.
- **Tourism and fisheries have collapsed:** Oyster and mussel farms closed; seafood trade and coastal tourism revenues plunged.
- Remote sensing buoys, satellite monitoring, and early detection systems have been deployed; a **Senate inquiry** is also underway.

Causes & Ecological Mechanism

- Key drivers: **marine heatwave** since Oct 2024, **nutrient-rich Murray River floods**, and **stagnant water conditions** due to high pressure.
- **Karenia mikimotoi** is a **dinoflagellate HAB**, releasing **reactive oxygen species** that damage gills and deplete oxygen during decomposition—killing animals even without direct toxin production.
- Similar mass mortality events and "dead zone" dynamics are well-documented in eutrophication cases worldwide.

Why It Matters

- Flagged as **South Australia's worst ecological crisis**, the bloom threatens **key tourism hotspots**, **marine biodiversity**, and **coastal livelihoods**.
- Highlights the **intersection of climate change and environmental health**, showing how **marine heatwaves and land-based pollution** trigger devastating HABs.

- Economic fallout emphasizes **policy gaps** in **marine ecosystem monitoring**, disaster preparedness, and **national environmental strategy**.

Henley Passport Index 2025: India Makes Its Biggest Leap Yet

What's New?

- India climbed **8 spots** in the 2025 Henley Passport Index, moving from **85th to 77th position**—the **largest single jump ever** for India.
- Indian passport holders can now travel visa-free or with visa-on-arrival access to **59 destinations**, up from **57** last year.
- However, the country still trails behind celebrity passports—**Singapore retains the top spot** with access to **193 destinations**, followed by Japan and South Korea at 190.

Why It Matters

- Despite adding only **two new countries** (the **Philippines** and **Sri Lanka**), India achieved its most significant ranking improvement in a single update, suggesting **strong diplomatic efforts and new visa waiver agreements**.
- The surge signals **improved global mobility** for Indian citizens, enhancing opportunities in tourism, education, business, and employment overseas.
- Yet, visas to only 59 destinations highlight persisting **visa restrictions**, especially when compared to nations in the top 10 list that offer access to **190+ destinations**.

Additional Information

- The **Henley Passport Index** ranks passports based on the number of destinations accessible without a prior visa, using exclusive data from the **International Air Transport Association (IATA)**.
- **Top-ranked passports** include:
 - **Singapore**: 193 destinations
 - **Japan & South Korea**: 190
 - Several European countries: 189–188.
- **Global trends** include:
 - **UAE and China** have improved sharply (UAE up to 8th, China to 60th) over the past decade through aggressive visa diplomacy.
 - **United States** has dropped to its lowest-ever spot (10th), tied with Iceland and Lithuania, accessing only 182 destinations.
- **Neighboring countries**:
 - India (77th) now ranks ahead of Pakistan (96th) and Bangladesh (94th).

surpassing **Singapore's Changi Airport**, a long-time favorite known for its **indoor waterfall** and **lush greenery**.

- The **Prix Versailles 2025** list, announced on **July 28, 2025**, highlighted six airports for their **aesthetic architecture**, **sustainability**, and **passenger experience**, including **Marseille Provence Airport** (France) and **Roland Garros Airport** (Réunion Island, France) in second and third places.
- **India's airports**, notably **Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport** (ranked 9th in **Travel + Leisure's World's Best Awards 2025**), did not feature in the **Prix Versailles** top six, marking a shift in global recognition.

What are the Prix Versailles Awards?

