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Governance and Policy

Crackdown on Pharma Freebies: Government Tightens Marketing Rules

In a significant move to ensure **ethical marketing practices** in the pharmaceutical sector, the Indian government is set to give more teeth to the existing guidelines controlling how drug companies promote their products to doctors and healthcare professionals. The focus is on curbing the influence of **freebies, gifts, travel, and hospitality** offered by pharmaceutical companies, which can potentially lead to irrational prescription of medicines.

What's Changing?

- The **Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP)**, under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, is working to make the **Uniform Code for Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices (UCPMP)** a legally binding framework. Currently, the UCPMP is a voluntary code.
- The government plans to clearly define a **monetary threshold** for gifts and payments that pharma companies can make to doctors and other healthcare professionals. This aims to bring **transparency** and prevent companies from influencing prescriptions through expensive gifts.
- The new rules will likely mandate **disclosure** of payments made by companies to doctors and professional bodies, making this information accessible to the public.
- There's a strong push to separate **genuine medical education** from promotional activities disguised as learning events.

Why is this Important?

- **Patient Welfare:** Unethical marketing can lead to doctors prescribing costlier or unnecessary medicines, impacting patient health and finances.
- **Fair Competition:** It will create a level playing field for all pharmaceutical companies, preventing those who indulge in unethical practices from gaining an unfair advantage.
- **Reduced Healthcare Costs:** By curbing annecessary prescriptions driven by incentives, overall healthcare expenditure could potentially be reduced.
- **Ethical Governance:** This move strengthens the ethical fabric of the pharmaceutical industry and its interaction with the medical profession.

Key Aspects of the UCPMP (Uniform Code for Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices):

- **No Gifts:** Prohibits companies from offering gifts, financial advantages, or benefits in kind to healthcare professionals or their families.
- **Travel & Hospitality:** Restricts providing travel facilities (domestic or international) or hospitality unless the healthcare professional is a speaker in a Continuing Medical Education (CME) program or a similar event.

- **Promotional Material:** Mandates that promotional materials must be accurate, balanced, and not misleading. Claims must be backed by scientific evidence.
- **Drug Samples:** Allows for providing free drug samples to qualified persons in limited quantities, mainly for them to gain experience with the product. These samples cannot be sold.
- **Continuing Medical Education (CME):** While companies can support CMEs, these events should be conducted transparently by recognized medical bodies, and the pharmaceutical company's involvement should be clearly disclosed. The primary purpose should be education, not promotion.
- **Accountability:** Companies are held responsible for the actions of their medical representatives.

What was the Issue with Current Practices?

- The voluntary nature of the UCPMP meant that adherence was not universal, and violations often went unpunished.
- There were concerns that some pharma companies were influencing doctors' prescribing habits by offering expensive gifts, sponsoring international trips, or funding lavish conferences, all under the guise of "marketing" or "education."
- This created a potential conflict of interest for medical professionals, where the choice of medicine could be influenced by incentives rather than the patient's best interest.

ECI Boosts Transparency: New System for Real-Time Voter Turnout Data

The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** is set to upgrade its process for sharing **Voter Turnout (VTR)** information by introducing a new, streamlined, technology-driven system. This initiative aims to provide timely and more accurate updates on approximate voter turnout percentage trends during elections, significantly reducing delays associated with earlier manual reporting methods.

What's New in the System?

- **Direct Data Entry by Presiding Officers:** Under the new system, the **Presiding Officer (PRO)** at each polling station will directly enter voter turnout data into a new **ECINET App** every two hours on polling day.
  - **ECINET App:** This appears to be an internal technology platform of the ECI, designed to integrate various election-related applications.
- **Automated Aggregation:** The data entered by PROs will be automatically aggregated at the constituency level.
- **Faster Updates on Voter Turnout (VTR) App:** The aggregated, approximate voting percentage trends will continue to be published every two hours on the publicly accessible **Voter Turnout (VTR) App**, but with a much-reduced time lag compared to the previous system.

- **End-of-Poll Data Entry:** A key improvement is that PROs will now enter the final voter turnout data into the ECINET App **immediately after the close of the poll**, before they leave the polling station. This will ensure that approximate constituency-wise figures are available much sooner.
- **Offline Capability:** The system will support offline data entry in areas with poor mobile connectivity. PROs can make entries offline and sync them once network connectivity is restored.
- **Rollout:** This updated system, integrating the VTR App with ECINET, is expected to be operational before the upcoming **Bihar assembly elections**.

Why the Upgrade?

- **Reducing Delays:** The previous system involved manual collection of data by Sector Officers from 10-12 polling stations. This data was then relayed to Returning Officers (ROs) via phone, SMS, or messaging apps, who would then compile and upload it. This often led to delays of 4-5 hours or even longer, sometimes causing misperceptions.
- **Enhancing Transparency:** Faster and more direct dissemination of turnout figures is expected to enhance public trust and transparency in the electoral process.
- **Timely Communication:** The ECI, under Chief Election Commissioner Shri Gyanesh Kumar, has emphasized its commitment to timely public communication.
- **Addressing Misperceptions:** Delays in releasing turnout data in the past have sometimes led to questions and doubts. The new system aims to address these by providing quicker updates.

Important Points to Note:

- **VTR App is Facilitative:** The ECI has clarified that while the VTR App is being streamlined for faster updates, it remains a **facilitative, non-statutory mechanism to** keep the public informed about approximate voter turnout trends.
- **Statutory Requirement Unchanged:** The legal requirement under **Rule 49S of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961**, remains unchanged. This rule mandates Presiding Officers to furnish **Form 17C** (which is the official account of votes recorded) to the polling agents of candidates present at the polling station at the close of the poll. Form 17C remains the authoritative legal document for vote counts.

Pension Adalat: Ensuring Dignity and Timely Support for Pensioners

In a move aimed at ensuring the **"Ease of Living"** for retired government employees and their families, the **13th All India Pension Adalat** was recently held in New Delhi. Inaugurated by Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh, the Adalat focused on resolving **family pension grievances**, successfully addressing 417 such cases pertaining to 17 different Ministries and Departments.

This initiative underscores the government's commitment to the **welfare of pensioners** and the speedy resolution of their concerns, particularly those related to family pensions which provide crucial financial support to the dependents of deceased employees.

13th Pension Adalat:

- **Focus on Family Pension:** The primary theme of this Adalat was the resolution of grievances related to **family pension**. This is significant as family members, especially spouses, often face difficulties in the timely processing and receipt of these benefits.
- **Technology-Driven Approach:** The Adalat leveraged technology by connecting all stakeholders – the pensioner/family pensioner, the concerned department, the bank, and officials from the **Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare (DoPPW)** – on a single digital platform. This facilitated on-the-spot resolution of many cases.
- **Significant Grievance Redressal:** A total of **417 grievances** were taken up, covering issues across **17 Ministries/Departments**, including crucial ones like the Ministry of Home Affairs, Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare, and Department of Financial Services.
- **Commitment to Dignity:** The Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions reiterated its dedication to ensuring faster resolution of grievances, thereby enhancing the **dignity and financial security** of family pensioners.
- **Success Stories Highlighted:** During the event, a compilation of success stories from the 12th Pension Adalat, titled "Brave Soldiers and Veer Naariyan," was released. This booklet showcased inspiring accounts of resolved long-pending pension grievances, particularly focusing on defence pensioners and the families of armed forces personnel.

Pension Adalat:

- **Concept:** Pension Adalats are special forums organized by the **Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare (DoPPW)** to provide a platform for the **on-the-spot resolution of pensioners' grievances**.
- **Objective:** To bring together all stakeholders (pensioner, department, bank, paying authority) to resolve long-pending pension-related issues, especially chronic ones.
- **Frequency:** These are organized regularly across the country, sometimes with specific themes like family pension or focusing on particular ministries.
- **Impact:** They have proven to be an effective mechanism for resolving a large number of grievances, reducing litigation, and providing relief to pensioners. Since their inception in 2017, over 18,000 grievances have been resolved through these Adalats.

Govt Launches C-CARES 2.0 to Digitize Coal Workers' Welfare

In a significant move towards enhancing the social security and welfare of coal sector workers, the **Union Ministry of Coal** has launched **C-CARES Version 2.0**. This upgraded web portal and mobile application, developed by the **Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC)**, aims to completely digitize the records and work processes of the **Coal Mines Provident Fund Organisation (CMPFO)**. This initiative is a major step in leveraging technology for efficient and transparent service delivery to lakhs of coal sector employees and pensioners.

What is C-CARES?

- **C-CARES** stands for **CMPFO's Computerised and Responsive Enquiry System**.
- It is a unified digital platform that brings together coal workers, coal management (companies), and the CMPFO.
- The primary objective is to streamline the processing and disbursement of **Provident Fund (PF)** and **pension claims** for coal sector workers in a transparent and efficient manner.

Features and Upgrades in Version 2.0:

- **Complete Digitization:** The portal moves away from a paper-based system to a completely digital, paperless workflow. This includes the online submission and processing of claims.
- **Real-Time Tracking:** Members can track the status of their claims and applications in real-time, from initiation to final settlement.
- **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT):** The portal facilitates the direct transfer of PF and pension amounts into the bank accounts of the workers, ensuring timely and secure payments. This financial module has been developed in collaboration with the **State Bank of India (SBI)**.
- **Integrated Mobile App:** A user-friendly mobile application allows members to:
    - View their personal profile and employment history.
    - Check their updated PF balance.
    - Track the status of their claims.
    - Raise grievances through a chatbot-enabled support system.
- **Automated Ledger Management:** The system facilitates the automatic updating of workers' PF and pension ledgers based on data submitted by the coal companies, ensuring accuracy and reducing manual errors.
- **Analytics Dashboard:** The portal includes a dashboard for coal companies and CMPFO to analyze trends, generate reports, and use predictive analytics to improve service delivery.

Railways Overhauls Tatkal System with Aadhaar and AI to Curb Fraud

In a major move to address long-standing passenger grievances and combat malpractices, **Indian Railways** has announced a significant overhaul of the **Tatkal ticket booking system**. The reforms, centered around **mandatory Aadhaar authentication** and the use of **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**, aim to eliminate the influence of touts using illegal software and ensure genuine passengers have a fair chance at booking last-minute tickets.

The Problem with the Existing Tatkal System:

The Tatkal scheme, designed for travellers with urgent needs, has been plagued by several issues:

- **Touts and Bots:** Unauthorised agents (touts) have been using sophisticated bots and illegal software to book a large number of tickets within seconds of the window opening.
- **Fake IDs:** Thousands of fake user IDs were being created on the IRCTC platform, often using disposable or temporary email addresses, to corner tickets.
- **System Overload:** The massive number of login attempts by bots would often overload the IRCTC servers, preventing genuine users from accessing the system.
- **Black Market:** The tickets cornered through illegal means were then sold to needy passengers at exorbitant prices in the black market.

Reforms Introduced by Indian Railways:

To tackle these issues, Indian Railways, through its ticketing arm **IRCTC**, has implemented a multi-pronged strategy:

- **Mandatory Aadhaar Authentication:**
    - It will soon be **compulsory to use e-Aadhaar authentication** for booking Tatkal tickets, both online and at counters. This will link every Tatkal ticket to a verifiable identity, making it extremely difficult to use fake profiles.
- **Priority for Verified Users:**
    - During the **first 10 minutes** of the Tatkal booking window (10:00 AM for AC classes, 11:00 AM for non-AC), **only Aadhaar-authenticated individual users** will be allowed to book tickets.
    - Crucially, even **authorised IRCTC agents will be barred** from booking tickets during this initial priority window.
- **Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI):**
    - IRCTC has deployed an advanced AI-based system to detect and block suspicious user accounts.
    - This system has already led to the deactivation of approximately **3.5 crore fake user IDs** over the last year, drastically reducing system overload.
- **Enhanced Website Performance:**
    - Railways has partnered with a top **Content Delivery Network (CDN)** to improve the speed and resilience of the IRCTC website, ensuring a

- smoother experience for users during peak hours.
  - o Specialised **anti-bot systems** have also been put in place to filter out automated login attempts.

Government Announces Census 2027 with Caste Enumeration; to be Held in Two Phases

The Government of India has announced its plan to conduct the next **decennial Population Census in 2027**, and notably, it will include **caste enumeration**. The census, which was originally scheduled for 2021 but postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, will be the first-ever **digital Census** in India's history and the first since 1931 to collect detailed caste data from all citizens.

Census 2027: A Two-Phase Digital Exercise

The Census will be conducted in two distinct phases:

- **Phase I: Houselisting and Housing Census:**
  - o **Objective:** This phase involves the listing of all buildings and houses across the country. Enumerators will collect data on housing conditions, amenities available (like drinking water, electricity, sanitation), and assets possessed by the households.
  - o **Significance:** This data is crucial for government planning related to housing, infrastructure, and basic services.
- **Phase II: Population Enumeration:**
  - o **Objective:** This is the main headcount where every individual is enumerated. Data on various socio-economic and demographic parameters like age, sex, marital status, religion, occupation, education, and migration will be collected.
  - o **Key Feature for 2027:** For the first time since independence, this phase will also include the enumeration of caste details for all citizens, beyond the standard count of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs).

The Landmark Inclusion of Caste Enumeration:

The decision to include a caste count in the census is a monumental step with profound implications:

- **Historical Context:** While every census post-independence has collected data on SCs and STs, a comprehensive caste count of the entire population has not been done since the **British-era census of 1931**.
- **Rationale:** The move comes after long-standing demands from various political parties, social groups, and state governments. The primary argument is that up-to-date caste data is essential for:
  - o The effective targeting and implementation of **welfare schemes**.
  - o Making evidence-based policies for **affirmative action** (reservation).

- o Understanding the contemporary socio-economic status of different caste groups.
- **Distinction from SECC 2011:** This exercise is different from the **Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) of 2011**. While SECC 2011 collected caste data, it was done by the Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation. The raw caste data from SECC was never officially released by the central government due to concerns about data quality and inconsistencies. The 2027 Census data, being collected by the official Census machinery, is expected to be more robust.

Methodology: India's First Digital Census

The 2027 Census will mark a complete shift from traditional paper-based methods to a digital-first approach:

- **Mobile App for Enumerators:** Enumerators will use a dedicated mobile application to capture and submit data in real-time.
- **Self-Enumeration Portal:** A portal will be made available for the public, allowing citizens to fill in their census details online from the convenience of their homes. This is a significant step towards public participation.
- **Benefits:** This digital approach is expected to lead to faster data collection, quicker processing and dissemination of results, improved accuracy, and a more cost-effective exercise.

Significance for Governance and Policy:

- **Evidence-Based Policy:** The census data is the backbone of administration and planning, providing detailed information down to the village level.
- **Resource Allocation:** The Finance Commission uses census data to determine the allocation of funds to states.
- **Delimitation Exercise:** The data is vital for the delimitation of parliamentary, assembly, and local body constituencies.
- **Socio-Political Impact:** The collection and release of caste data are expected to have a significant impact on India's social and political landscape, potentially influencing reservation policies and political discourse.

Impeachment Motion Against High Court Judge: A Test for Judicial Accountability

The Union government is set to initiate an **impeachment motion** in the upcoming Monsoon Session of Parliament against **Justice Yashwant Varma**, a sitting judge of the Allahabad High Court. This rare and significant move follows serious allegations of misconduct and has brought the issue of **judicial accountability** in India to the forefront.

What is the Case About?

The primary reason for the impeachment proceedings is the discovery of a large amount of **unaccounted cash**, some of it burnt, at the official residence of Justice Varma in Delhi on March 14, 2025. At the time, he was a judge of the Delhi High Court.

- A fire at his residence led to the discovery of the cash by emergency services.
- Following the incident, the then **Chief Justice of India (CJI)**, Sanjiv Khanna, constituted a **three-member in-house inquiry committee** to probe the matter.
- The committee, comprising senior judges, found substance in the allegations and concluded that the misconduct was serious enough to warrant removal.
- The CJI then recommended the initiation of impeachment proceedings to the President and the Prime Minister after Justice Varma reportedly refused to resign.
- Subsequently, Justice Varma was transferred from the Delhi High Court to the Allahabad High Court.
- The initial news report also mentioned an allegation of Justice Varma's interference in a case related to the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)**, though further public details on this specific charge are not widely available.

The government is now seeking **cross-party support** to ensure the motion passes in both Houses of Parliament, emphasizing that this is a matter of judicial integrity and not a political issue.

The Impeachment Process of a High Court Judge

The process for removing a judge of a High Court or the Supreme Court is laid down in the Constitution of India and the **Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968**. It is a deliberately complex and stringent procedure to ensure the independence of the judiciary.

- **Grounds for Removal:** A judge can be removed only on the grounds of **"proved misbehaviour or incapacity."**
- **Initiation of Motion:**
  - A motion for impeachment must be signed by at least **100 members of the Lok Sabha** or **50 members of the Rajya Sabha**.
  - The Speaker of the Lok Sabha or the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha decides whether to admit or reject the motion.
- **Inquiry Committee:**
  - If the motion is admitted, the presiding officer constitutes a **three-member committee** comprising:
    1. A Supreme Court judge.
    2. A Chief Justice of a High Court.
    3. A distinguished jurist.
  - This committee investigates the charges, much like a trial. In the case of Justice Varma, the in-house inquiry by the Supreme Court has already been completed.
- **Parliamentary Vote:**
  - If the committee finds the judge guilty, the motion is taken up for discussion in the House where it was introduced.
  - To pass, the motion requires a **special majority** in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha:
    - A majority of the total membership of the House.
    - A majority of not less than **two-thirds of the members present and voting**.[2]
- **President's Order:**
  - If the motion is passed by both Houses in the same session, an address is presented to the **President of India**, who then issues an order to remove the judge.

It is important to note that **no judge in India has ever been removed through the process of impeachment** so far. Previous proceedings have either failed to get the required majority in Parliament or the judge in question resigned before the final vote.

Legislature's Power to Make Law is Absolute: Supreme Court

In a landmark judgment, the **Supreme Court of India** has ruled that Parliament or a State Legislature cannot be held in contempt of court for simply enacting a law. The court clarified that a law can be challenged and struck down for being unconstitutional, but the act of making the law itself does not constitute contempt.

The Core of the Judgment

The verdict was delivered by a bench of **Justices B.R. Gavai and Sandeep Mehta** while hearing a case related to a law passed by the **Haryana government**. The key takeaways from the ruling are:

- **Lawmaking is not Contempt:** The court stated that holding a legislature in contempt for passing a law would be a **"disastrous"** and **"dangerous"** proposition. It would effectively give the judiciary veto power over legislation, which is not the intention of the Constitution.
- **The Remedy is Judicial Review:** If a law is seen as violating a court's earlier judgment or constitutional principles, the appropriate course of action is to challenge its **constitutional validity**, not to initiate contempt proceedings against the legislature. The court can conduct a **judicial review** and, if necessary, declare the law unconstitutional.
- **Reiteration of Separation of Powers:** The judgment strongly emphasizes that the legislature, executive, and judiciary have their own distinct functions. The legislature's primary function is to make laws, and the judiciary's role is to interpret them and ensure they are in line with the Constitution. The court cannot interfere with the lawmaking process itself.
- **Colorable Legislation:** The court did acknowledge the concept of **"colorable legislation,"** where a legislature enacts a law that it is not competent to pass, in a disguised manner. In such cases, the law can be struck down.

Background of the Case

The case stemmed from a law enacted by the Haryana government that was seen as an attempt to nullify a previous Supreme Court judgment. The petitioners had argued that by passing this law, the state government had

committed contempt of court. The Supreme Court, however, disagreed with this line of argument, leading to the present clarification. The court ultimately found the Haryana law to be a piece of "colorable legislation" and "unconstitutional," striking it down on those grounds, but not on the grounds of contempt.

New 'Bharatiya Bhasha Anubhag' to Promote Indian Languages in Governance

In a significant step to strengthen India's linguistic diversity in administration, Union Home Minister Amit Shah launched the **'Bharatiya Bhasha Anubhag'** (Indian Languages Section) on June 6, 2025. This new section, operating under the **Department of Official Language** in the Home Ministry, aims to reduce the country's reliance on foreign languages, particularly English, in official work and to promote thinking, analysis, and decision-making in native Indian tongues.

What is the Goal of This Initiative?

The primary objective of the Bharatiya Bhasha Anubhag is to free the country's administration from the "influence of foreign languages" and to create a strong, organized platform for all Indian languages. This move aligns with the broader vision of fostering cultural self-reliance and making governance more inclusive and accessible to the common citizen.

- **Promoting Mother Tongues:** The initiative seeks to enable government officials and departments to conduct their original thinking, drafting, and decision-making processes in their own mother tongues.
- **Breaking the Language Barrier:** It aims to ensure that language does not act as a barrier in governance. The Home Minister emphasized that India's true potential can only be realized when its administrative processes are conducted in its own languages.
- **Technological Integration:** The new section will work closely with the **Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC)** to develop advanced tools for high-quality, real-time translation between various Indian languages and Hindi. This will facilitate seamless communication between the Centre and different states.
- **Alignment with NEP 2020:** The initiative is in sync with the principles of the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, which places significant emphasis on promoting education and learning in the mother tongue and regional languages.
- **Strengthening Linguistic Diversity:** By providing a platform for all Indian languages, the government aims to strengthen them, viewing them as the soul of Indian culture and essential for national unity.

How Will it Work?

The Bharatiya Bhasha Anubhag will function as a central body to facilitate the use of different Indian languages in official correspondence. For instance, if a state government communicates with the Centre in its regional language, this section will ensure its effective translation and comprehension, enabling replies in the respective language. The Union Budget for 2024-25 has already allocated **₹56 crore** for the development of this platform, showing a clear financial commitment to the initiative.

Delhi HC: Citizens Get Right to Correct Their Public Records

What's the News?

- On **7 June 2025**, the **Delhi High Court** affirmed that citizens possess a fundamental right to **accurate public documents**, including **birth certificates**, **ration cards**, **panchayat records**, and **electoral rolls**, under the **Right to Information (RTI) Act** and other relevant laws.
- The court emphasized that any incorrect or outdated information in public records must be **corrected proactively** by authorities once identified.

Key Points from the Judgment

- A citizen challenged the **Delhi government's refusal** to correct errors in **ration cards and school records** without approaching a court.
- The High Court clarified that:
  o Citizens have a **statutory right** to **have records corrected** digitally or administratively.
  o Authorities cannot **refuse corrections** merely because the record was issued years ago.
  o This right is a facet of **administrative justice** and the **right to information**, ensuring documents reflect **true facts**.

Additional Info

- **Relevant laws and rules**:
  o **RTI Act, 2005**: Ensures access and correction entitlement.
  o **General Clauses Act, 1897**: Defines "public documents".
  o **Civil Procedure Code (CPC)**: Alternate judicial remedy via **Section 106**.
- **Administrative structure**
  o Correction of public documents usually handled by **Panchayats**, **Municipal bodies**, **Education departments**, **Food & Civil Supplies Dept**.
- **Related judicial precedents**:
  o **Bhagat Ram vs. State of Delhi (1991)**: Right to correction in electoral rolls.
  o **Rama Swami Case**: Correction of birth and death certificates.

Consultative Regulation-Making: From Idea to Institutional Practice

What's the News?

- An editorial in *The Hindu* dated **June 2025** advocates strengthening **consultative regulation-making**—where

regulators meaningfully **seek public input** before framing policies and conduct **post-implementation impact assessments**.

- Highlighted reforms include:
  - **RBI and SEBI** have introduced drafts and implemented **21-day public consultations** with accompanying **impact analyses** – a first in India's financial regulatory practice
  - The **Ministry of Corporate Affairs** plans to mandate **30-day public feedback** and **3-year periodic reviews** for regulations under its domain.

Why It Matters

- Encourages **evidence-based policymaking** and enhances **transparency**, **accountability**, and **public trust**.
- Mitigates risks of **regulatory capture** and **ad-hoc rule-making**, aligning norms with **global best practices** seen in the **US, UK, EU**, etc.
- Streamlines regulation by incorporating **stakeholder feedback**, reducing **post-hoc corrections** and enhancing **regulatory confidence**.

Real-World Examples: What's Changing?

- **RBI's reform**: Now publishes **draft guidelines**, invites at least **21 days of comments**, and conducts **impact analysis** before finalising—applicable to significant rules and amendments.
- **SEBI's process**: Mirrors RBI's approach, clarifying **regulatory objectives**, publishing drafts, and inviting feedback
- **MCA's draft policy**: Proposes **public consultation templates**, **30-day feedback**, and **triannual review** of principal regulations.

Additional Info

- **Consultative rule-making**: Part of the **public policy cycle** (agenda → formulation → adoption → implementation → evaluation → maintenance). Consultation occurs at formulation and evaluation stages.
- **FSLRC recommendations** (2013): Advocated **principle-based legislation** with **transparent public input** and simplified frameworks scalable to innovation.
- **Global models**:
  - **US**: Federal regulators publish **notices of proposed rulemaking (NPRM)** before final rules.
  - **UK**: Long-standing **Code of Practice on Consultation**.
  - **EU/Singapore**: Transparent consultation portals and feedback summaries.

"Tatkal Ticketing Reforms: Aadhaar Authentication from July 2025"

What's the News?

- From **1 July 2025**, **Aadhaar authentication** will become **mandatory** for **Tatkal ticket** bookings via **IRCTC website/app**, applying to both AC and non-AC classes.
- Starting **15 July**, an **Aadhaar-based OTP** will also be required for:
  - Finalising **online Tatkal bookings**
  - Booking via **PRS counters and authorised agents**.
- A new rule bars **ticket agents** from booking Tatkal tickets during the **first 30 minutes** of the quota window:
  - AC class: **10:00–10:30**
  - Non-AC class: **11:00–11:30**.

Background & Need

- Tatkal scheme, launched in **1997**, allows **last-minute bookings**; widely misused by ticket touts, bots, and fake agents.
- IRCTC reported that over **50% of tickets sell out** within the first 10 minutes; **2.5 crore fake IDs** were deactivated recently.
- Use of Aadhaar—via e-KYC and OTP—intends to **eliminate bot access**, ensure **authentic booking**, and improve fairness.

Significance

- **Digital India & governance**: This aligns with the push for **secure, digital identity** and reduction of intermediary misuse.
- **Public service delivery**: Ensures **equitable access** to critical services (Tatkal) for genuine travellers.
- **Data integrity & cybersecurity**: Helps curb **fraud** and strengthens trust in digital ticketing platforms.
- **Policy reflection**: Example of regulatory use of **biometric verification** to reform a public service.

Additional Info

- **Tatkal Scheme**: Enables emergency bookings; opens **10 AM (AC)** & **11 AM (non-AC)** a day before travel.
- **CRIS**: Responsible for integrating Aadhaar-based verification into IRCTC systems.
- **Aadhaar e-KYC/OTP**: Authenticates user identity; safeguards that **only IPO-verified individuals** access last-minute tickets.
- **Ticket charges**: Tatkal fares include a supplement—**10% for second class**, **30% for other classes**—with set minimum/maximums.

Lokpal Unveils Official Logo & Motto— Strengthening Anti-Corruption Identity

What's the News?

- **Lokpal of India** officially launched its **logo** and **motto** on **26 November 2019**, in a ceremony led by its first Chairperson, **Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose**.

- While the logo was designed through a national open contest, no suitable public entries were received for the motto—so it was internally selected.

Logo Details

- **Designer**: Prashant Mishra (Prayagraj, UP), selected from **2,236** logo entries.
- **Symbolism**:
    - o **"Lok" + "Pal"** = caretaker of the people.
    - o **Three human figures**—public.
    - o **Judge's bench**—ombudsman authority.
    - o **Ashoka Chakra eye**—vigilance.
    - o **Orange book**—law.
    - o **Tri-colour hands at base**—judicial balance.
    - o **Tricolour palette**—national integrity.

Motto Details

- Sanskrit motto: **"मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम्"** (*Ma Gridhah Kasyasvid hanam*)— "Do not be greedy for anyone's wealth".
- Sourced from the **Isha Upanishad**; chosen by Lokpal's full bench on **17 October 2019**.

Additional Info

- **Lokpal & Lokayuktas Act, 2013**:
    - o Instaured Lokpal (centre) and Lokayuktas (states).
    - o Defines **inquiry powers** over PM, MPs, central govt officers, and linked bodies.
- **Institutional setup**:
    - o **Chairperson + up to 8 members** (50% SC/ST/OBC/Minority/Women).
    - o Jurisdiction: PM, Union Ministers, MPs, Group A–D officials.
- **Current leadership**:
    - o As on **10 March 2024**, Justice **A.M. Khanwilkar** serves as Lokpal Chairperson.
- **Significance**:
    - o Affords **independence**—Lokpal can supervise CBI investigations and control transfers .
    - o Logo & motto reinforce **public ownership** and **ethical standards**.

Gyan Post: Affordable Book Delivery Across India

What's the News?

- Since **1 May 2025**, the **Department of Posts** has introduced **Gyan Post**, a postal service for **low-cost delivery of educational, cultural, social, and religious books** across India.
- Available at **all departmental post offices**, it supports packages weighing **300 g to 5 kg**, priced **₹20 to ₹100** (excluding taxes), using **surface transport** and **tracking** facilities.

Key Features

- **Affordable pricing**: ₹20 (up to 300 g) to ₹100 (up to 5 kg) via surface mail.
- **Trackable delivery**: Each parcel is traceable and delivery is address-specific.
- **Eligible materials**:
    - o Textbooks for schools, boards, universities, competitive exams.
    - o Non-commercial social, cultural, religious literature.
    - o Packets must carry the "Gyan Post" label and publisher information.
- **Strict conditions**:
    - o No regular publications (magazines, journals).
    - o No advertisements or commercial content, except incidental announcements.

Additional Info

- **Regulatory basis**: Introduced via **Post Office (Second Amendment) Regulations, 2025** under Section 13 of the Post Office Act, 2023.
- **Parcel specifications**:
    - o Weight range: 300 g–5 kg.
    - o Packets must be trackable; non-compliance refundable through parcel charges.
- **Operational SOP**:
    - o Booking at POS counters.
    - o Verification of eligibility and packaging by staff.
    - o Receipts, bag manifests, proof-of-delivery records maintained.

India Forms High-Level Committee & Orders Extended Boeing 787 Inspections

What's the News?

- Following the **Air India Flight AI171 Boeing 787 Dreamliner crash** in Ahmedabad on **12 June 2025**, which tragically killed approximately **270–294 people**, the government has established a **high-level committee**—led by the **Union Home Secretary**—to **probe the crash and review safety SOPs**.
- The **Civil Aviation Ministry** has also **mandated extended surveillance and safety inspections** across India's **fleet of 34 Boeing 787 aircraft**, with **eight already inspected** as of announcement, and urgent checks underway for the rest.

Key Details
- **Crash specifics**:
  - AI flight took off at **1:38 PM**, soon issued a **'Mayday' call**, then crashed into a residential hostel area near Ahmedabad airport.
  - One survivor: **Vishwash Kumar Ramesh**; efforts to identify the deceased via **DNA match** ongoing.
- **High-level committee functions**:
  - Review crash cause.
  - Evaluate and update **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**.
  - Aim to submit findings and recommendations in **three months**.
- **Fleet inspections include**:
  - **One-off aviation safety checks**: takeoff parameters, flight controls, engine thrust, gear/flap configuration.
  - **Technical data review**: using recovered **flight data recorder**, awaiting cockpit voice recorder input.
- **International collaboration**: Boeing experts and regulators from the **UK and US** are assisting under **Annex 13 investigation protocols**.

Additional Info
- **Boeing 787 Dreamliner**: First commercial flight in 2011; renowned for fuel efficiency but has experienced past issues, including battery fires in 2013 and whistleblower controversies over manufacturing defects.
- **DGCA & AAIB**:
  - DGCA: National aviation regulator responsible for airworthiness and inspections.
  - AAIB: Conducts accident investigations and reports to MoCA/**ICAO**.
- **Annex 13 protocol**: International standard for aircraft accident investigations, involving manufacturer, state of registration, and operators.

"Ease of Innovation & Research" – India Unveils Major Reforms for a Tech-Driven Future
What's New?
- On **June 15, 2025**, the Ministry of Science & Technology, led by **Dr Jitendra Singh**, rolled out a **comprehensive policy package** focused on boosting **Ease of Innovation**, **Ease of Research**, and **Ease of Science**.
- Key reform highlights:
  - **Global R&D procurement simplified**: Heads of research institutes can now approve **international tenders up to ₹200 crore** without multiple approvals.
  - **GFR (General Financial Rules) revised**: Speeds up purchasing of lab equipment and consumables for scientific work.

- **Administrative reforms**: Senior-level meeting aligned DoPT & science ministries to resolve procedural hurdles like recruitment norms, service conditions, and retention.

Why This Matters?
- **Streamlined procedures** eliminate **approval bottlenecks**, enabling **faster experiments** and reducing delays in groundbreaking projects.
- **Global participation** is now easier—labs can buy from foreign vendors swiftly, enabling **world-class research access**.
- **Focus on core research**: Scientists can concentrate on innovation, not paperwork.
- **Holistic support**: Aligning procurement, finance, and administrative systems fosters a **research-conducive environment**.

Additional Info
- **General Financial Rules (GFR)**: Serve as India's main procurement and financial management framework. Their revision is instrumental for **faster research ecosystem delivery**.
- **DoPT (Department of Personnel & Training)**: Central in managing civil service norms—its alignment with science departments reinforces **research-friendly bureaucracy**.
- **Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), 2023**: Established to unify India's R&D ecosystem, regulate, and fund it.
- **Prime Minister's Research Fellowship (PMRF)**: Earlier announced increase in fellowships to **10,000**, nurturing tomorrow's research leaders.
- **Budget 2024–25**: Allocated **₹1 lakh crore corpus** to support R&D in sunrise sectors like semiconductors, AI, quantum computing, 5G, biotechnology, etc..
- **ANRF, National Quantum Mission, India AI Mission**: Part of the "Techade for India" narrative.
- **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)** & **Startup India**: Complemented by these reforms, these active programs deepen India's innovation infrastructure.

"One-Stop Toll Solution" – NHAI Unveils ₹3,000 Annual FASTag Pass for Private Vehicles
What's New?
- **On June 18, 2025,** Union Road Transport and Highways Minister **Nitin Gadkari** announced the launch of an annual **FASTag-based toll pass** for **non-commercial private vehicles,** priced at **₹3,000**.
- The pass will be valid for **one year from activation** or **up to 200 trips**, whichever comes first. It becomes effective from **August 15, 2025.**
- Activation/renewal will be available via the **Rajmarg Yatra App** and official **NHAI/MoRTH websites**, requiring no extra paperwork like address proof.

Cost-Benefit Analysis

- Compared to monthly passes (₹340/month -> ₹4080/year) (**₹1,080 annually**; Gadkari estimates total savings of **up to ₹7,000** for frequent users.
- Private vehicles contribute **53%** of highway traffic but only **21%** of toll revenue—indicating underutilised convenience for private commuters.

Convenience & Efficiency

- Enables **uninterrupted travel** on national highways, reducing stop-and-pay friction at toll booths.
- Aims to decrease **traffic congestion, transaction time, and toll-related disputes**.

Technology & Infrastructure

- Integrates with existing **RFID FASTag system**, with no additional installation or documentation needed.
- Aligns with government push for **barrier-free tolling**, using technologies like **ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition)** and **satellite/GPS tolling**.
- Earlier considered lifetime pass (₹30,000 for 15 years) has been shelved; focus now is on annual model.

Additional Info

- **FASTag System:**
  - Introduced in **2014**, mandated by MoRTH from **February 2021**.
  - Utilises RFID technology linked to accounts for contactless toll payments.
- **NHAI & MoRTH**: Responsible for national highway tolling and digital transitions.
- **Toll Products:**
  - Monthly passes restricted to specific toll plazas vs. the new **all-network annual pass**.
  - Scheme aligns with global push for **smarter, digital infrastructure**.

"Poll-Power 2.0" – ECI Rolls Out Tech-Driven Reforms in June By-Polls

What's New?