- An annual **architecture and design award**, often called the "**world architecture and design award**," recognizing outstanding **public infrastructure** like airports, museums, and hotels since **2015**.
- **Criteria**:
 - **Aesthetic excellence**: Innovative design reflecting local culture (e.g., Yantai's **coastal-inspired architecture** spanning **167,000 sqm**).
 - **Sustainability**: Use of **eco-friendly materials**, **energy efficiency**, and **green technology** (e.g., **solar panels** in San Francisco's Harvey Milk Terminal).
 - **Passenger experience**: Focus on **comfort**, **functionality**, and **cultural integration**.
- **2025 Airport List**:
 - **Yantai Penglai Terminal 2** (China): Coastal design, flexible structure.
 - **Marseille Provence Airport** (France): Modern, passenger-friendly layout.
 - **Roland Garros Airport** (Réunion Island): **Tropical bioclimatic design** with **91% local materials**.
 - **Kansai International Airport Terminal 1** (Japan): Longest terminal, designed by **Renzo Piano**.
 - **San Francisco International Airport Terminal 1** (USA): **40% less energy** use, home to the world's first **airport museum**.
 - **Portland International Airport Main Terminal** (USA): Nature-inspired, eco-friendly design with **llamas** for traveler relaxation.

Global and Indian Context

- **Global shift**: **Singapore's Changi Airport**, with its **Jewel complex** and **600,000 plants**, lost its top spot in **Prix Versailles 2025**, despite ranking second in **Travel + Leisure's World's Best Awards** (score: 98.57, behind **Istanbul Airport**). This reflects rising competition in **airport design**.
- **India's aviation growth**: India's **aviation sector** is expanding, with **153 airports** and plans for **300 by 2030** under the **UDAN** scheme. **Mumbai Airport's** ranking highlights India's growing global presence, though **infrastructure gaps** persist.
- **Sustainability focus**: Airports like **San Francisco** and **Roland Garros** set benchmarks for **green**

Yantai Penglai Named World's Most Beautiful Airport 2025

What's New?

- **Yantai Penglai International Airport's Terminal 2** in **China** was crowned the **world's most beautiful airport** for 2025 by the **Prix Versailles Awards**,

design, pushing India to integrate **renewable energy** and **smart systems** in projects like **Navi Mumbai International Airport**.

Additional Info

- **Prix Versailles:** Administered by a **UNESCO-partnered committee**, it evaluates **design innovation** across sectors, with past winners including **Paris' Louvre Pyramid** and **Tokyo's Shibuya Station**.
- **Yantai Penglai International Airport:** Located in **Shandong, China**, its **Terminal 2** reflects the region's **maritime heritage**, designed for **flexibility** and **natural light**.
- **India's Aviation Sector:** Managed by the **Ministry of Civil Aviation**, with **Airports Authority of India (AAI)** overseeing operations and **UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik)** promoting **regional connectivity**.
- **Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport:** Operated by **Adani Airports**, it handles **50 million passengers annually**, known for its **art installations** and **Terminal 2 design**.

breaking from the US stance. France's recognition of **Palestinian statehood** signals a shift toward **global advocacy** for Palestinian rights.

- **Israeli actions:** Proposals for a "**humanitarian city**" in **Rafah** to relocate **600,000 Palestinians**, described by critics like former Israeli PM **Ehud Olmert** as a potential **concentration camp**, and incidents of **shooting unarmed Palestinians** seeking aid have intensified global criticism.

Strategic and Global Implications

- **Geopolitical impact:**
 - The rift weakens the **Western bloc's unity**, with countries like **France** and **Saudi Arabia** pushing for a **two-state solution**, while the **US-Israel** stance isolates them from the **Global South** and parts of the West.
 - **India's position:** India balances its **strategic ties** with Israel (e.g., **defence cooperation**) and support for a **Palestinian state**, condemning **Hamas terrorism** while maintaining relations with **Arab Gulf states** and **Iran**. The Gaza crisis has paused initiatives like the **India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC)** and **I2U2**, impacting India's economic interests.

Growing Rift in the West Over Gaza: Implications and Challenges

What's New?

- On **July 21, 2025**, **25 countries**, including **Italy, Canada, UK, Japan, France**, and the **EU**, issued a joint statement asserting that "the war in Gaza must end now," urging an **immediate ceasefire** and compliance with **international law**.
- Western leaders like **French President Emmanuel Macron**, **UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer**, **Canadian PM Mark Carney**, and **Australian PM Anthony Albanese** have publicly criticized Israel's actions in Gaza, reflecting a growing divide in Western support for Israel.
- **France** and **Saudi Arabia** are set to co-chair an **international conference** on the **two-state solution** at the **UN** starting **July 28, 2025**, building on a **September 2024** ministerial meeting, amid Israel's intensified military operations and plans for **permanent occupation** of Gaza.