- During **June 19, 2025**, by-elections across five assembly seats—**Gujarat**, **Kerala**, **Punjab**, **West Bengal**—saw a **suite of first-ever initiatives** by the **Election Commission of India (ECI)**.
- Changes included:
  - **Mobile-phone deposit facility** at **every polling station**
  - **Real-time voter turnout reporting (VTR)** through the **ECINET** app
  - **100% webcasting** of booth activities
  - **Mock poll training** for polling officers
  - **Special summary revision** of electoral rolls before the polls

Why It Matters

- **Transparency & trust**: Webcasting across all booths enables real-time monitoring, reducing malpractice risk and enhancing public confidence.

- **Voter convenience**: Phone deposits ease entry for seniors, women, and People with Disabilities (PwD), while real-time turnout maintains efficiency.
- **Digital election shift**: ECINET app and mock poll training professionalize poll management and pave the way for more robust future deployments.

Mobile-Phone Deposit

- Voters deposited phones in **pigeonhole boxes or jute bags** at booth entrances.
- **Volunteers** assisted vulnerable voters to ensure seamless entry.

Real-Time VTR via ECINET

- Presiding Officers logged turnout **every 2 hours**, with final entries before closing—offline entries auto-sync when online.

Full Webcasting

- Live monitoring at **RO, DEO, CEO levels**
- Webcasting implemented at **100% of polling stations**, with only one exception.

Mock Polls & Electoral Rolls

- **Individual training sessions** ensured polling officers were fully prepared.
- **Special summary revision** updated rolls pre-polls—first such initiative in nearly 20 years.

Additional Info

- These reforms follow earlier initiatives: booth-capacity limit reduced to **1,200 voters**, voter information slip upgrades, and interface consolidation via ECINET dashboard.
- The ECI also issued new **SOP for EVM memory checks and mock polls** following a **Supreme Court mandate (May 9, 2025)**.
- ECI has automated post-poll **result publishing systems** to ensure faster and more transparent dissemination of data.
- It may conduct **door-to-door verification** of voter rolls ahead of **Bihar Assembly polls**, continuing the push for accurate electoral data.

"Smart Customs, Faster Exports" – CBIC Launches ICETAB for Export Inspections

What's New?

- On **June 19, 2025**, the **Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC)** launched **ICETAB**, a **tablet-based digital inspection tool**, extending its use from import examinations to **export inspections**.
- Introduced at the **Chief Commissioners & DGs conference** in New Delhi, ICETAB enables customs officers to **digitally record**, **monitor**, and **manage export examinations** in real time.

Why It Matters

- **Speed and efficiency**: ICETAB eliminates manual paperwork, significantly reducing delays in inspections and cargo clearance.

- **Transparency and traceability**: Officers can upload inspection reports and up to **four cargo images** directly to the **e-Sanchit repository**, ensuring full audit trails.
- **Ease of Doing Business**: Part of CBIC's broader **Turant Customs** and **Green Customs** initiative aligned with **National Trade Facilitation Action Plan (2020–25)**—boosts exporter confidence, especially MSMEs.

How ICETAB Works
- Officers access **shipping bill details**, **examination orders**, and **RMS instructions** via tablet.
- Inspection findings and visual documentation are uploaded **on-site**, ensuring immediate compliance capture.
- In digital disruptions, manual reporting may be authorized with senior officer approval, and issues are reviewed **weekly**.

Digital Customs Evolution
- ICETAB builds on its **success with imports** (launched Aug 2024 via Circular No. 10/2024).
- Export rollout was mandated through **Circular No. 17/2025** .

Additional Info
- **e-Sanchit**: Central digital repository for customs documents and inspection visuals.
- **RMS (Risk Management System)**: Integrated in workflow; ICETAB displays dynamic instructions during inspections.
- **Turant Customs**: Initiative for faceless, paperless, contactless trade facilitation.
- **Green Customs**: Focuses on reducing environmental footprint and paperwork.

"Data for Equity" – India to Conduct First Comprehensive Household Income Survey in 2026

What's New?
- The **Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI)** has announced India's launch of its **first full-scale Household Income Survey** in **2026**, aimed at gathering reliable data on household income distribution nationwide.
- A **Technical Expert Group (TEG)**, chaired by economist **Surjit S. Bhalla**, has been formed to shape the survey's design, methodology, sampling, and analytical framework.
- Planning suggests the survey might commence in **early 2026** and extend over **12–18 months**, with results possibly released by **March 2026**.

Why It Matters
- **Filling data gaps**: Unlike consumption surveys, India lacks reliable, granular data on **actual incomes**, limiting insights on inequality and economic stratification.
- **Policy insights**: Accurate income data enables better targeting of welfare schemes, tax reforms, poverty alleviation, and UHC benefits.

- **International comparability**: Aligning with global good practices improves India's position in global inequality and development metrics.

Survey Design & Coverage
- The **TEG** includes experts from ISI, NCAER, JNU, NSE, DSE, and CEFP; it will finalize concepts, sampling, household definitions, and indicators.
- The survey will evaluate **technology's impact on income**, demographic variables, and cover both rural and urban households.

Complementary Data Systems
- India currently uses consumption-based surveys like **HCES (2022–23)** and **PLFS**, but these only indirectly reflect living standards through expenditure data.
- Other data sources like **CMIE-CPHS** and **IHDS** offer insights but lack comprehensive national representation.

Timing & Related Surveys
- Expected launch in 2026, findings may become available by early 2026–27; will align with other big data efforts such as **Census 2026** and potential **All-India Debt & Investment Survey**.
- Supports India's aim to modernize data infrastructure ahead of the **2030 Agenda** and planned delimitation post-Census.

"Data Quality First" – NITI Aayog Launches Third Edition of *Future Front*

What's New?
- **NITI Aayog** released the **third edition** of its flagship quarterly report *Future Front*, titled **"India's Data Imperative: The Pivot Towards Quality"**, during a high-level event attended by senior officials including the CEO of NITI and MoSPI Secretary.
- The report advocates for a shift toward **high-quality, trustworthy data** as the bedrock of **effective digital governance**.

Why It Matters
- **Data-driven policy**: Emphasises that **accurate, timely, and consistent data** across sectors like health, education, and welfare is essential for inclusive service delivery, evidence-based decisions, and reinforcing trust in institutions.
- **AI & DPI readiness**: Quality data is a prerequisite for effective **AI deployment**, **open data practices**, and **national digital public infrastructure (DPI)**.

Tools Introduced for Agencies
1. **Data-Quality Scorecard**
   - Evaluates datasets on **completeness, consistency, timeliness, accuracy, and validity**.
   - Enables ministries to benchmark and improve datasets systematically.
2. **Data-Quality Maturity Framework**

- o Offers self-assessment to help agencies progress from basic to advanced data governance capabilities.
- o Promotes stewardship, auditing, and quality assurance.

Broader Governance Ecosystem

- Aligned with existing initiatives like **National Data and Analytics Platform (NDAP)** for repository access and **Data Governance Quality Index (DGQI)** by DMEO for measuring data preparedness.
- Emphasises peer learning across ministries, open data sharing, inter-agency collaboration, and standardized data practices.

Additional Info

- **DGQI background**: Launched in 2020, DGQI covers three pillars—*Data Strategy, Data Systems, Data-driven Outcomes*—and includes themes such as data generation, quality, technology use, and inter-institutional data sharing.
- **NDAP role**: Functions as a user-friendly portal for accessing, visualizing, and merging government datasets, supporting transparent and accessible decision-making.

"Budgeting with a Gender Lens" – Centre Launches Knowledge Hub for Inclusive Growth

What's New?

- The **Ministry of Women & Child Development** launched the **Gender Budgeting Knowledge Hub**, a digital platform that provides policymakers and stakeholders with **policy briefs**, **best practices**, **training manuals**, and **gender-disaggregated data** to embed a **gender perspective in fiscal planning**.
- The launch took place alongside a national consultation at **Vigyan Bhawan**, attended by **40+ central ministries**, **20 state governments**, **UN Women**, **ADB**, and key national institutions.

Why It Matters

- **Gender-responsive budgeting** transforms fiscal policy from symbolic allocation to a **strategic tool for inclusive governance**, aligning with **'Viksit Bharat @2047'** goals.
- With the gender budget allocation rising **4.5×** from ₹0.98 lakh crore (2014–15) to **₹4.49 lakh crore** (2025–26), the Hub supports **evidence-based planning** and **monitoring of impact**.

Platform Features

- Centralised repository: includes **toolkits**, **templates**, **training modules**, **case studies**, and **policy insights** for ministries and states.
- Supports **capacity building** via draft training manual and encourages **inter-ministerial dialogue**.
- Promotes **gender-disaggregated data usage**, fostering transparency and accountability in budgeting.

Broader Significance

- Shifts gender budgeting from being a **fiscal formality** to an **impact-oriented governance strategy**.
- Bridges national–state coordination, with **UN and ADB's involvement**, enhancing global-level alignment.
- Institutionalises **gender lenses in schemes** like **PMMVY**, **Mission Shakti**, **Ujjwala**, and **SHG credit access**.

Additional Info

- **Gender budgeting** evaluates how budget allocations address **gender disparities** in education, health, livelihood, and unpaid care work.
- Strong institutional support: **Ministry of Women & Child Development** coordinates with finance wings of central/state departments.
- Aligns with **SDG 5 (Gender Equality)** and **good governance under SDG 16**, improving public financial management.

"Ghostbuster Redux" – ECI Moves to Delist 345 Inactive Political Parties

What's New?

- The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** has initiated the process to **delist 345 Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs)** that have remained **inactive since 2019** and whose **offices could not be traced**—often dubbed **"ghost parties"**.
- **Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs)** of concerned states will issue **show-cause notices**, allowing affected parties a **fair hearing** before final decisions are taken.
- These RUPPs were identified during a nationwide ECI audit among over **2,800 registered unrecognised parties**, under mandates of **Section 29A of the RP Act, 1951**.

Why It Matters

- **Clean electoral rolls**: Removes defunct entities that clutter the system, improving clarity and reducing administrative burden.
- **Curbing misuse**: Inactive parties have been accused of exploiting **tax exemptions**, **common symbols**, and financial benefits without electoral participation.
- **Enhancing democracy**: Streamlining the list of parties strengthens **transparency**, **accountability**, and restores **voter trust** in India's democratic institutions.

RUPP vs Recognised Parties

- **RUPPs** lack recognition as **national or state parties**, enjoy limited privileges, yet receive common symbols under **Symbol Order 1968**.
- For recognition, parties must meet criteria like winning seats or vote share; recognised parties enjoy perks like **reserved symbols**, **star campaigners**, and **broadcast airtime**.

Legal and Institutional Basis

- Under **Section 29A, RP Act, 1951**, parties must **contest elections periodically** and maintain valid **address,**

office-bearer, **PAN, and constitution**—failure invites delisting.
- In 2022, the ECI delisted **86 non-existent** and declared **253 inactive** RUPPs, totaling over **500 purged parties**.

Accountability & Oversight
- ECI's clean-up follows concerns of **money laundering**, **fake funding**, and misuse of **income tax exemptions** by inactive parties.
- The ECI has also proposed **empowering itself to deregister parties** permanently—an idea supported by the **Law Commission (2015)** and reiterated in the **ECI's 2016 reforms proposal**.

Additional Info
- **Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs)** are those that do not meet recognition criteria—often dormant, numbering nearly **2,800+**.
- **Recognised parties** are classified as **national (6)** or **state (60+)**, enjoying advanced benefits like **symbol rights**, **campaign privileges**, and **EC broadcast coverage**.

"Access Amplified" – Sugamya Bharat App Gets AI Chatbot & Smarter UI
What's New?
- The **Sugamya Bharat App**, launched in 2021 by the **Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD)** under the **Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment**, has been revamped (**June 2025**) with:
  - A more **intuitive, accessible UI,** tailored for **divyangjan and the elderly,** featuring adjustable fonts, contrasting colors, text-to-speech, and multilingual support.
  - An **AI-powered chatbot** providing **real-time assistance** on accessibility, grievance monitoring, and government schemes across platforms like WhatsApp and voice interfaces.
  - Integrated **circulars, notifications**, and a portal for **government accessibility schemes**.
  - **Geo-tagged complaint registration**, enabling users to post issue photos; over **14,358 registered users**, ~**83,791 downloads** (mostly Android).

Why It Matters
- **Enhanced inclusion**: Offers **autonomy and dignity** to PWDs and older citizens by simplifying access and redress of accessibility challenges.
- **One-stop platform**: The AI chatbot and data integration position the app as a central hub for **information**, **complaints**, and **scheme facilitation**.
- **Effective grievance resolution**: Since 2021, the app has logged **2,705 complaints**, resolving **1,897** (≈70%), highlighting its role in accessibility monitoring and action.

Historical Context & Tech Integration
- The app offers **crowdsourced data** on barriers in **buildings, transport, ICT**, with evidence forwarded to appropriate authorities.
- Since 2024, programs like **Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan/Yatra** and partnerships with NGOs and institutes (e.g., Mission Accessibility, I-STEM, NAB-Delhi) and **IIT-Kharagpur** have focussed on audit, awareness, and accessible design.
- A **2014 MoU** initiated the incorporation of AI features; the new chatbot actualises those plans.

AI & User Empowerment
- Powered by AI/voice agents (e.g., SarvamAI), the chatbot guides users through **270+ government schemes**, legal aid access, and complaint registration.
- The interface supports **voice/text queries**, **multilingual communication**, and content retrieval, unlocking accessibility for visually/hearing impaired.

Additional Info
- Suggested upgrades include **UPI-enabled payouts**, **face ID**, and **ATM-mode withdrawals**, likely improving autonomy in future iterations.
- **NDIHS helpline (14456)** complements the app by offering 24×7 support.
- Aligned with **UNCRPD, RPwD Act 2016**, and **Accessible India Campaign**, reinforcing India's commitment to **inclusive digital governance**.

"Data at Fingertips" – MoSPI Launches GoIStats App for Real-Time Official Data
What's New?
- On **Statistics Day, June 29, 2025**, the **Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI)**, via **NSO**, launched the **GoIStats mobile application**, designed to provide a unified platform for accessing India's official data on-the-go.
- Currently, the **Android app is live** on the Google Play Store (over 500 installations already), with an **iOS version coming soon**.

Why It Matters
- **Empowering data-driven governance**: With features like "Key Trends" dashboards showcasing **GDP**, **inflation**, **employment**, and more, the app equips citizens, researchers, and policymakers to make informed decisions.
- **Enhanced accessibility**: Users can benefit from **advanced filtering**, **comprehensive metadata**, and **mobile-optimized tables**, making complex statistical information more understandable and usable.
- **Visual insights**: Interactive dashboards and data storytelling tools democratize statistical understanding, supporting greater public participation and transparency.

Statistics Day & Policy Alignment

- The launch coincided with the **19th Statistics Day**, which celebrates the birthday of Prof. **P.C. Mahalanobis**, and marked the **75th anniversary of NSS**.
- Alongside the app, MoSPI released key **SDG indicator reports**, reinforcing the linkage between data access and sustainable development goals.

Digital Governance Ecosystem

- The app complements existing MoSPI digital platforms like the **revamped Microdata Portal** and upcoming **AI/ML classification tools**, developed in collaboration with the World Bank and NIC.
- A related **"Innovate with GoIStats" hackathon**, held earlier in March 2025, encouraged youth participation in data visualization and policy insights generation.

Additional Info

- **NSO**, functioning under MoSPI, is India's national statistical bureau responsible for major surveys like **NSS**, **ASI**, and **CPI**.
- The GoIStats app, built by **NIC and MoSPI**, currently offers Android support (23.8 MB, ~500+ downloads) and plans to extend to **iOS soon**.

Social Issues

India's Population Hits 1.46 Billion as Fertility Drops Below Replacement Rate

What's the News?

- India's **population in 2025** is estimated at **1.46 billion**, surpassing China to become the most populous country.
- According to the **UNFPA State of World Population Report 2025**, India's **Total Fertility Rate (TFR)** has declined to **1.9 births per woman**, now below the **replacement level of 2.1**.

Highlights from the UNFPA Report

- India's **population projected to peak** at ~1.7 billion by the **2060s**, then gradually decline.
- Despite low fertility, a significant **working-age population** (~68%) persists, alongside a **sizeable youth cohort** (26% aged 10–24).
- Urban TFR is even lower—estimated at **1.6–1.7 births per woman**, due to delayed marriages and career-centric lifestyles.

Dual Fertility Patterns: A Challenge

- **High-fertility pockets**: States like **Bihar, Jharkhand, UP** lag behind—unintended pregnancies and closely spaced births persist due to limited access to contraception.
- **Low-fertility hotspots**: Educated urban middle classes in **Delhi, Kerala, Tamil Nadu** often delay or forgo childbirth citing financial pressures and work-life balance concerns.

Why It Matters

- **Demographic dividend at risk**: Falling TFR could shrink the workforce and burden elder care in coming decades.
- **Policy focus needs shift**:
  - From alarming population growth to **addressing unmet reproductive goals**
  - Demand for better access to **reproductive healthcare**, **fertility awareness**, and **gender-sensitive policies**.
- **SDGs Impact**:
  - SDG-3 (health & well-being), SDG-5 (gender equality) and SDG-8 (decent work) implications are significant.

Additional Info

- **UNFPA mandate**: Focuses on reproductive health, population data, gender equity.
- **Replacement fertility**: 2.1 births per woman is needed to sustain population without migration.
- **TFR trend**: From ~5 in 1970 to 1.9 now—a sharp demographic transition.
- **Population age structure**:
  - 0–14 years: ~24%, 15–64 years: ~68%, 65+ years: ~7%.
- **Future ageing**: UN projects elderly population could reach ~20% by 2050 .

India Slips to 131st on Gender Gap Index as Global Parity Inches Ahead

What's the News?

- The **World Economic Forum (WEF)** released its **Global Gender Gap Report**:
  - **India ranked 131st** out of **148 countries**, slipping two positions from 129th in 2024.
  - India's **overall gender parity score** stands at **64.1%**, compared to the global average of **68.8% closed**.

State-wise & Sub-index Performance

- **South Asia**: India now ranks **5th**, trailing **Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka**.
- **Improved sub-indices**:
  - **Economic Participation & Opportunity** rose by **0.9 pp** to **40.7%**.
  - **Educational Attainment** score at **97.1%**, showing near parity.
  - **Health & Survival** also improved, led by better sex ratio at birth and healthy life expectancy indicators.
- **Declines**:
  - **Political Empowerment** dipped by **0.6 pp**.
  - Female representation in **Parliament** fell from **14.7% to 13.8%**, and in **ministerial positions** from **6.5% to 5.6%**.

Global & Regional Insights

- **Iceland** tops the index for the **16th year**, achieving **92.6% gender parity**, followed by Finland and Norway.
- **Worldwide parity closure**: **68.8%**, with no country reaching 100%, and it may take **123 years** to fully close the gender gap.
- **Regional outlook**: South Asia lags behind, despite some progress in country-specific scores (e.g., Bangladesh leaps ahead in region).

Top 5 Countries on Global Gender Gap Index 2025:

Rank	Country	Score
1	Iceland	0.926
2	Finland	0.879
3	Norway	0.863
4	United Kingdom (UK)	0.838
5	New Zealand	0.827
131	**India**	**0.644**

Top 7 countries in South Asia:

Economies	Regional Rank	Global Rank	Score
Bangladesh	1	24	0.775
Bhutan	2	119	0.663
Nepal	3	125	0.648
Sri Lanka	4	130	0.645
India	**5**	**131**	**0.644**
Maldives	6	138	0.626
Pakistan	7	148	0.567

Additional Information

- **Global Gender Gap Index** measures across:
  - Economic, Education, Health, Political Empowerment.
- **India's statistics**:
  - **Economic participation** ~40.7%, still lags significantly behind education/health.
  - **Labour force participation** remained at **~45.9%**, highest recorded.
- **Historic trend**: From 127th in 2023 → 129th in 2024 → 131st in 2025.
- **UNDP's Gender Inequality Index (GII)**: India ranks **102nd**, showing gradual improvement in health, empowerment, and labour metrics.

Surge in Violent Crimes by Juvenile Offenders: India's Growing Concern

What's the News?

- The **NCRB-backed Adolescence India Edition** (The Hindu) reports a **significant rise in violent offences** committed by **juveniles (under 18)**—notably between **2019 and 2023**—including **assaults and murders**.
- Though **overall juvenile crime** slightly declined over the past decade, **violent crimes have increased**, raising alarm among policymakers .

Key Trends & Data

- **Violent offences** (murder, assault, robbery) show a **marked upward trajectory**, even as petty crime dips .
- **Demographics**:
  - ~ 75% of juvenile offenders aged **16–18**, and **99% are boys**.
  - Most juvenile crimes (≈ 90%) fall under **Indian Penal Code (IPC)** provisions.
- **Offence types**:
  - Major share: **theft, bodily harm**, followed by **robbery**, **murder**, and **rape**.

Additional Context

- **Juvenile Justice (Care & Protection) Act, 2015**:
  - Defines legal framework for minors in conflict with law.
  - Allows for **trial of 16–18-year-olds as adults** in heinous cases upon court assessment.
- **Global perspective**:
  - UNICEF: 125 million adolescent lives disrupted by violence globally; linkages between abuse and juvenile crime.
- **Data reliability**: NCRB relies on states for data; variations and under-reporting exist.

"Digital Gap or Bridge?" – Strong Intergenerational Ties in Non-Metro Cities

What's New?

- A **HelpAge India report** released on **June 14, 2025**, surveyed **5,798 elderly respondents** across **10 cities**.
- **73 %** of elders in **non-metro areas** feel **digital tech brings them closer to youth**—facilitating connections via calls, messaging, and social media.
- Yet, many seniors report **confusion with devices**, **fear of making mistakes**, and **memory lapses**, indicating a significant **digital literacy gap**.
- Highlighted are **communication hurdles**, like youth being busy or hesitant, and fears of getting misunderstood.
- The findings were shared during **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2025** in **Chennai**, where **government schemes** supporting elder welfare were also showcased.

The Findings

- **Digital bridges**: Technology can help reduce distance—but only if elders feel confident using it.
- **Challenges remain**: Fear, confusion, age-related memory issues, and reluctance to learn limit usage.
- **Emotional gaps**: Even when youth care, lack of conversations or feeling of neglect still exists.
- Emphasised need: **open communication**, **digital literacy training**, and **empathy** in intergenerational relations.

Why It Matters?

- Reflects India's **demographic shift**—with a growing elderly population (expected to reach 21 % by 2050), intergenerational dynamics gain increasing policy relevance.
- Connects to **social security themes**: inclusion of elderly using digital tools (e.g., for pensions, healthcare).

- Ties into **UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030)**: stresses **digital inclusion**, **ageism reduction**, and stronger family/community bonds.

Additional Info

- **HelpAge India**: One of India's leading NGOs focused on elder welfare since 1978.
- **World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (June 15)**: A UN-observed day highlighting elder neglect, abuse, and digital exclusion.
- **Anbu Cholai & Bandham schemes (TN Govt.)**: Daycare and safety initiatives featuring *Kaaval Uthavi* app to bolster elder security and connectivity.
- **UN Decade of Healthy Ageing**: Global effort (2021–2030) focusing on strategies like digital inclusion, friendly communities, and combating ageism .

Empowerment

Rural Women Embrace Digital Finance: UPI & Online Banking See Major Surge

Recent government survey data reveals a remarkable surge in the number of **rural women** capable of performing **online banking and UPI (Unified Payments Interface) transactions**. This trend underscores the growing financial inclusion and digital literacy among women in India's hinterlands, largely enabled by increased mobile phone penetration and targeted government initiatives. According to the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation's (MoSPI) Comprehensive Modular Survey: Telecom (CMS:T), 2025**, conducted as part of the 80th round of the National Sample Survey (NSS) in early 2025, the progress has been particularly noteworthy.

Rural Women's Digital Leap:

- **Significant Jump in Online Banking:** The proportion of rural women (aged 15 years and above) who reported the ability to perform online banking transactions surged to **30.0%** in the first quarter of 2025. This is a substantial increase from **17.1%** recorded in 2022-23.
- **Youth Leading the Way:** The transformation is even more pronounced among young rural women. In the **15-24 years age bracket**, **51.4%** of females in rural areas reported the ability to perform online banking, more than doubling from **19.6%** in 2022-23.
- **UPI as the Key Enabler:** The **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** has emerged as the dominant platform for these transactions. A very high percentage of those conducting online banking, including rural women, are reportedly using UPI, highlighting its ease of use and accessibility.
- **Increased Internet and Mobile Usage:** This digital financial empowerment is underpinned by rising mobile phone ownership and internet usage among rural women. The survey indicated that **57.6% of rural females** used the internet in the three months before the survey, up from 42.6% in 2022-23.

Factors Contributing to the Surge:

- **Increased Smartphone Penetration:** Growing affordability and availability of smartphones in rural areas.
- **Improved Internet Connectivity:** Expansion of mobile internet services into rural India.
- **Simplicity of UPI:** The user-friendly interface of UPI has made digital payments accessible even to those with limited digital literacy.
- **Government Push for Digital Payments:** Initiatives promoting digital transactions post-demonetization and during the pandemic.
- **Role of Self-Help Groups (SHGs):** SHGs have been instrumental in promoting financial literacy and encouraging digital adoption among their members.
- **Awareness and Digital Literacy Programs:** Schemes like **Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA)** have played a role.
- **Jan Dhan Accounts:** The foundation of bank accounts provided under PMJDY, with a majority held by women, has been crucial.

Relevant Government Initiatives:

- **Digital India Program:** A flagship program to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. Key pillars include digital infrastructure, digital literacy, and digitally delivered services.
- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY):** A national mission for financial inclusion to ensure access to financial services, namely banking/savings & deposit accounts, remittance, credit, insurance, pension in an affordable manner. A significant number of account holders are women.
- **National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM - Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana):** Focuses on organizing rural poor women into Self Help Groups (SHGs), building their capacities, and linking them with banks for financial services. Many SHGs are now being trained in digital financial literacy.
- **Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA):** A scheme to make digitally literate at least one person in every rural household across India.
- **Unified Payments Interface (UPI):** An instant real-time payment system developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) facilitating inter-bank transactions.

Ladakh Gets New Official Languages; Women's Reservation in Hill Councils Ensured

In a significant move for the Union Territory of Ladakh, **President Droupadi Murmu** has promulgated two key regulations: **The Ladakh Official Languages Regulation, 2025**, and an amendment to ensure **one-third reservation for women** in the **Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDCs)**. These measures aim to preserve Ladakh's unique cultural and linguistic identity and promote women's participation in local governance.

1. Ladakh Official Languages Regulation, 2025: Embracing Multilingualism

The President has promulgated **The Ladakh Official Languages Regulation, 2025**, which designates multiple languages for official use in the Union Territory.

Key Provisions & Significance:

- **Recognized Languages:** The regulation recognizes **English, Hindi, Urdu, Bhoti, and Purgi** as official languages to be used for all or any of the official purposes of the Union Territory of Ladakh.
  - **English** will continue to be used for all official purposes for which it was being used before the commencement of this regulation, ensuring administrative continuity.
- **Promotion of Native Languages:** The regulation also empowers the **Administrator (Lieutenant Governor) of Ladakh** to take necessary steps to promote and develop other native languages of Ladakh. Specific mention is made of languages like **Shina (Dardic), Brokskat (Dardic), Balti, and Ladakhi.**
  - This includes the potential establishment of an **Academy of Art, Culture, and Languages** to strengthen institutional mechanisms for their promotion.
- **Cultural Recognition:** This move is a significant step towards recognizing and preserving the rich linguistic diversity of Ladakh, which has a unique cultural heritage influenced by its geographical location and history.
- **Inclusive Governance:** By recognizing local languages, the administration aims to make governance more accessible and participatory for the diverse communities residing in Ladakh.
- **Constitutional Basis:** The President is empowered to make regulations for the peace, progress, and good government of Union Territories like Ladakh (which does not have its own legislature) under **Article 240 of the Constitution.** This regulation was made exercising these powers, read with relevant sections of the **Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019**.

2. One-Third Reservation for Women in Ladakh Hill Councils

In a major boost for women's empowerment in Ladakh, the President has promulgated the **Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (Amendment) Regulation, 2025**.

Key Provisions & Significance:

- **Mandatory Reservation:** The amendment ensures that **not less than one-third** of the total number of seats in both the **Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), Leh** and the **Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), Kargil** shall be reserved for women.
- **Rotation of Seats:** These reserved seats for women will be allotted by **rotation** to different territorial constituencies within the Hill Councils. The rotation will be based on the serial number allotted to each constituency, as notified in the official gazette.
- **Alignment with National Policy:** This provision aligns with the national policy of promoting women's participation in political decision-making bodies, similar to the **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (Women's Reservation Act)** for Parliament and State Assemblies, and existing provisions for Panchayati Raj Institutions.
- **Enhanced Political Participation:** This will significantly increase the representation of women in the local governance of Ladakh, enabling them to voice their concerns and contribute more effectively to the development of the region.
- **Empowerment and Inclusivity:** The reservation is expected to empower Ladakhi women politically and lead to more inclusive and representative Hill Councils.

India's Skyrocketing Social Security Coverage: A Global Leap

What's the News?

- According to the **ILO's World Social Protection Report** released in June 2025, India's **social security coverage** has surged from **19% in 2015 to 64.3% in 2025**.
- Approximately **94 crore (940 million)** citizens now receive at least one form of **social protection benefit**.
- This positions India as **second globally** in terms of social security reach, following unprecedented growth over the decade .

Key Metrics

- **Coverage growth**:
  - 2015 → 19%
  - 2021 → around 24%
  - 2024 → 48.8% (data-pooling exercise)
  - 2025 → 64.3%.
- **Beneficiary count**: ~**94 crore people** covered.
- **Global standing**: Ranked **2nd worldwide** for coverage percentage.

Government Interventions & Enablers

- **Social Protection Data Pooling (Mar 2025)**: Consolidated over **200 crore records** across 34 central schemes (MGNREGA, EPFO, ESIC, PMMVY, APY, PM-POSHAN), covering ~65% (92 crore) of population.
- **Key central schemes**:
  - **Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY**: ~39.9 crore cards issued.
  - **PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana**: ~80 crore food beneficiaries.
  - **eShram portal**: 30.7 crore unorganised workers registered.
  - **Atal Pension Yojana**: Over 7 crore subscribers with ₹43,000+ crore corpus.
- **Legislative backing**:
  - **Social Security Code (2020)** mandates gradual universalisation across sectors.
  - State-level boards (Building Workers', Unorganised Workers' Boards) operate under this framework.

India Launches Green Skills Training to Equip Youth for Sustainable Economy

What's the News?

- The **Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE)** and **Shell India** have jointly launched a **Green Skills and Electric Vehicles (EV) Training Initiative**, starting **12 June 2025**.
- Named **Skills4Future**, in partnership with Edunet Foundation and the Directorate General of Training (DGT), the programme targets **students and faculty** in select **ITIs and NSTIs** across **Delhi-NCR, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka**.

Key Features

- **Advanced EV Technician Course**: A 240-hour curriculum at four designated NSTIs, emphasizing diagnostics, maintenance, and safety protocols.
- **EV Skills Course at ITIs**: 90-hour modules at 12 ITIs equipped with Shell-supported labs.
- **Foundational Green Energy Training**: Additional introductory modules at collaborating institutions.
- **Certification & Placement Support**: Co-branded credentials by MSDE and Shell, with structured career linkage for trainees.
- **Technology and Tools**: Lab-based hands-on learning in EV systems, diagnostics, charging infrastructure, and AI-enabled green technologies.

Additional Info

- **Skill Council for Green Jobs (SCGJ)**: Under NSDC/MSDE, it designs qualification standards across sub-sectors—solar, wind, hydro, EVs, bioenergy, waste, etc. (NSQF levels 2–7, ~77 job roles).
- **ITI and NSTI Role**: Central training institutes under MSDE that offer vocational programs—this adds green modules to their curriculum.
- **Support by ADB**: The Asian Development Bank supports MSDE to strengthen green skill frameworks as part of youth employment & energy transition programmes.
- **Renewables context**: India's green workforce (~1 million) could expand by 3.4 million jobs by 2030; yet, current green training rates are low (~10%).

300+ FRA Cells: A Boost for Tribal Rights Implementation

What's New?

- The Union government under the **Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyaan (DAJGUA)** approved the setup of over **300 Forest Rights Act (FRA) cells** across **18 States and Union Territories**.
- These cells, to be established at **State**, **District**, and **Sub-Divisional** levels, are funded by the Union but operate under **State government supervision**.

The Initiative

- **FRA cells** are dedicated teams to:
  - **Spread awareness** about FRA provisions.

  - Assist **Scheduled Tribes (STs)** and **Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs)** in filing claims.
  - Support **Gram Sabhas** and **district bodies** in claim verification and grievance redressal.
  - Encourage **digitalisation** of claim processing using resources like the **VanMitra portal**.

Additional Context

- **Forest Rights Act, 2006**:
  - Legally recognizes **customary rights** of forest dwellers (STs and OTFDs).
  - Includes **habitation rights**, **MFP**, **CFR**, conservation roles, and **development protections**.
  - Designed with a **decentralised structure**:
    - **Gram Sabhas → SDLC → DLC** for claims.
- **DAJGUA**:
  - Launched Oct 2, 2024, under PM-JUGA (Pradhan Mantri Janajatiya Unnat Gram Abhiyaan).
  - Provides **funding for FRA cells**, **digitisation**, and support to **Gram Sabhas/CFR committees**.
- **Stakeholders**:
  - **Gram Sabhas/FRCs**: Local bodies empowered to verify claims.
  - **Forest Department**: Often a bottleneck in claims due to overlap of authority.
  - **NGOs/Academia**: Partners in awareness drives and claim facilitation.

"Acknowledging Her Harvest" – Women Farmers Key to Food Security

What's New?

- The **UN General Assembly** has declared **2026** as the **International Year of the Woman Farmer**, backed by over **100 countries**, to spotlight women's pivotal role in agriculture and food security.

Why It Matters

- In **developing nations**, women contribute **60–80%** of food production and make up around **39%** of agricultural labour in South Asia.
- In **India**, about **80%** of economically active rural women work in agriculture, yet only **14%** (NFHS data) own land, limiting their access to credit and government schemes.
- Empowering women is essential for enhancing **food production**, boosting **household nutrition**, and building climate resilience.

Challenges Faced

- **Land ownership gap:** Only ~14% of women in India own farmland; globally, women own under 20% .
- **Credit and financial exclusion:** Lack of land-holding prevents women from accessing bank loans, forcing reliance on informal sources .
- **Technological divide:** Women often lack mobile phones and access to agricultural advisories, blocking them from climate-smart tips.
- **Climate burden:** Climate change disproportionately affects women—adding to workloads at home and on the farm.

Encouraging Solutions & Initiatives

- **ENACT project (Assam):** A WFP-Assam program, with Norway's funding, aiding 300+ women across 17 villages with **weekly mobile agro-climate advisories,** climate-resilient seeds, digital support centres
- **Government Schemes**:
  - **Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP):** Skill-building & sustainable agriculture training.
  - **Sub-mission on Agricultural Mechanisation:** 50–80% subsidies for farm equipment.
  - **National Food Security Mission:** 30% budget earmarked for women farmers.
- **Land reforms:** The **2005 Hindu Succession Amendment** and **2006 Forest Rights Act** grant daughters land inheritance rights.
- **Tech & digital inclusion:** Mobile platforms for advisory services, e-markets, women-led agri-startups.
- **Community empowerment:** Women-only cooperatives (only 8k vs. 450k total) and self-help groups amplify access and collective action.

"Dharti Aaba Janbhagidari Abhiyan" – A Landmark Push for Tribal Empowerment

What's New?

- From **June 15 to 30, 2025,** the Ministry of Tribal Affairs launched the **Dharti Aaba Janbhagidari Abhiyan**, a massive benefit-saturation campaign targeting tribal regions.
- Coverage includes **549 tribal-dominated districts, 207 PVTG districts, and over 100,000 villages,** aiming to ensure seamless access to central and state welfare schemes.

Why It Matters

- This campaign is a milestone in inclusivity, aligning with PM Modi's **Antyodaya vision**—uplifting the most marginalized through dignity and empowerment.
- It ensures no tribal household is left behind, especially in regions with **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).**
- Multi-ministry participation promotes synergy in delivering services like healthcare, education, financial inclusion, and livelihood support.