What is the Rift Over Gaza?

- **Context:** Israel's ongoing military campaign in Gaza, intensified since the **October 7, 2023, Hamas attack**, has led to a **humanitarian crisis**, with over **100 humanitarian organizations** warning of a **mass famine** and **1.3 million displacements** in Gaza.
- **Western divide:**
 - **US-Israel alliance:** The **US** continues to provide **military** and **diplomatic support** to Israel, rejecting immediate pushes for a **Palestinian state** and withdrawing from **ceasefire negotiations** in **July 2025**, giving Israel a **carte blanche** for its objectives of eliminating **Hamas** and occupying Gaza.
 - **Dissenting voices:** Countries like **Canada, UK, Germany**, and **France** support Israel's short-term security goals but advocate for a **two-state solution**,

- **Humanitarian crisis:** The **World Food Program** reports a **third of Gaza's population** not eating for days, with **61% requiring food aid** due to Israel's **blockade** and **aid restrictions**, labeled as **collective punishment** by critics.
- **Global South's response:** Countries like **Colombia** (part of **The Hague Group**) have adopted measures like **arms embargoes** and prosecution of **Israeli war crimes**, reflecting a broader **Global South** push for accountability.

Additional Info

- **Gaza's blockade:** Since **2007**, when **Hamas** took control, Israel's **air, land, and sea blockade**, supported by **Egypt**, has restricted **goods, aid, and movement**, earning Gaza the label of an "**open-air prison**" by figures like **David Cameron**.
- **Two-state solution:** Envisions a **Palestinian state** alongside Israel based on **pre-1967 borders**, supported by the **UN** and countries like **France**, but opposed by **Israel's current government**, with ministers like **Itamar Ben-Gvir** advocating for **Palestinian expulsion**.
- **India-Middle East ties:** India's **economic relations** with the **Gulf** (e.g., **UAE, Saudi Arabia**) and **Iran** remain stable, but escalation risks **remittances, energy imports**, and projects like **IMEC**.
- **UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA):** Reports **devastating impacts** in Gaza, with **31% of households** unable to meet **education needs** and **46% unemployment** due to the blockade.

Global Hunger Declines, but Rises in Africa and Western Asia: UN Report

What's New?

- On **July 28, 2025**, the **State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI 2025)** report, released by five UN agencies during the **Second UN Food Systems Summit Stocktake (UNFSS+4)** in **Addis Ababa**, revealed that global hunger affected **8.2% of the population** (approximately **673 million people**) in 2024, down from **8.5% in 2023** and **8.7% in 2022**, a reduction of **15 million** from 2023 and **22 million** from 2022.
- Despite global progress, hunger rose in **Africa** (affecting **20.4%**, or **307 million people**) and **Western Asia** (**12.7%**, or **39 million people**), driven by **conflict, climate shocks, and food inflation**. The report projects **512 million** people could face chronic undernourishment by 2030, with **60%** in Africa.
- India** contributed significantly to global hunger reduction, with **Southern Asia's** prevalence of undernourishment falling from **12.2% in 2023** to **11% in 2024**, or **323 million people**, due to improved access to **healthy diets**.

What Does the SOFI 2025 Report Highlight?

- Global trends:**
 - Hunger remains above pre-pandemic levels (**7.5% in 2019**), with **food inflation** (2021–2023) slowing recovery. **Low-income countries** saw **72% of their population** (544.7 million) unable to afford a healthy diet in 2024.
 - Southern Asia** and **Latin America** showed progress, with Latin America's hunger rate dropping to **5.1%** (34 million people) from **6.1% in 2020**.
- Regional challenges:**
 - Africa:** Hunger surpassed **20%** in 2024, worsened by **population growth, low agricultural productivity, and conflicts** (e.g., Sudan, Gaza). **Climate shocks** like droughts further strained food systems.
 - Western Asia:** Conflicts, including **Israel's blockade of Gaza** (imposed March 2025, partially lifted May 2025), led to **alarming**

malnutrition levels, with only a **trickle of aid** allowed, risking **mass starvation**.