Key Features & Implementation

- **Service-on-wheels**: Camps across 100,000+ villages use mobile vans, fixed camps, and gram sabhas for on-the-spot registrations.
- **Range of services:**
  - Aadhaar enrolment
  - Ayushman Bharat health cards
  - PM-Kisan farmer registrations
  - Pensions, scholarships
  - Bank accounts under PM-Jan Dhan, skill training
  - Basic amenities like drinking water and electricity
- **Grassroots engagement:** Local panchayats and community leaders drive awareness and participation.

Related Parallel Schemes

- **PM-Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN)**: Focuses on PVTGs; active in Odisha's Malkangiri with integrated infrastructure and livelihood support.
- **Year-End Review 2024**: Highlights MoTA's budget growth from ₹4,498 Cr (2014-15) to ₹13,000 Cr (2024-25), and launch of major schemes—Dharti Aaba Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan, PM-JANMAN, EMRS expansion.
- **Budget 2025-26:** Record tribal development outlay of ₹14,926 Cr, a 46% hike over previous year .

Additional Info

- **Scheduled Tribe Population:** ~10.45 Cr (~8.6% of total); 705+ tribal groups across India.
- **Development Action Plan (DAPST)**: Central ministries allocate 4–17.5% of scheme budgets for ST development; funding surged from ₹21,525 Cr (2013-14) to ₹1.25 Lakh Cr (2024-25).
- **PVTGs**: 207 districts targeted; require focused attention due to extreme socio-economic vulnerability.

"Autonomous Identity" – Madras HC Empowers Women to Apply for Passport Without Husband's Consent

What's New?

- On **June 20, 2025**, a single-judge bench of the **Madras High Court** (Justice N. Anand Venkatesh) ruled that a **married woman does not need her husband's signature or consent** to obtain a passport, calling such demands "repressive and patriarchal".
- The judgment was in response to **Revathy**, a Chennai-based petitioner, who faced a **passport application delay** because her husband (struggling through divorce proceedings) couldn't or wouldn't sign **Form J**.
- The Court directed the **Regional Passport Office** to finalize her application within **four weeks**, sans husband's endorsement.

Why It Matters

- **Upholds legal equality**: Affirms that marriage does not diminish a woman's **individual rights**, including freedom of movement under **Article 21**.
- **Challenges patriarchal norms**: Court condemned the insistence on Form J signature as indicative of "male supremacism" and treating women like **chattel property**.
- **Sets administrative precedent**: Officials must **process passports independently of marital status**, preventing bureaucratic delays caused by spousal barriers.

Form J Demystified

- Standard **Form J** requires local verification and, in spousal cases, could involve a spouse's signature—but the Court said this is **not legally mandatory**, especially for existing citizens.

Autonomy Despite Marital Discord

- The petitioner, **Revathy**, married in 2023 and involved in ongoing divorce proceedings. Passport authorities used this to justify the demand—but the Court ruled that expecting

her husband's signature amidst such a situation required her to "fulfill an impossibility".

Broader Legal Context

- Reinforces earlier **HC orders rejecting mandatory spousal consent** and reflects **evolving gender norms** within bureaucracy.
- Aligns with constitutional guarantees under **Articles 14, 15, 19, and 21**, safeguarding women's rights to equality and mobility.

"NAVYA Nurtures" – New Scheme to Skill Adolescent Girls

What's New?

- On **June 24, 2025**, the **Ministry of Women & Child Development (MWCD)** and the **Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE)** jointly launched **NAVYA** (*Nurturing Aspirations through Vocational Training for Young Adolescent Girls*) in **Sonbhadra, UP**, aiming to skill girls aged **16–18 years** in non-traditional and emerging sectors.
- The initiative is piloting in **27 aspirational districts across 19 states**, such as Maharashtra, Karnataka, Bihar, and Himachal Pradesh, chosen with NITI Aayog's coordination.

Why It Matters

- **Empowerment & inclusion**: Provides vocational training in fields like **graphic design**, **smartphone and drone assembly**, **CCTV installation**, **solar PV**, and **professional beauty**, breaking gender stereotypes.
- **Employment & entrepreneurship**: Integrates with PMKVY 4.0 to equip girls for both job markets and self-employment, bridging gender and skill gaps.
- **Holistic development**: Includes a **7-hour life-skills module** focusing on communication, interpersonal skills, health, hygiene, conflict resolution, and career counselling.

Location & Outreach

- Pilot roll-out: 27 **aspirational and tribal districts** across 19 states, with training centers utilizing existing MSDE and MWCD infrastructure.
- Sonbhadra launch symbolizes focus on underserved regions.

Skill Areas & Training Model

- Focus areas:
  - **Tech & electronics** (drones, smartphone repair, solar PV)
  - **Creative fields** (graphic design, beauty services)
  - **Green and digital economy roles**.
- Delivered through **PMKVY** and **PM Vishwakarma Yojana** frameworks and local partners such as Jan Shikshan Sansthans.

Convergence & Implementation

- A joint effort by **MWCD and MSDE**, formalized through inter-ministerial collaboration via PMKVY implementation modules.
- Builds on previous pilot: door-to-door mobilisation training ~3,800 girls across similar regions, offering incentives, boarding, stipends, and placement support.

Additional Info

- NAVYA aligns with the wider **'Viksit Bharat 2047'** mission, emphasizing youth empowerment, gender parity, and skill-led growth.
- It's a logical extension of earlier adolescent girl schemes like **RGSEAG/SABLA**, now moving beyond nutrition and life skills toward **market-oriented vocational empowerment** for girls aged 16–18.

"Skill Shift" – Jayant Chaudhary's Blueprint for a Future-Ready Workforce

What's New?

- Union Minister **Jayant Chaudhary** (MoS, Skill Development & Education) unveiled a comprehensive report and action plan titled **"Transforming India's Workforce"**, aimed at **formalising informal skills**, **localising vocational training**, and aligning skilling initiatives with **future job market demands**.
- The unveiling happened during the **Kaushal Manthan** workshop in Hyderabad, where the Minister also announced **two new Centres of Excellence at Hyderabad** and **Chennai** to train trainers and foster advanced skill development.

Why It Matters

- **Bridging the informal-formal gap**: Aims to recognise and certify skills acquired outside formal education, enabling informal sector workers to access better opportunities and social security.
- **Local relevance & flexibility**: Encourages **state-customised vocational programmes**, moving away from one-size-fits-all approaches to address regional economic needs and youth aspirations.
- **Life-long learning ecosystem**: Emphasises evolving skill requirements via **life-long learning**, **faculty development**, and mandatory **Craft Instructor Training Scheme (CITS)** certification.

Centres of Excellence & Biochar Initiative

- Two CoEs announced at **NSTI Hyderabad** & **Chennai** to standardize and elevate trainer quality across emerging sectors.
- Launched India's first **Rural Biochar Entrepreneurship Programme**, a sustainable initiative combining green technology and rural job creation.

Global Engagement & Workforce Vision

- At **WEF Davos 2025**, Chaudhary stressed India must **reskill its workforce** amid AI transformation; called on private sector to invest in training.
- Highlighted India's emergence as a **global skill capital**, with Indian talent forming ~16% of global AI workforce.
- At **TiEcon 2025** (US), he indicated India is nurturing **1 million+ entrepreneurs** through **Startup India**, **Skill India**, and **AIM**, showcasing fusion of **skills and innovation**.

Targets & Statistical Anchors

- Citing Economic Survey, India needs **7.85 million new skilled jobs annually till 2030** for **Viksit Bharat @2047** vision.
- Under **PMKVY 4.0**, over **1.5 crore learners trained** in electronics, logistics, healthcare; 80% female participation via **Jan Shikshan Sansthan**.

Additional Info

- **Jayant Chaudhary**: MoS (Independent Charge) for Skill Dev & Entrepreneurship since June 2024; alumnus of LSE, Loksabha MP, grandson of former PM Chaudhary Charan Singh.
- **Skill India Mission (2015)**: Overseen by the MSDE, it aims to train 40 crore people by 2022 via PMKVY, NNPS, apprenticeship schemes.

"Security Surge" - India's Social Safety Net Covers 64% of Population in 2025

What's New?

- **India's social security coverage** has reached **64.3% in 2025**, a steep climb from **19% in 2015**, marking a **45 percentage-point increase** over a decade.
- This expansion has brought **approximately 940-950 million people** (over **94 crore citizens**) under at least one legislatively-backed, cash-based welfare scheme.
- According to the **International Labour Organization (ILO)**, India now ranks **second globally** in terms of beneficiary count.

Why It Matters

- **Fastest global expansion**: Tracked as the **world's fastest rise in social protection coverage**, reflecting India's strong pro-poor governance.
- **Inclusive welfare proof**: Coverage jump from **24.4% in 2019 to 64.3% in 2025** signals scale, particularly among underserved groups.
- **Global credibility boost**: Helps in negotiating **Social Security Agreements (SSAs)**, portability for Indian workers abroad, and reinforcing international labor standards.

Schemes Driving the Surge

- Coverage includes **32 schemes**, such as:
  - **Atal Pension Yojana** (pension),
  - **PM-KISAN, MGNREGA, PM POSHAN, Janani Suraksha Yojana, PM-JAY, e-Shram**, and **PM-SYM**.
- ILO's criteria: schemes must be **legislated, cash-based**, **active**, and have **verified ≥3 years of data**.

Data Pooling Initiative

- The coverage figure reflects **Phase I** of a central-state **data pooling exercise** from **8 states**, focusing on **central and women-centric schemes**.
- **Phase II** underway; once integrated, coverage is likely to **exceed 100 crore people**.

Institutional & Global Recognition

- **Union Labour & Employment Minister Mansukh Mandaviya** and **PM Modi** praised the milestone at the **113th ILO Conference** in Geneva, and discussed its role in global negotiations.
- **ILO's DG** Gilbert Houngbo praised India's rights-based welfare strategy.

Additional Info

- **ILOSTAT**: India now becomes the **first country to update its 2025 coverage data** on the ILOSTAT dashboard.
- **The Code on Social Security, 2020** aims to extend formal protections—pension, health, maternity, disability—to **all workers**, including informal and gig sector.

"Adi Karmyogi" – Empowering Tribal Scheme Implementation Through Field-Level Training

What's New?

- On **27 June 2025**, the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** launched **Adi Karmyogi**—a nationwide capacity-building programme aimed at enhancing the **motivation, empathy, and efficiency** of officials implementing tribal welfare schemes.
- Launched at the **Adi Anveshan** National Conference in New Delhi by Minister **Jual Oram**, the initiative targets creation of a **cadre of purpose-driven implementers** across tribal India.

Why It Matters

- **Bridges implementation gap**: Many tribal schemes stall not due to funding shortages but due to lack of **motivated, result-oriented officials**.
- **Enhances last-mile impact**: By improving field capacities, the programme seeks to ensure **better service delivery**, **inclusion,** and **outcomes in tribal communities**.

Training Strategy & Scale

- A three-tier training structure:
  - **180+ State Master Trainers**
  - **3,000+ District Trainers**
  - **15,000+ Block Trainers**
- Aims to reach **2 million+ grassroots stakeholders**, including frontline officers, tribal researchers, and local administrators.

Core Objectives

- Shift mindsets from viewing schemes as **bureaucratic tasks** to **citizen-centric service delivery**.
- Promote **cultural sensitivity, ground-level engagement, data use**, and **community participation**.
- Encourage **innovative models**—like tribal incubators and integrated service delivery campaigns (e.g., **DAJGUA**)—and empower **Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs)**.

Additional Info

- Inspired by **Mission Karmayogi**, the central civil servant capacity-building initiative aimed at promoting **lifelong learning and role-based competencies**.
- Builds upon tribal development schemes like **PMAAGY, Van Dhan**, and **DAJGUA**, focusing on revitalized execution standards at the grassroots level.

Culture and Arts

Kutch Findings Push Back Human History, Predating Harappans

In a groundbreaking discovery, archaeological evidence from the **Kutch region of Gujarat** has revealed that thriving prehistoric **hunter-gatherer communities** lived there at least **5,000 years before the rise of the great Harappan cities**. This finding fundamentally alters our understanding of the cultural evolution in the region, suggesting a gradual, locally-rooted development rather than urbanism being an abrupt influence from Sindh.

The research, a collaborative effort by experts from the **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Gandhinagar**, IIT Kanpur, Inter-University Accelerator Centre (IUAC) Delhi, and the Physical Research Laboratory (PRL) Ahmedabad, has unearthed significant proof of human settlement long before the Harappan era.

What are the Key Discoveries?

The study focused on **shell midden sites** in the vast expanses of Kutch. A shell midden is essentially a heap of discarded shells, remnants of food consumed by ancient communities, which serves as a rich archaeological record.

- **Ancient Hunter-Gatherers:** The findings confirm that the region was home to hunter-gatherer communities who lived in a **mangrove-dominated landscape**. Their primary food source was shell species like oysters and gastropods.
- **Dating the Sites:** Using a precise technique called **Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS)** for Carbon-14 dating on shell remains, researchers established the age of these sites. The results confirmed that these settlements are significantly older than the Harappan civilization.
- **Stone Tool Culture:** Besides shell deposits, a variety of **stone tools** used for cutting, scraping, and splitting were discovered. The presence of these tools and raw materials suggests that these communities were proficient in manufacturing implements for their daily needs.
- **Challenging Existing Narratives:** This evidence challenges the long-held view that urbanism in Kutch was primarily an external influence. Instead, it points towards a **gradual process of local adaptation and cultural development**. The accumulated knowledge of local geology, water resources, and navigation by these early communities may have later helped the Harappans plan their settlements and engage in long-distance trade.
- **Links to other Ancient Cultures:** The findings also show similarities with coastal archaeological sites in the Las Bela and Makran regions of Pakistan and the Oman Peninsula, suggesting that early coastal communities across this wider region may have developed similar survival strategies.

Yoga Connect Global Summit Kicks Off in Delhi Ahead of IDY 2025

What's the News?

- On **14 June 2025**, the **Ministry of AYUSH** launched **Yoga Connect 2025** at **Vigyan Bhawan, Delhi**, marking a hybrid global summit ahead of **IDY 2025**, themed **"Yoga for One Earth, One Health"**.
- Over **1,000 in-person participants** and a large virtual audience, including delegates from the **US, UK, South Korea, Bahrain** and more, are attending.
- Led by the **Central Council for Research in Yoga & Naturopathy (CCRYN)**, the summit features renowned gurus—**Baba Ramdev, H.R. Nagendra, Bikkhu Sanghasena, Bharath Bhushan**, and others.

Key Features of the Summit

- **Release of thematic publications**:
  - **'Yoga Prabhava' report** assessing 10 years since the first International Day of Yoga.
  - E-book "Decadal Impact of Yoga".
  - Scientometric report on yoga research.
  - "Bhartiya Vriksha Vaibhavam" – booklet on India's native trees and their cultural value.
- **Thematic sessions** on:
  - Yoga's role in **preventing non-communicable diseases**.
  - Scientific insights into the **Common Yoga Protocol**.
  - **Women's health**, **Yoga-Tech innovations**, and promoting yoga in **commerce & industry**.

Additional Info

- **International Day of Yoga (IDY)**:
  - First celebrated in **2015** after a UN resolution; annual theme continues as "One Earth, One Health" in 2025.
  - **Ten signature events** announced by AYUSH for IDY 2025: **Yoga Sangam** (100,000+ locations); **Yoga Bandhan**; **Yoga Parks**; **Samavesh**; **Prabhava**; **Connect**; **Harit Yoga**; **Unplugged**; **Maha Kumbh**; **Samyoga**.
- **CCRYN**: Apex body for yoga research, now leading global integration of scientific and traditional approaches.
- **Common Yoga Protocol (CYP)**: Standardized set of practices; demonstrated daily during Yoga Mahotsav events with over 1,000 participants at MDNIY.

"Decoding the Past" – ASI to Host Conclave on Indus Valley Script

What's New?

- The **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)**, in collaboration with the **Ministry of Culture**, will host a **three-day international conference** on **20–22 August 2025** at the **Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Institute of Archaeology**, Greater Noida.
- Titled **"Decipherment of Indus Script: Current Status and Way Forward"**, the conclave invites global scholars to

present their research and collaborate on cracking the century-old puzzle.

- Participants must **submit papers in advance**, with both **offline and online** sessions, and ASI plans to offer **fellowships**, alongside Tamil Nadu's **US $1 million prize** for successful decipherment .

Why It Matters

- The **Indus script** appears on seals, pottery, tablets, and more—across **400+ symbols**—but remains **undeciphered**, largely due to **brevity of inscriptions** and **no bilingual text** like a Rosetta Stone.
- Decoding it could reshape understanding of the **Indus Valley Civilization (c.2600–1900 BCE)**—its language, administration, trade, religion, and links to later cultures like **Dravidian or Vedic** .
- This aligns with India's efforts to reclaim its **ancient heritage**, as seen in state-level efforts (e.g., Tamil Nadu's monetary incentive).

Conference Structure

- **Thematic sessions** reflect the state of research—linguistic theories, computational analysis, or archaeological context.
- Format includes **presentations and discussions**, enhancing **knowledge-sharing** and collaboration .

Past & Contemporary Efforts

- Scholars propose various interpretations: **Dravidian (Parpola)**, **proto-Sanskrit (Rao)**, **numerical systems**, or **logo-syllabic formulas**.
- Advanced tools like **computer vision** are revealing similarities with **Tibetan-Yi Corridor scripts**, suggesting ancient script connections and wider transmission networks.

Additional Info

- **ASI**: India's premier authority on archaeology and heritage protection under the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (1958)**.
- **Seals & Context**: Symbols on seals were typically brief (3–5 signs), with no extensive continuous texts—complicating decipherment.
- **Bilingual gap**: Unlike Egyptian hieroglyphs decoded using Rosetta Stone, no parallel texts have been found here.

"Hul Diwas" – Honouring the Santhal Revolution Against Colonial & Feudal Exploitation

What's New?

- **Hul Diwas**, observed **annually on 30 June**, commemorates the 1855 **Santhal Rebellion** (Hul), a well-organized tribal uprising led by **Sidhu & Kanhu Murmu** against **British colonial authorities** and **zamindars/moneylenders** in **Damin-i-Koh (modern Jharkhand)**.
- It symbolises defiance against **economic injustice, dispossession, and bonded labour**, reasserting tribal agency in India's freedom struggle.

Why Did the Rebellion Erupt?

- The British had encouraged **Santhal migration** for tax revenue, but this invited **exploitative zamindars, moneylenders (dikus)**, and corrupt officials, imposing interest rates as high as **500%**, seizing land and livestock.

Leadership & Organisation

- The rebellion was marked by tribal council resolutions and strategic coordination—**6,000+ Santals assembled** at Bhognadih on 30 June 1855.
- Besides brothers **Sidhu, Kanhu, Chand & Bhairav Murmu**, **Phulo & Jhano Murmu** notably led women's contingents—over **32 communities participated**.

The Course & Aftermath

- Santals initially pushed colonial forces out of many villages, but by **10 Nov 1855**, British imposed **Martial Law**, suppressing the revolt by January 1856, at the cost of **10,000–15,000 deaths**.
- Colonial response included the **Sonthal Parganas Act, 1855** (creation of Santhal Pargana district) and **Santhal Parganas Tenancy Act, 1876**, protecting tribal land rights.

Additional Info

- **Santhal Rebellion** preceded the 1857 revolt and is considered one of India's **earliest organized mass revolts**.
- **Bhognadih**, birth village of Sidhu-Kanhu, hosts a yearly **shahid mela** in their honour.
- The Santhals, **India's third-largest tribal community**, now spread across Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, and Odisha; Hul Diwas underscores their **historical and cultural identity**.

Environment

Telangana Boosts Tiger Conservation: Kumram Bheem Conservation Reserve Notified

In a significant step towards strengthening **wildlife corridors** and protecting tigers, the **Telangana government** has officially notified a crucial forest stretch as the **Kumram Bheem Conservation Reserve**. This newly designated reserve aims to secure the movement of tigers and other wildlife between the **Kawal Tiger Reserve** in Telangana and the **Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve** in Maharashtra, potentially extending to the Indravati Tiger Reserve in Chhattisgarh.

Key Details of the New Reserve:

- **Named After Tribal Icon:** The reserve is named in honour of **Kumram Bheem**, a revered Gond tribal leader who fought for the rights of tribal people over forest resources (Jal, Jangal, Zameen - Water, Forest, Land).
- **Strategic Location:** The **Kumram Bheem Conservation Reserve** spans approximately **1,492.88 square kilometers** (around 1,49,288 hectares). It covers parts of the **Asifabad and Kagaznagar forest divisions** within the Kumram Bheem Asifabad district of Telangana.
- **Purpose:** The primary objective is to provide **legal protection** to this vital **inter-state tiger corridor**. This will

facilitate safer movement of tigers, promote genetic exchange between their populations, and reduce human-animal conflict.

- **Rich Biodiversity:** The area is not only crucial for tigers (with over 45 unique tigers identified using this corridor in the last decade) but also hosts a rich array of other fauna. This includes leopards, wild dogs, sloth bears, wolves, hyenas, gaur, chital, sambar, nilgai, and unique avian species like the Malabar Pied Hornbill and the Long Billed Vulture (for which it serves as a nesting site).
- **Legal Framework:** The notification has been issued under **Section 36(A) of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- **Management:** A **Conservation Reserve Management Committee** will be formed. This committee typically includes forest officials, representatives from local communities (like Sarpanches), and members from non-governmental organizations working on wildlife conservation.

Why is this Conservation Reserve Important?
- **Strengthens Tiger Corridors:** Wildlife corridors are essential for the long-term survival of species like tigers, which require large territories. These corridors connect fragmented habitats, allowing animals to move freely, find mates, and access new resources.
- **Genetic Diversity:** By facilitating movement between different tiger populations (Kawal, Tadoba, Indravati), the reserve will help maintain healthy genetic diversity, which is crucial for the species' resilience against diseases and environmental changes.
- **Habitat Protection:** The 'Conservation Reserve' status provides enhanced legal protection to the forest area, helping to curb habitat degradation, poaching, and other threats.
- **Community Participation:** The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, emphasizes the role of local communities in the management of Conservation Reserves. This ensures that the livelihoods and traditional rights of people living in and around these areas are considered, fostering a collaborative approach to conservation.
- **Boost to Conservation Efforts:** This move reinforces Telangana's commitment to wildlife conservation and adds another layer of protection to the Central Indian Tiger Landscape, which is vital for the country's tiger population.

India Champions 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' on World Environment Day 2025

On **June 5th, 2025**, as the world observed **World Environment Day**, India galvanized its efforts to increase green cover through a unique, emotionally resonant campaign – **'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' (A Tree in Mother's Name)**. Led by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the initiative turned into a nationwide mass movement (Jan Andolan), connecting the act of planting a tree with a tribute to one's mother.

Global Theme and Host for 2025:
- **Host Country:** The global celebrations for World Environment Day 2025 were hosted by the **Republic of Korea**.
- **Theme:** The focus of this year's theme was on tackling plastic pollution, with the powerful slogan **#BeatPlasticPollution**. This theme highlights the urgent need for global cooperation and innovative solutions to end the menace of plastic pollution.

India's Flagship Initiative: 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam'
While aligning with the global call for environmental action, India's domestic focus was firmly on the **'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam'** campaign.
- **Symbolic Leadership:** Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi participated in the campaign by planting a **'Sindoor' (Bixa orellana)** sapling at his residence. This act served as a powerful inspiration for citizens across the country to join the plantation drive.
- **Objective:** The campaign encourages every citizen to plant a tree in the name of their mother, thereby linking the nurturing nature of mothers with the nurturing aspect of Mother Earth. It aims to foster a personal connection with environmental conservation.
- **'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam 2.0':** To ensure the campaign's continuity and wider reach, **Union Education Minister Shri Dharmendra Pradhan** launched the **'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam 2.0'** campaign.
  - This second phase specifically targets **students and educational institutions**, aiming to integrate environmental consciousness into the education system.
  - A special module and a dedicated website have been launched to monitor the activities of **Eco Clubs** under **Mission LiFE**, turning this into a structured, nationwide student-led movement.

Connecting with India's Broader Environmental Goals:
The plantation drive directly supports India's key national and international commitments:
- **National Mission for a Green India (GIM):** This is one of the eight missions under India's **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)**. GIM aims to protect, restore, and enhance India's forest cover and respond to climate change.
- **Bonn Challenge:** India has pledged under the Bonn Challenge to bring 26 million hectares of degraded and deforested land into restoration by 2030. Mass plantation drives are critical to achieving this target.
- **Combating Desertification:** Increasing green cover is a primary strategy to combat land degradation and desertification, a significant challenge for India. India is a signatory to the **UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)**.

Rajasthan Doubles its Ramsar Sites: Khichan and Menar Get Global Wetland Tag

In a major boost for conservation in Rajasthan, two renowned birding havens – **Khichan Bird Sanctuary** in Phalodi and **Menar Lake** in Udaipur – have been officially declared as **Wetlands of International Importance**, also known as **Ramsar Sites**. This prestigious international recognition doubles the number of Ramsar sites in Rajasthan from two to four and takes India's total count to **91 sites**.

About the New Ramsar Sites:

1. Khichan Bird Sanctuary, Phalodi:

- **A Haven for Demoiselle Cranes:** Khichan is globally famous for hosting thousands of migratory **Demoiselle Cranes (Kurjan)** every winter. These birds travel over 5,000 km from their breeding grounds in Mongolia and China to spend the winter here.
- **Community-led Conservation:** The story of Khichan is a remarkable example of **community-driven conservation**. For decades, local villagers, particularly the Jain community, have been feeding and protecting these cranes, turning the area into a safe refuge.
- **Formal Recognition:** Recognizing its ecological importance, the area was first declared a **conservation reserve** and later upgraded to a **bird sanctuary**, paving the way for the Ramsar tag.

2. Menar Lake Wetland Complex, Udaipur:

- **Rajasthan's "Bird Village":** Menar has earned the title of the "bird village" of Rajasthan due to the rich avian diversity it supports. The wetland complex is a crucial habitat for over **150 species** of resident and migratory birds.
- **Key Species:** It is a vital wintering ground for spectacular species like the **Greater Flamingo, White-tailed Lapwing, Dalmatian Pelican,** and various ducks, geese, and waders.
- **Community Guardians:** Similar to Khichan, the conservation efforts in Menar are led by the local community. Villagers have been protecting the lake and its birds for generations, even forming patrolling teams to prevent poaching. The state government had recently notified Menar as a wetland, which was a critical step for its nomination.

EnviStats 2025: NSO Report Card on India's Environment

On the eve of World Environment Day, the **National Statistical Office (NSO)** released its flagship annual publication, **"EnviStats India-2025"**.

The report, compiled from data sourced from various ministries, is structured along the **United Nations' Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES), 2013**, ensuring global comparability. While a detailed sectoral analysis is awaited, the initial highlights present a mixed bag of progress and pressing challenges.

Key Findings of EnviStats India-2025

The report underscores some significant long-term trends across different environmental domains:

- **Rising Temperatures:** The data points to an unambiguous warming trend. The **annual mean temperature** of the country has increased from **25.05°C in 2001 to 25.74°C in 2024**. This rise in average temperature is a clear indicator of the impacts of climate change on India.
- **Energy Sector Transition:** The energy landscape shows a dual trend.
  - **Thermal Power:** Generation from thermal sources continues to rise, increasing from 7.92 lakh GWh in 2013-14 to **13.26 lakh GWh** in 2023-24, highlighting India's ongoing reliance on fossil fuels for its energy security.
  - **Renewable Energy:** On a positive note, electricity generation from renewable sources has seen substantial growth, jumping from 65,520 GWh to **2,25,835 GWh** in the same period, reflecting the push towards clean energy.
- **Boom in Inland Fisheries:** Inland fish production has more than doubled in a decade, surging from 61.36 lakh tonnes in 2013-14 to **139.07 lakh tonnes** in 2023-24. This indicates significant growth in aquaculture and freshwater fisheries, which is crucial for livelihoods and nutritional security.
- **Rich Biodiversity:** The report documents India's rich faunal diversity, noting the presence of **1,04,561 faunal species**, which is a significant portion of the global total. This underlines India's status as a mega-diverse country and the importance of its conservation efforts.

Linking Data with Government Initiatives

The findings of the EnviStats report must be studied in conjunction with major government programs aimed at environmental protection:

- **For Climate Change & Air Quality:** The **National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)** aims to reduce particulate matter pollution, while India's updated **NDCs** under the Paris Agreement set ambitious targets for emission intensity reduction and renewable energy capacity.
- **For Waste Management:** The **Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0** focuses on making cities garbage-free, with a strong emphasis on solid waste management, plastic waste reduction, and remediating legacy dumpsites.
- **For Water Conservation:** With groundwater levels being a persistent concern, schemes like the **Jal Shakti Abhiyan** focus on rainwater harvesting, water conservation, and rejuvenating traditional water bodies.

May 2025: Earth Records Second-Hottest May on Record

What's the News?

- The **Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S)** reported that **May 2025** was the **second-warmest May ever recorded**, trailing only **May 2024**. The northern hemisphere also experienced its **second-hottest spring** (March–May).
- The **global surface temperature** for May averaged **1.4 °C above** pre-industrial levels (1850–1900), with **21 of the past 22 months** exceeding the **1.5 °C threshold**.

Key Insights

- Despite a slight dip, May remains **well above** safe climate limits, and C3S forecasts temperatures are expected to **surpass 1.5 °C again soon** .
- A **World Weather Attribution** analysis found that climate change amplified a **May 2025 heatwave** in **Greenland and Iceland** by about **3 °C**, accelerating ice-sheet melt.

Broader Climate Implications

- **Arctic warming** is now impacting global systems. Greenland recorded **unprecedented melting**, threatening to disrupt the **Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation**—a major climate regulator.
- The **sea ice decline** endangers Arctic communities and ecosystems; warmer oceans increase risks of **sealevel rise**, **extreme weather events**, and **biodiversity loss** .
- Persistently elevated **sea surface temperatures**—nearly record-highs in May—affect atmospheric pressure systems, intensify storms, and weaken oceanic carbon sinks.

India's Growing Heat Risk: Explainer on Extreme Heat

What's the News?

- A recent *Indian Express* analysis explains that **76% of India's population**—in states like Delhi, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, UP, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Goa, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and MP—are now at **high or very high risk** from extreme heat.
- The **IMD forecast** indicates rising maximum and minimum temperatures, with **heatwave days expected to double** in over 10 states in the next five years.
- Recent events:
  - **June 11–14 2025**: IMD issued **red alerts** as Haryana cities like Sirsa, Rohtak, Hisar hit **46–48 °C**.
  - **Delhi** recorded daytime highs of **45–45.5 °C**, heat-index reaching **49 °C**.

Why This Happens

- **Climate change** is the primary driver:
  - April 2025 heatwave was **3–4 °C hotter than past decades**.
- **Geographical susceptibility**:
  - Thar Desert, dense urban hot spots, and seasonal delay in monsoon allow sustained heat .
- **Warming nights** compound heat stress, as poor communities and outdoor workers can't cool down.

Impacts on Society & Economy

- **Health**: Risk of heat stroke rises sharply with sustained 40 °C days and 29 °C+ nights; the heat index crackles around **49 °C in Delhi**.
- **Livelihood loss**:
  - Informal laborers, farmers, and outdoor workers risk dehydration, heat exhaustion.
  - Urban heat island effect worsens in densely populated areas.
- **Economic productivity**: Heat-related drop in work capacity; growing demand for cooling threatens power infrastructure and energy equity .
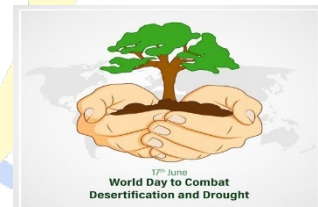
Responses & Adaptive Measures

- **Heat Action Plans (HAPs)** in cities like Ahmedabad and Delhi—include early warning systems, public advisories, water/ORS stations, and work-hour scheduling.
- Innovations like **"Neralu" portable shelters** for outdoor workers offer relief.
- Growing advocacy for:
  - **Climate Risk Observatories**
  - **Urban greening**, reflective roofing
  - **Regulation of AC usage** to balance cooling needs with power-grid sustainability.

Additional Info

- **Heat Risk Index (HRI)**: Developed for 734 districts using 35 indicators (temperature extremes, demographics, land use, health infrastructure).
- **IMD criteria**:
  - Heatwave: >40 °C on plains or +4.5 °C above normal.
  - Severe heatwave: +6.4 °C above climatology.
- **Warming trajectory**: India likely to see +1.6–2.2 °C temperature rise by mid-century—exceeding global average .
- **Bharat Forecasting System (BFS)**: High-res IMD tool (6 km grid) launched May 2025 to strengthen forecasting and disaster response.

"Restore the Land, Unlock Opportunities" – Combating Desertification

17th June
World Day to Combat
Desertification and Drought

What's New?

- **17 June** is observed globally as **World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought**, led by the **UNCCD**.
- The 2025 theme is **"Restore the land. Unlock the opportunities"**, promoting land restoration to boost **jobs, climate resilience, food/water security, and biodiversity**.
- In **Jodhpur**, India's **MoEFCC** hosted a **National Workshop** at **CAZRI** (ICAR) with ministers, scientists, policymakers, and NGOs to strategize drought and desertification control.
- **FICCI's "Forests & Finance" webinar** discussed **carbon markets** and **REDD+**, emphasizing **nature-based climate financing**.

UNCCD (United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification):

- Adopted **17 June 1994** at Rio's Earth Summit; legally binding with **197 parties** to tackle desertification and drought.
- Promotes **Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)** by **2030**, with over 130 country commitments.

Global Concerns:

- Nearly **40% of the world's land** is degraded, affecting **~3 billion people**, costing the global economy ~$880 billion annually.
- Degradation releases carbon, worsens climate change, threatens food security, displaces populations, and heightens conflicts.

Community & Innovation:

- Initiatives like the **Great Green Wall** in Africa regenerate millions of hectares and create jobs.
- In **Rajasthan**, CAZRI developed technologies for sand stabilization, drought mitigation, agro-voltaics, and renewable energy to empower farmers and local communities.

Additional Info

- **Central Arid Zone Research Institute (CAZRI)**, Jodhpur:
  - Founded 1959 under **ICAR-DARE**, focusing exclusively on arid-zone research and agri-solutions.
  - Works on **sand dune control**, **water management**, **wind erosion**, alternate land use, and solar tech for rural resilience.
- FICCI & REDD+:
  - **Forest Carbon Markets** and **REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Afforestation)**—international frameworks that monetise forest conservation to drive climate finance and incentivise restoration.
- UNESCO's Role:
  - Supports UNCCD via **hydrology and biosphere research** and public outreach.

"Roar of Cooperation" – India Hosts First Assembly of International Big Cat Alliance

What's New?

- **India hosted the inaugural Assembly** of the **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)** in New Delhi on **16–17 June 2025**, presided over by **Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav**.
- The Assembly brought together **delegations from nine countries** (Bhutan, Cambodia, Eswatini, Guinea, Kazakhstan, Liberia, Suriname, Somalia, and India) to set the Alliance's governing framework.
- Key decisions passed:
  - **Bhupender Yadav** appointed as the **IBCA President**.
  - **S.P. Yadav** named **Director General**.
  - **Rules of Procedure**, **Work Plan**, and **Staff and Financial regulations** approved.
  - Ratification of **Headquarters Agreement**, confirming **New Delhi** as the **permanent IBCA seat**.

IBCA Overview:

- Launched by **PM Modi on 9 April 2023** during the 50th anniversary of **Project Tiger**.

- A **treaty-based intergovernmental organization** covering **seven big cat species**: Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar, Puma.
- Originally included **95–97 member countries**, now **27 countries** have formally ratified, with India being among the first five.

India's role & funding:

- **Union Cabinet** approved IBCA in **Feb 2024**, with ₹150 crore (~₹30 crore/year) funding for **five years = 2023–24 to 2027–28/29**.
- **Headquarters Agreement** signed in April 2025, granting **diplomatic privileges, immunities, and premises**.