- Nutrition indicators:**
 - Child stunting** fell from **26.4% in 2012** to **23.2% in 2024**; **exclusive breastfeeding** (under 6 months) rose from **37% in 2012** to **47.8% in 2023**.
 - Child wasting** (6.6% in 2024) and **overweight** (5.5% in 2024) remained stable; **adult obesity** rose to **15.8% in 2022**; **anaemia in women** (15–49 years) increased to **30.7% in 2023**.
 - New **SDG indicator**: **One-third of children** (6–23 months) and **two-thirds of women** (15–49 years) met **minimum dietary diversity**.

Strategic Importance

- Global response:** The **FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO** called for **urgent action**, emphasizing **rural investments, social protection, and nutrition education** (e.g., breastfeeding promotion) to address hunger in **vulnerable regions**.
- India's role:** Improved food access and **agricultural policies** (e.g., **PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana**) reduced undernourishment, positioning India as a **key driver** in Southern Asia's progress.
- Challenges:** **Funding shortages** (noted by WFP's Cindy McCain) and **acute crises** (e.g., Gaza, Sudan) hinder progress toward **SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)**. **UN Secretary-General António Guterres** linked hunger to **instability**, urging global cooperation.

Additional Info

- UN Agencies:** The **FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO** jointly produce the SOFI report, launched at **UNFSS+4** to assess **SDG 2** progress.
- India's context:** Programs like **Mid-Day Meal Scheme** and **POSHAN Abhiyaan** have improved **nutrition access**, though **rural poverty** and **climate risks** (e.g., monsoon variability) persist.
- Gaza crisis:** The **WHO** flagged **alarming malnutrition** due to Israel's blockade, with **UN aid organizations** warning of **famine risks**.

Miscellaneous

“Maratha Military Landscapes of India” Awarded UNESCO World Heritage Status

What’s New?

- At the **47th session** of the **UNESCO World Heritage Committee** in Paris, the **Maratha Military Landscapes of India**—a network of **12 historic forts**—were inscribed as India’s **44th UNESCO World Heritage Site**.

What Does It Include?

- The 12 forts—**Salher, Shivneri, Lohagad, Khanderi, Raigad, Rajgad, Pratapgad, Suvarnadurg, Panhala, Vijaydurg, Sindhudurg, and Gingee** (in Tamil Nadu)—were built or enhanced between the **17th and 19th centuries**.
- They span diverse terrains: hilltops in the **Sahyadris**, coastal outposts in the **Konkan**, plateaus, and the **Eastern Ghats**, showcasing strategic fortification across landscapes.

Why It Matters

- Architectural ingenuity & military strategy:** The forts form a **defense system** using geography—elevated positions, visibility, and inter-visibility among fortresses.
- Historical legacy:** Symbolizes the **Maratha Empire’s rise**, led by **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj** and strengthened under the Peshwas, embodying **regional resistance and governance ethos**.
- India’s global cultural standing:** Adds to India’s rich heritage narrative, now the **44th property** on the World Heritage list.

Reactions & Significance

- Political and regional response:**
 - PM Modi, Culture Minister Shekhawat, and Maharashtra CM Fadnavis** celebrated the achievement.
 - Tamil Nadu CM Stalin** applauded inclusion of **Gingee Fort**, calling it “Troy of the East”.
 - Regional pride is soaring in **Maharashtra**, driven by cultural identity politics ahead of local elections; calls for preserving fort environs have emerged.

Post-Inscription Plans

- A **10-year conservation plan** has been approved around **Salher Fort**, covering forts in a **25 km radius** (like Mulher, Nhavi Gad) with infrastructure upgrades, signage, heritage security, and tourism focus.
- Enforcement actions** are underway in Maharashtra to remove **unauthorised encroachments** from these forts.

2025 crash of Air India flight AI-171 (Boeing 787-8) in **Ahmedabad** found **no mechanical or maintenance faults** with the aircraft or its engines.