India's Conservation Track Record:

- Houses **five of the seven big cat species** (tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, cheetah).
- Over the past decade, India increased its **tiger population**, executed **Project Cheetah**, expanded protected areas, and enhanced anti-poaching measures.

Additional Info

- **Project Tiger (1973)**: One of the world's foremost tiger conservation initiatives.
- **Headquarters Agreement** benefits:
  - Legal status under international law for IBCA.
  - Visa facilitation, tax exemptions, and functional autonomy.
- **Governance Structure**
  - **Assembly (**general body), **Steering Committee**, and **Secretariat**. India serves as **host nation** and **current secretariat location**.
- **Global Significance**:
  - Fills a gap by focusing *exclusively* on big cats, unlike broader wildlife bodies.
  - Aims to curb **illegal wildlife trade, poaching**, and habitat degradation through **capacity-building**, **knowledge-sharing**, and **financial cooperation**.

"50 Years of Croc Conservation" – World Crocodile Day & India's Landmark Progress

What's New?

- **World Crocodile Day**, observed annually on **June 18**, marks awareness of reptilian conservation globally.
- In **2025**, India—and specifically **Odisha**—celebrates the **50th anniversary** of its pioneering **Crocodile Conservation Project (CCP)**, launched in **1975** .

Why It Matters

- India is home to all **three native crocodilian species**: saltwater crocodile, mugger (marsh crocodile), and gharial—a distinction unique to **Odisha**.
- From a population low of **~95 saltwater crocs** in 1975, Odisha now supports **~1,826** in Bhitarkanika, alongside muggers and gharials—highlighting massive recovery.

Conservation Strategy: Rear and Release

- Launched via **UNDP-FAO support**, the CCP focused on **egg collection, captive incubation, and release** into sanctuaries.

- Achieved target densities of **5–6 crocodiles/km**; restored wild populations through systematic **captive breeding**.

Odisha's Multi-Species Success

- In 1975, three conservation programs began:
  - **Saltwater crocodiles** in **Bhitarkanika**
  - **Gharials** in **Satkosia**
  - **Muggers** in **Similipal**
- Odisha remains the **only Indian state** with viable wild populations of all three.

Recent Progress & Community Engagement

- A week-long celebration (seminars, workshops, exhibitions) marked the 50th anniversary, honoring conservationists like Sudhakar Kar and H. R. Bustard.
- Operations include annual nest counts, barriers/warnings, and training forest staff, particularly during nesting season to reduce conflicts and ensure safety.

Emerging Challenges

- Rising human–crocodile conflict: Bhitarkanika recorded 6–10 fatalities in recent years .
- Climate change threatens gharial habitats on Chambal and other rivers .
- Conservation now emphasizes research, community safety, conflict mitigation, and ecosystem-based management.

Additional Info

- **Species Status & Habitat:**
  - **Saltwater crocodile** (*Crocodylus porosus*): IUCN Least Concern; found in Bhitarkanika, Sundarbans, Andamans.
  - **Mugger crocodile** (*Crocodylus palustris*): IUCN Vulnerable; major populations in freshwater bodies like Similipal.
  - **Gharial** (*Gavialis gangeticus*): IUCN Critically Endangered; Indian population (~2,000–2,500) thanks to kukrail and Satkosia efforts .
- **Madras Crocodile Bank Trust (MCBT),** Chennai: Established 1976, a key herpetology centre, bred 5,000+ crocs, educates and supports conservation across species.
- **International and National Significance:**
  - The project is a **global conservation model**—UNDP and FAO-backed, replicable for wetland and reptile habitats.
  - Supports **SDG 15** (Life on Land) and demonstrates India's leadership in biodiversity restoration.

What Is Banned & Allowed?

- **Banned items** (in targeted zones/functions):
  - Plastic plates, cups, food containers, **straws**, **sachets**, **bakery boxes**
  - **Plastic water bottles < 5 L** and **soft drink bottles < 2 L**
- **Allowed**: Larger water bottles (≥ 5 L) and soft drink bottles (≥ 2 L), **non-woven bags ≥ 60 GSM**, pending separate legal review.

Why It Matters

- Tackles **plastic pollution** in **ecologically sensitive hill regions**—Munnar, Thekkady, Vagamon, Athirappilly, Sultan Bathery, Nelliyampathy, and others.
- The Court emphasized the **fundamental right to a clean environment** under **Article 21** of the Constitution.
- Aims to prevent **plastic waste dumping into rivers and canals**, fostering ecological conservation around fragile hill landscapes.

Infrastructure & Alternatives

- Requires installation of **water kiosks** and availability of **glass, steel, or copper bottles** at tourist sites.
- Discourages tourists from bringing single-use plastics; licensing for hotels/auditoria to include ban conditions.

Boosting Awareness & Enforcement

- Directs state, local bodies, Pollution Control Board, and police to:
  - **Prevent plastic dumping**
  - **Run awareness campaigns** via print and electronic media
- Calls for enforcing **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** under Plastic Waste Management Rules.

Managing Water Bottle Waste

- **Kerala HC** earlier asked for stakeholder inputs (e.g., buy-back systems via Kerala State Beverages Corp) for disposing small plastic bottles in hill areas and weddings.

Additional Info

- **Suo motu petition**: The Court acted on its own, monitoring environmental threats under Articles **226–227**.
- **Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016 (as amended)**: Rule 9 emphasizes EPR for producers, importers, and brand owners.
- **Article 21** jurisprudence: Protecting clean environment aligns with Supreme Court precedents on the fundamental right to life.

"Plastic-Free Peaks" – Kerala HC Bans Single-Use Plastics in Hilly Areas

What's New?

- On **June 17, 2025**, the **Kerala High Court**, in a suo motu case prompted by the 2023 Brahmapuram waste plant fire, **banned single-use plastics** in **10 high-footfall hilly tourist destinations** and across **weddings, government functions, hotels, restaurants, and auditoriums**.
- The ban will be effective from **October 2, 2025** (Gandhi Jayanti)—giving time for the state to ensure compliance.

"A Parched Planet" – Global Drought Outlook 2025

What's New?

- The **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** released the **Global Drought Outlook 2025**, titled *Trends, Impacts and Policies to Adapt to a Drier World* (17 June 2025).
- Key headline: **40% of the world's land** now faces **more frequent and severe droughts**, marking a doubling in exposure since 1900.

Why It Matters

- **Food and water security** are under threat: crop yields may drop up to **22%**, and hydroelectric, industrial, and inland water transport systems are disrupted.
- **Economic strain**: drought-related costs are rising by **3–7.5% annually**, with forecasts predicting a **35% jump by 2035**.
- **Ecological impact**: Since 1980, **37%** of global land has lost soil moisture; **62%** of studied aquifers show declining groundwater levels.

Types & Drivers of Drought

- **Meteorological**: low rainfall
- **Agricultural**: reduced soil moisture
- **Hydrological**: diminished surface/groundwater
- Key causes: **climate change**, **glacier melt**, **land degradation**, **unsustainable use**, **urbanization**, and **irrational water use**.

Regional Hotspots & Trends

- The doubling of land at drought risk since 1900 now affects regions across **North/South America**, **Europe**, **Africa**, **Australia**, and **Asia**.
- Examples include Europe (2022), California (2021), Horn of Africa, Mexico, southern Africa, and the Amazon.

Consequences

- **Environmental**: biodiversity loss, wetland degradation
- **Economic & infrastructural**: risk to hydro-power, inland navigation (e.g., Panama Canal)
- **Social**: rising malnutrition, migration, and poverty; droughts cause ~**34% of all disaster deaths**.

Additional Info

- **Global frameworks**:
  - UNCCD's **Desertification Day** observed June 17
  - **UN Water Development Report 2025** links melting glaciers to extreme droughts and floods.
- **Policy responses**:
  - **OECD** urges investments in **drought resilience**, with $1 spent yielding $2–3 benefits and up to 10× returns for strategic projects.
  - **WMO–Global Water Partnership** collaborates via International Drought Management Program.
  - India's initiatives: **NADAMS**, **PMKSY-Watershed**, and **Atal Bhujal Yojana**.

"Sliding Ranks, Rising Readiness" – India at 71st on WEF Energy Transition Index 2025

What's New?

- The **World Economic Forum (WEF)** released its **Fostering Effective Energy Transition 2025** report on **June 18, 2025**, ranking **India 71st out of 118 countries**, down from 63rd in 2024.
- Despite the drop, India was among the **largest improvers** in the energy system performance metrics, particularly **energy efficiency** and **investment capacity**.

Why It Matters

- **Global leadership**: The top five economies—China, US, EU, Japan, India—account for nearly **half of global GDP, population, and energy supply**, making their transition pace pivotal.
- **India's role**: Demonstrates rising energy equity (universal access, clean fuels), robust renewable investments (~42% power generation), and reduced **energy intensity** and **methane emissions**.

Strengths: Efficiency & Investment

- **Energy intensity** has dropped—reflecting higher economic output per unit of energy.
- Investment in **renewables, biomass**, and clean-energy regulation is advancing; India is the **4th largest renewables market** globally.

Challenges: Infrastructure & Readiness

- **Transition Readiness** score (42.7) remains lower due to:
  - Incomplete **grid modernisation**
  - High **fossil-fuel dependency** (~49%)
  - Inadequate **energy storage and rural reliability**
  - Workforce gaps in renewables.

Global Context

- Top countries: **Sweden**, **Finland**, **Denmark**, **Norway**, and **Switzerland**.
- Among major economies, only **China (12th)** and **India (71st)** improved markedly, though China still far exceeds India.
- Globally, **77 countries improved their ETI scores**, but only **28% showed broad gains** across the three pillars—security, sustainability, equity.

Additional Info

- **IEA Indicators**:
  - India's ETI score: **53.3**
  - System Performance: **60.4**
  - Transition Readiness: **42.7**.
- **India's renewable targets**:
  - ~222 GW renewables installed (Oct 2024), making up **46% of capacity**; aiming for **500 GW by 2030**.
- **Global challenges**: Clean energy investment (USD 2 trillion in 2024) hasn't halted emissions at near-record 37.8 $GtCO_2$; growth in AI, data centres, and cooling demand intensifies pressure.

"River Guardian" – Gharial Species Conservation Programme Launched

What's New?

- **June 2025**: Union Environment Minister **Bhupender Yadav** inaugurated the **Gharial Species Conservation Programme** at **Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary**, releasing **seven juvenile gharials (fish eating crocodiles)** into the *Gerua River*.
- The programme emphasizes **community-led conservation**, involving expert inputs and public suggestions to address **human–wildlife conflict** and build a long-term action plan.

Why It Matters

- **Gharials (Gavialis gangeticus)** are **Critically Endangered**, with less than 250 mature individuals in the wild—Chambal, Gandak, Mahanadi, Satkosia hotspots included.
- Their decline highlights broader issues of **riverine health**, **fish population balance**, and **ecosystem integrity**.
- This initiative is a critical element of **India's Project Crocodile (1975)**, a flagship model of reptile conservation.

Conservation Milestones

- **50 years of Project Crocodile**: Commemorated on **World Crocodile Day**, underscoring its longevity—rests on Chambal (2,456 gharials), Gandak (~217), Satkosia successes (29 hatchlings in 2025).
- **Odisha's Gharial Recovery Project**: Released 7 adults in Apr 2025 at Mahanadi (Satkosia); recorded fifth consecutive breeding year there.
- **MP & UP releases**: Madhya Pradesh released 10 gharials in Chambal; surveyed >2,400 individuals; UP also active through Nicola and Chambal sanctuaries .

Science & Surveillance

- Released gharials are being fitted with **GPS–VHF transmitters**, enabling **real-time tracking** and movement studies.
- A **collaborative India–South Korea study** highlights future habitat shifts—north-east regions may become more suitable, prompting planning for **habitat connectivity** and **conflict mitigation**.

Community & Stakeholder Engagement

- Programs like the **Gandak Recovery Project** actively involve **farmers and fishers**, who monitor nests and protect eggs—a model National Geographic praised as "unique partnership".
- Local communities, NGOs, state wildlife departments, IUCN–SSC Crocodile Specialist Group, and global bodies (e.g., LA Zoo, Wildlife Trust of India) play integral roles.

Additional Info

- **Taxonomy & Habitat**: Gharial is an Asian crocodilian, endemic to South Asia, with a thin snout adapted for piscivory .
- **Legal protection**: Listed as **Critically Endangered** under **IUCN Red List**, **Schedule I** of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972, and **CITES Appendix I** .
- **Key sites & population**:
  - **National Chambal Sanctuary** (tri-state): Holds ~77% of India's population (~2,456 individuals).
  - **Gandak River reserves**: Grew from 30 to ~217 gharials (2023).
  - **Satkosia Gorge (Odisha)**: Demonstrated natural breeding—29 hatchlings in May 2025.

"Cap-and-Trade India" – India Rolls Out Regulated Emissions Trading Scheme

What's New?

- In **June 2025**, India marked a major climate-policy shift by announcing the expansion of its **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS)** into a **full-fledged compliance-based Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS)** targeting high-emission industries.
- The **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)**, under the **Ministry of Power**, will administer the scheme. It uses an **intensity-based baseline-and-credit model**, setting **annual greenhouse gas (GHG) emission intensity targets** for nine energy-intensive sectors—aluminium, cement, chlor-alkali, fertilisers, iron & steel, pulp & paper, petrochemicals, petroleum refining, and textiles.

Why It Matters

- **Market-based mitigation**: Transforms from voluntary energy-efficiency (PAT) credits to a mandatory carbon-credits regime, aligning with India's **Paris Agreement commitments** and **net-zero by 2070** goal.
- **Economic rationality**: Incentivises clean tech by enabling firms to sell surplus credits or procure them to meet compliance, fostering **industrial decarbonisation** while maintaining competitiveness.
- **Global readiness**: Addresses risks like the EU's **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)** by helping Indian firms reduce emissions and remain export-competitive.

Regulatory Design & Coverage

- Anchored in the **Energy Conservation Amendment Act, 2022**, the **National Steering Committee for Indian Carbon Market (NSC-ICM)** supervises its operations.
- Includes a **voluntary offset mechanism** for sectors beyond the initial nine, broadening participation and enhancing market liquidity.
- **GHG Emission Intensity (GEI) targets** were outlined in May 2025 draft rules—reductions of 2–7.5% in 2025–26 and 2026–27 across 282 industrial units.

Institutional Process

- **BEE** to issue and monitor **Carbon Credit Certificates (CCCs)**; industries earning below-baseline emissions get credits; others must purchase or pay penalties.
- **Trading mode**: Initially via power exchanges with **Market Clearing Price (MCP)** auctions; continuous trading possible in future.
- Mandatory **monitoring, reporting & verification (MRV)** of emissions, third-party verified and recorded in a national registry.

Policy & Economic Implications

- Complements global climate alignment—**NDC intensity reduction by 45% by 2030**, support for **SDG 13 (Climate Action)**.
- Builds a **digital, transparent carbon market** to facilitate low-carbon investment, promote financial participation, and enable revenue generation via carbon asset creation.
- Supports **industrial competitiveness** by hedging against carbon tariffs and tying global investors to green innovation.

"Waste-to-Energy Reboot" - MNRE Tightens Guidelines to Boost Efficiency & Financing

What's New?

- In **June 2025**, the **Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE)** issued **revised guidelines** for its **Waste-to-Energy (WtE) Programme** under the National Bioenergy Programme, aiming to improve **CFA efficiency**, **regulatory ease**, and **performance-linked disbursement**.
- The update introduces a **two-stage CFA release mechanism**:
    - **Stage 1**: 50% CFA after obtaining **Consent to Operate**, backed by a **bank guarantee**.
    - **Stage 2**: Remaining CFA on achieving ≥**80% Plant Load Factor (PLF)**, or pro-rata support if PLF ≥50%, with no CFA below 50% PLF.
- It also **reduces paperwork**, streamlines approvals, and extends the **claim period to 18 months** from commissioning or in-principle clearance.

Why It Matters

- **Performance-driven support** incentivises efficient plant operation before much subsidy is paid.
- **Ease of doing business** boosted for developers, especially **MSMEs and startups**, by cutting procedural delays.
- Aligns with **Net-Zero 2070** and **circular economy goals**—helping reduce urban/industrial/agricultural waste, lower GHG emissions, and support biofuel initiatives like **SATAT**, **Swachh Bharat**, and **National Hydrogen Mission**.

Financing & Inspection Reforms

- CFA split into **two stages**, with **joint inspections** by **NIBE, SNAs, BTDCs**, or **third-party agencies** to ensure transparency.
- **SCADA or remote monitoring mandatory**, ensuring accurate performance tracking over at least **3 months**.

Tech & Project Scope

- Supports multiple WtE technologies: **biomethanation, combustion, gasification, pyrolysis**, and **municipal solid waste (MSW)-based plants**.
- CFA rates (pre-Nov 2022) included up to ₹10 Cr per biogas/CBG project and ₹0.75 Cr/MW for biogas-based power.

Programme Scale & Budget

- WtE Programme is part of the **₹1,715 Cr National Bioenergy Programme (2021–26),** with an initial ₹858 Cr allocation; Phase II is expected to match funding levels.
- As of mid-2024, **593 MWeq capacity** achieved across 316 projects—93 biogas, 83 CBG, 140 power plants.

Additional Info

- **Programme history**: Launched FY 2021–22 to 2025–26; implemented via **BioURJA portal**, executed by **IREDA**.
- **SATAT linkages**: BioCNG under WtE is integrated with MoPNG's initiative, encouraging circular economy in transport.
- Institutional support includes **NIBE, BTDCs, SNAs**, and **IITs** for quality checks, R&D, and training.

"Fluttering Frontier" – India's First Butterfly Sanctuary in the Western Ghats

What's New?

- On **18 June 2025**, the **Kerala State Wildlife Board** renamed **Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary** (Kannur district) as **Aralam Butterfly Sanctuary**, marking India's very first **forest dedicated to butterfly conservation**.
- Spanning **55 sq km** of **tropical and semi-evergreen forests**, the sanctuary hosts over **266 butterfly species**, that is **80% of Kerala's butterfly diversity**, including several **endangered and endemic** ones.