- The investigation noted that both **fuel-control switches** were switched to **CUTOFF** shortly after takeoff, causing **dual engine flameout**.

Key Findings

- No technical issues:** Fuel quality was normal; maintenance schedules were current; pilot medical and breathalyzer clearances were all satisfactory.
- Fuel switch action:** Both engines lost thrust because fuel cutoff switches were flipped within one second of each other; cockpit audio captured confusion—one pilot asked, “Why did you cut off?” and the other denied it.
- Failed relight:** While the switches were returned to RUN, one engine did not recover thrust in time, leading to a crash just 30 seconds after takeoff.

Why It Matters

- Focus shifts:** With no mechanical fault, investigation now centers on **human factors**, cockpit design, or potential sabotage.
- Global alert:** DGCA has mandated inspections of fuel switch mechanisms on all Boeing aircraft operated in India by **July 21**.
- Pilot error concerns:** Experts suggest the switches require deliberate action, making accidental activation “vanishingly small”.

Odisha’s Major IAS Reshuffle: Streamlining Governance

What’s New?

- On **July 22, 2025**, the **Odisha Government** executed a significant **bureaucratic reshuffle**, transferring **47 IAS and OAS officers** to enhance **administrative efficiency**, as announced by the **General Administration & Public Grievance Department**.
- The reshuffle covers **senior-level portfolios, district collectors, and municipal commissioners**, aiming to strengthen governance ahead of key state initiatives.

Context of the Reshuffle

- Objective:** The **BJP-led government** under Chief Minister **Mohan Charan Majhi** seeks to **streamline administration**, improve **service delivery**, and align officers with critical portfolios like **Finance, Industries, and Urban Development**.
- Scope:**
 - Collectors and District Magistrates:** New appointments in districts like **Kendrapara, Sonepur, and Rayagada** to boost local governance.
 - Departmental shifts:** Officers reassigned to **Sports & Youth Services, Skill Development, Excise, and Public Enterprises** to address sectoral priorities.

AI-171 Crash: No Mechanical Faults Found in Preliminary Report

What’s New?

- The **Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB)** and **Air India CEO Campbell Wilson** confirmed that the **preliminary report** into the **June 12**,

- **Municipal roles:** Key urban centers like **Bhubaneswar**, **Cuttack**, and **Sambalpur** see new commissioners to enhance **urban administration**.
- **Timing:** Follows a series of reshuffles (e.g., **January 2024:** 41 IAS officers, **April 2025:** 17 Joint Secretaries) to align with **policy goals** and **electoral cycles**.

Key Appointments and Their Significance

- **Chanchal Rana:** As **BMC Commissioner**, tasked with improving **urban infrastructure** and **smart city initiatives** in Bhubaneswar, a key hub for **Odisha's governance**.
- **Roopa Roshan Sahoo:** Her role as **Secretary to the Governor** reflects a strategic placement to strengthen **constitutional coordination**.
- **Sanjeeb Kumar Mishra:** Leading **Finance Department**, critical for **budget management** and **economic planning**, especially with **Odisha Budget FY26** discussions underway.
- **Hemant Sharma:** Overseeing **Information & Public Relations** alongside **Industries** and **IPICOL**, pivotal for **investment promotion** and **public communication**.
- Other notable transfers:
 - **Sachin Ramchandra Jadhav** (2007 batch) to **Sports & Youth Services** with additional roles as **RDC**, **Northern Division** and **CEO**, **WODC**.
 - **Bhupendra Singh Poonia** (2008 batch) to **Skill Development & Technical Education**, also **MD**, **IPICOL**.

Additional Info

- **General Administration & Public Grievance Department:** Oversees **IAS** and **OAS** cadre management, ensuring **transparent transfers** and **administrative reforms** in Odisha.
- **Indian Administrative Service (IAS):** A premier civil service under the **All India Services Act, 1951**, with officers appointed by the **Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)** and allocated to state cadres like Odisha.
- **Odisha's Governance Structure:** Comprises **30 districts**, each led by a **Collector and District Magistrate**, responsible for **revenue**, **law and order**, and **development programs**.
- **Industrial Promotion and Investment Corporation of Odisha Limited (IPICOL):** A state **PSU** promoting **industrial investments**, currently chaired by **Hemant Sharma**.
- **Odisha Budget FY26:** Expected to prioritize **infrastructure**, **skilling**, and **rural development**, influencing the strategic placement of officers like **Mishra** in Finance.

apparel companies during the **Odisha TEX 2025 Summit** in **Bhubaneswar**, aiming to generate **53,300 jobs** and establish the state as **Eastern India's textile hub**.

- Chief Minister **Mohan Charan Majhi** announced the creation of **six new textile clusters** in **Bolangir**, **Keonjhar**, **Sambalpur**, **Jagatsinghpur**, **Ganjam**, and **Cuttack**, alongside **two hi-tech textile and footwear parks** in **Jagatsinghpur** and **Bhadrak** with **plug-and-play facilities** for global-standard manufacturing.
- The state revised subsidies under the **Odisha Technical Textile & Apparel Policy 2022**, increasing **employment cost subsidies** from **Rs 5,000** to **Rs 6,000** per month for male workers and **Rs 6,000** to **Rs 7,000** per month for female workers to boost **workforce stability**.

What is Odisha TEX 2025?

- **Odisha TEX 2025** is Eastern India's largest **textile and apparel industry summit**, hosted by the **Odisha Government** to attract investment, showcase the state's **textile heritage**, and promote **industrial growth**.
- **Key highlights:**
 - Over **160 companies** participated, including major players like **Page Industries**, **First Step Baby Wear**, **KPR Mills**, **Sportking**, **Adarsh Knitwear**, **Anubhav Apparels**, **Bon & Co.**, and **B.L. International**, covering the **textile value chain** (yarn, fabrics, garments, technical textiles).
 - **650 delegates**, including **global brands**, **investors**, **startups**, and **policymakers**, attended, reflecting strong investor confidence.
 - A **dedicated task force** under the **Industries Department** was formed to fast-track project implementation, with **full administrative support** promised.
- **Vision:** Create **over 1 lakh jobs** by **2030**, supported by **five new textile parks** and enhanced **worker hostels** for industrial stability.

Strategic Importance

- **Economic impact:** The investments are expected to transform Odisha's **apparel landscape**, leveraging its **40% share** of India's **private investment influx** in 2025, with a focus on **rural employment** and **export growth**.
- **Policy support:** The **Odisha Technical Textile & Apparel Policy 2022** and **Industrial Policy Resolution 2022** offer **attractive incentives**, including **subsidies**, **land allocation**, and **infrastructure support**, positioning Odisha as a competitor to **Gujarat** and **Tamil Nadu** in textiles.
- **Regional development:** New clusters and parks aim to balance growth across districts, particularly in **underdeveloped areas** like **Bolangir** and **Keonjhar**, while reviving Odisha's **handloom heritage** (e.g., **Sambalpuri** and **Bomkai sarees**).

Additional Info

- **Odisha's Textile Sector:** Known for **handwoven textiles** like **Ikat** and **Sambalpuri**, it contributes

Odisha Signs 33 MoUs to Boost Textile Sector with Rs 7,808 Crore Investment

What's New?

- On **July 25, 2025**, Odisha signed **33 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs)** worth **Rs 7,808 crore** (approximately **\$902 million**) with textile and

significantly to **rural livelihoods**, with **70% of weavers** being women.

- **Industries Department:** Oversees investment promotion via **Invest Odisha**, facilitating **single-window clearance** for projects under policies like the **Apparel & Technical Textile Policy 2022**.
- **Previous initiatives:** Odisha's **Make in Odisha Conclave 2022** attracted **Rs 10.5 lakh crore** in investment intents,

with textiles as a key focus, building on the state's **industrial ecosystem**.

- **National context:** India's textile sector, valued at **\$165 billion** in 2024, aims to reach **\$350 billion by 2030**, with Odisha's investments aligning with schemes like the **PLI Scheme for Textiles** and **PM MITRA Parks**.
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