Why It Matters

- **Biodiversity hotspot**: Located in the **Western Ghats**, a UNESCO **World Heritage site** and global biodiversity hotspot hosting 334 butterfly species.
- **Ecological importance**: Butterflies are vital **pollinators** and sensitive **ecological indicators**—their conservation supports ecosystem health.
- **Migratory marvel**: From **December to February**, thousands of butterflies (Common Albatross, Danaine species) migrate here, creating a spectacular natural event.

Research & Conservation Efforts

- Since **1984**, **annual butterfly surveys** have been conducted by the **Kerala Forest Department** in collaboration with the **Malabar Natural History Society**—a continuous 25-year programme.
- The sanctuary serves as a natural **research hub** for discovering new species and studying **migration patterns**, with counts of **5,000–12,000 butterflies passing a single point in five minutes** during peak season.

Broader Ecological Context

- Aralam also houses larger fauna—**elephants, giant squirrels, leopards**, and diverse **birdlife**, making it a multi-tiered **biodiversity zone**.
- **Kerala State Wildlife Board** additionally postponed other proposals (like rat-snake state animal) to prioritise butterfly conservation.

Additional Info

- **Butterfly diversity index**: Kerala contains **327 documented butterfly species**; Aralam hosts **266**, including 27 species **endemic** to the Western Ghats and some listed under **Schedule I**.
- Sanctuary location in the **Brahmagiri range** offers **mineral-rich waters**, aiding butterflies during breeding migrations.
- The global hotspot: the **Western Ghats** harbors nearly **30% of India's flora-fauna**, with ongoing efforts from **WGEEP** and UNESCO to preserve its unique ecosystems.

"Carbon Curb Blueprint" – Draft Emission Targets for 460+ Industries to Fuel India's Carbon Market

What's New?

- The **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** has unveiled draft **Greenhouse Gas Emission Intensity (GEI) Target Rules, 2025**, setting **mandatory GEI targets** for **over 460 industrial units** spanning **aluminium, cement, pulp & paper, and chlor-alkali sectors**.
- This is a key regulatory expansion under the **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS), 2023**, aimed at scaling up India's domestic carbon market by **2026**.
- The draft mandates dual-year compliance—**2025–26 and 2026–27**—with **baseline emissions pegged to 2023–24 levels** and introduces **penalties** and **carbon credit offsets** based on performance.

Why It Matters

- **Market-led decarbonisation**: Obligated units reducing GEI below targets earn **carbon credits**, which can be traded or banked for future compliance.
- **Compliance model**: Entities exceeding targets can **purchase credits** or face penalties set at **twice the average credit price**, enforced by CPCB.
- **Green trade preparedness**: Aligns with India's **NDCs under Paris Agreement**—45% GDP emission intensity cut by 2030 and achieving **net-zero by 2070**—while supporting resilience against **EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)**.

Sectoral Coverage & Expansion Roadmap

- Initially covers **282 units**: 13 aluminium plants, 186 cement, 53 pulp & paper, and 30 chlor-alkali facilities.
- Future drafts aim to include **fertiliser, steel, petrochemicals**, and possibly the **power sector**, which currently accounts for ~39% of emissions but remains excluded for regulatory simplicity.

Compliance Mechanism & Governance

- **Methodologies by BEE**: Define GEI targets per unit of production.
- **Registration and trading** managed via the **Indian Carbon Market (ICM) Portal**, monitored under CCTS, with oversight from CPCB and BEE.
- **Penalties**: Environmental compensation equal to twice the average carbon credit price, payable within 90 days.

Institutional Context

- India's carbon market emerged post the **Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2022**, and CCTS-2023; the **BEE** leads, with **NIC** running the ICM portal.
- Modeled on global frameworks like the **EU ETS**, **China ETS**—it combines **cap-and-trade** principles with **intensity-based standards** suited for a growing economy.

Additional Info

- **Baseline Year Definition**: Uses production-based tCO_2e metrics, covering direct process and indirect emissions.
- **Trading Scope**: Aims to integrate existing energy savings and REC mechanisms from 2025–26.
- As India's carbon market scales up, it's projected to become one of the **world's largest**, with potential export of credits.

"Green Gold" – Kerala Tops National Protected Area Management Effectiveness

What's New?

- Kerala, alongside Chandigarh, has been awarded the only **"Very Good"** rating in India's **Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE)** of **438 National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries** for the 2020-25 cycle by the MoEFCC—the state's mean score is **76.22%**.
- **Eravikulam National Park** (Kerala) and **Dachigam National Park** (J&K) emerged as the top individual parks, each scoring **92.97%**, followed closely by Kerala's **Mathikettan Shola NP (90.63%)** and **Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary (89.84%)**.

Why It Matters

- **Global-standard governance**: The MEE follows **IUCN-WCPA guidelines**, assessing parameters like biodiversity conservation, community involvement, and infrastructure.
- **Clear progress signal**: National mean MEE score improved to **64.4%** (from 60.5%), with **84 PAs rated "very good"**, reflecting strengthened protected area management.

Top Kerala Performers

- **Eravikulam NP** (97 km²): Key Nilgiri Tahr habitat, Neelakurinji bloom region; exemplary community inclusion and eco-tourism.
- **Mathikettan Shola NP**: Critical elephant corridor and Galaxy Frog refuge; scored **90.63%**.
- **Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary**: Noted for scrub-forest biodiversity; rated **89.84%**.

Challenges & Recommendations

- Urban sanctuaries like **Mangalavanam (Kochi)** face pollution and lack waste treatment plans.
- Sanctuaries in **Idukki, Wayanad, Anamudi Shola** experience biotic pressures, human-wildlife conflict, invasive species, traffic, and require corridor restoration.

Additional Info

- **Kerala Forest Department**, formed in 1888, manages nearly **30% forest cover**, participates actively in biodiversity conservation through state institutions and partnerships.
- MEE informs national targets under the **Convention on Biological Diversity** and reflects commitment to **SDG 15** and ecological stewardship.

Health

Ayush Ministry Launches "Ayush Suraksha Portal" to Combat Misleading Ads

The **Union Ministry of Ayush** has launched the **"Ayush Suraksha Portal."** This dedicated digital platform by Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Ayush, Shri Prataprao Jadhav, aims to tackle the issue of **misleading**

advertisements related to Ayush products and services and also monitor **Adverse Drug Reactions (ADRs)**.

The portal is designed to serve as a "vigilant watchtower against misinformation," empowering both citizens and healthcare professionals to report concerns and ensuring that only safe and credible Ayush products and information reach the public. This initiative also comes in compliance with a **Supreme Court directive** (July 2024) that emphasized the need for a centralized mechanism to monitor and publish data on misleading advertisements and ADRs in the Ayush sector.

Features and Objectives of the Ayush Suraksha Portal:

- **Centralized Reporting System:** Allows consumers, healthcare professionals, and regulatory authorities to directly report misleading advertisements or adverse drug reactions related to Ayush products and therapies.
- **Real-time Monitoring and Tracking:** Provides a centralized dashboard for reported cases, enabling real-time tracking, swift regulatory action by concerned authorities, and detailed data analysis.
- **Multi-Stakeholder Integration:** Integrates data and facilitates coordination among various stakeholders, including State Licensing Authorities, national pharmacovigilance centres, the Ayush vertical under the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), the National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM), the National Commission for Homoeopathy (NCH), the Pharmacy Council of India (PCI), and the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Users who report issues can track the status of their reports and view subsequent regulatory actions, fostering transparency and accountability within the Ayush ecosystem.
- **Pharmacovigilance Enhancement:** Strengthens the pharmacovigilance framework for Ayush systems, ensuring better safety monitoring of drugs and therapies.
- **Empowering Citizens:** Enables the public to become active participants in safeguarding the integrity and safety of Ayush systems.
- **Technical Support:** Developed with technical support from the **Central Council for Research in Siddha (CCRS)** and aligned with the National Pharmacovigilance Program.

Understanding Ayush Systems and the Ministry of Ayush:

- **Ayush:** An acronym for **Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa, and Homoeopathy**. These are traditional and complementary systems of medicine prevalent in India.
- **Ministry of Ayush:** Formed in **November 2014** with a vision to revive the profound knowledge of ancient Indian systems of medicine and ensure the optimal development and propagation of Ayush systems of healthcare.
  - **Mandate:** Includes education, research, drug development, standardization, quality control, and promotion of these traditional systems.
  - **Key Initiatives:** National Ayush Mission (NAM), International Day of Yoga, Ayush Health and Wellness Centres, research portals, and collaborations for global promotion.

The Problem of Misleading Advertisements in the Ayush Sector:

- The growing popularity of Ayush systems has unfortunately been accompanied by an increase in misleading advertisements that make exaggerated or unsubstantiated claims about curing various ailments, often targeting vulnerable consumers.
- Such advertisements can lead to:
  - Financial loss for consumers.
  - Delay in seeking appropriate medical treatment.
  - Potential health risks from using unverified products.
  - Erosion of public trust in genuine Ayush practices.

How the Ayush Suraksha Portal Aims to Help:

- By providing a single, accessible platform for reporting, the portal streamlines the process of identifying and acting against misleading advertisements.
- The integrated approach involving multiple regulatory bodies ensures a more coordinated and effective response.
- The public availability of data on action taken can act as a deterrent for potential violators and build consumer confidence.
- It supports the efforts of State Licensing Authorities who are primarily responsible for enforcing regulations at the ground level.

Existing Regulatory Frameworks for Advertisements:

Besides this new portal, advertisements in India, including those for health products, are governed by several laws and codes:

- **The Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954:** This Act prohibits advertisements of drugs and remedies that claim to cure certain specified diseases and disorders or those that are otherwise misleading. It applies to all systems of medicine, including Ayush.
- **The Consumer Protection Act, 2019:** Empowers consumers to file complaints against misleading advertisements. The **Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)** has been established under this Act to regulate matters relating to false or misleading advertisements.
- **The Cable Television Network (Regulation) Act, 1995:** Contains an advertising code that prohibits misleading advertisements.
- **Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI):** A self-regulatory voluntary organization of the advertising industry that sets codes for ethical advertising and considers complaints against misleading ads. The Ministry of Ayush has previously collaborated with ASCI to monitor Ayush-related advertisements.

Centre Launches AYUSH Nivesh Saarthi to Boost Investment in Traditional Medicine

In a significant move to position India as a global leader in traditional and wellness systems of medicine, the government has launched the **'AYUSH Nivesh Saarthi'** portal. This digital platform aims to attract substantial domestic and foreign investments into the **AYUSH sector**, making it easier for investors to explore and fund opportunities in this rapidly growing field. The portal was jointly launched by the Union Minister for Commerce and Industry and the Minister of State for AYUSH, highlighting the government's coordinated push to promote India's ancient healthcare systems as a key engine for economic growth and public health.

What is the AYUSH Nivesh Saarthi Portal?

- **A One-Stop Solution for Investors:** Developed by the **Ministry of AYUSH** in collaboration with **Invest India**, the portal acts as a dedicated online gateway for investors. It brings together all necessary information and facilitation services under a single roof.
- **Key Features:**
    - **Investor-Centric Design:** The platform is designed to be user-friendly, providing clear and concise information on policies, incentives, and investment opportunities.
    - **Project Showcase:** It features a list of investment-ready projects for easy consideration by potential investors.
    - **Real-time Facilitation:** The portal offers a dynamic dashboard for real-time guidance, support, and approvals, simplifying the investment process.
    - **Global Outreach:** It is designed to cater to both domestic and international investors, aligning with the government's vision of 'Heal in India'.

"Guarding a Plague-Free Future" – India Strengthens Global Rinderpest Containment

What's New?

- On **May 29, 2025**, during the **92nd WOAH General Session** in Paris, India's **ICAR-NIHSAD, Bhopal** was designated a **Category A Rinderpest Holding Facility (RHF)** by **WOAH** and **FAO**.
- India formally applied for RHF status in **2019**, and after a **joint inspection in March 2025**, achieved the designation for a **one-year term**.
- This places India among just **six global labs** vetted to securely store **Rinderpest Virus-Containing Material (RVCM)** .

Why It Matters

- **Rinderpest**, aka **cattle plague**, was one of the deadliest livestock diseases until its **global eradication in 2011.**
- Even post-eradication, the **virus persists in labs**; any accidental release could threaten **animal health** and **livelihoods worldwide**.

- This move reinforces India's role in upholding **biosecurity, One Health**, and **animal disease surveillance**.

Global Facility Network

- The other five **Category A RHFs** are located in the **UK, USA, France, Japan, and Ethiopia** .
- Facilities must meet rigorous standards: **BSL-3 infrastructure, inventory tracking, emergency preparedness**, and **annual reporting**.

India's Preparedness & Legacy

- **NIHSAD,** established in **2012** as India's national RVCM repository, is already a **WOAH reference lab for avian influenza**.
- India became clinically free of rinderpest in **June 1995**, with **OIE certification** following in May 2006.

Historical Context

- First recorded in India in the **mid-18th century**, rinderpest had **90–100%** mortality in cattle and buffaloes.
- **Mass vaccination** began in **1954,** significantly cutting outbreaks and contributing to overall agricultural prosperity.
- It became only the **second disease globally eradicated**, after smallpox.

"Skin Health Matters" – WHO Declares Skin Diseases a Global Public Health Priority

What's New?

- At the **78th World Health Assembly** (May 24, 2025), a landmark **WHA Resolution** titled **"Skin Diseases as a Global Public Health Priority"** was unanimously adopted—first-ever action to elevate skin health beyond cosmetic concerns.
- The resolution was spearheaded by **Côte d'Ivoire**, supported by Nigeria, Togo, Micronesia, China, Egypt, and Colombia, highlighting skin health as a matter of **equity, dignity, and universal health coverage (UHC)**.

Why It Matters

- **Enormous burden**: Skin and subcutaneous diseases resulted in approximately **4.69 billion new cases** and **41.9 million DALYs** in 2021, ranking among the **top 10 causes of global disability**.
- **Neglect despite prevalence**: Affecting ~**2 billion people** globally, particularly in **LMICs**, yet deeply underestimated and underfunded—often overlooked in health systems .
- **Beyond skin deep**: Conditions like psoriasis, vitiligo, and severe fungal infections cause **stigma**, **mental health issues**, **lost productivity**, and sometimes **serious comorbidities**, requiring urgent attention.

Resolution Provisions

- **Global Action Plan**: To be ready by WHA-80 (2027), focusing on prevention, early diagnosis, treatment access, environmental resilience.
- **Primary Care Strengthening**: Emphasis on training frontline health workers, task-sharing, and timely referrals.

- **Surveillance & Research**: Enhance data collection, diagnostics, inclusion of skin conditions in national registries, and address antimicrobial resistance linked to skin infections.
- **Equitable access**: Ensure affordable, quality dermatological care—including labs and medicines—in UHC packages.

Global Coordination

- Joint advocacy by **GlobalSkin**, **ILDS**, WHO side events since WHA 77 highlighted patient and professional calls for action.
- WHO's Executive Board (EB 156) in Feb 2025 recommended the resolution for WHA adoption.

Burden Distribution

- High prevalence in **low–middle SDI countries** like India; fungal infections are especially widespread.
- Age-disaggregated data indicates **children (10–19)** have the highest incidence of viral skin diseases; older adults face rising burdens too.

Additional Info

- **WHO & UHC**: This resolution aligns with SDG 3.8—universal access to essential health services without financial hardship.
- **Common skin conditions**: Eczema, acne, infections, psoriasis—most are treatable at primary care level with basic meds.
- **Key stakeholders**: WHO, member states, patient groups, academicians, dermatologists, dermatological societies, and international NGOs.

"Quit Today, Save Tomorrow" – India Wins Bloomberg Philanthropies Award for Tobacco Cessation

What's New?

- **India's Health Ministry**, via the **National Tobacco Control Cell (NTCC)**, received the **'O' category award**—"Offer help to quit tobacco use"—at the **2025 Bloomberg Philanthropies Awards for Global Tobacco Control** during the World Conference on Tobacco Control (WCTC) held in **Dublin on 23 June**.
- The honour recognises India's efforts under WHO's **MPOWER** framework to establish extensive **tobacco cessation services** nationwide.

Why It Matters

- **Public health impact**: India recorded **1.35 million cessation counselling sessions** in 2023–24 via **675 district-level centres**, helping millions fight addiction.
- **WHO recognition**: India's daily smoking prevalence (~7% in 2023) has declined, while comprehensive smokeless tobacco and e-cigarette controls are in place.
- **Global leadership**: Among six global awardees—including Mauritius, Mexico, Montenegro, the Philippines, and Ukraine—India stands out as a model for low-middle income country tobacco control.

MPOWER Strategy in Action

- **O = Offer help to quit**: India's award category, signifying success in integrating **quitlines, clinics, screenings**, and **public awareness** measures.
- Integrated with **Ayushman Bharat health facilities**, ensuring wide access across public healthcare delivery networks.

Quitlines & Support Infrastructure

- **National Toll-Free Quitline (1800-11-2356)** handles around **42,000 calls/month** in 16 languages.
- Major institutions like **NIMHANS**, **VPCI**, **Tata Memorial Centre**, and **BBCI** host dedicated cessation centres.

Supplementary Measures

- **E-cigarette ban** under **PECA 2019**
- **Graphic health warnings** on packs
- **OTT ad regulations** aimed at youth protection—as part of NTCP's multi-layered strategy.

Global Initiative & Funding

- Bloomberg Philanthropies has invested nearly **$1 billion globally** since 2007 in tobacco-control efforts, with 2025's awards marking the 17th edition.
- A **$20 million Accelerator Fund** was launched alongside the awards to support countries lagging in tobacco control.

"Life Links Unlocked" – India Integrates Rare Blood Donor Registry with e-Rakt Kosh

What's New?

- India is **set to integrate its Rare Blood Donor Registry** with the **e-Rakt Kosh portal**, unifying access to rare blood types and enhancing emergency availability nationwide.
- e-Rakt Kosh, launched in **2016**, now connects blood banks across India digitally; a mobile app followed in **2020**. It has already registered over **1.95 lakh donors** from **6,136 camps**.

Why It Matters

- **Critical preparedness**: Rare blood types (e.g. Bombay phenotype) are lifesaving in emergencies like thalassemia, complex transfusion, transplant surgery, and obstetric care.
- **Faster access**: Centralizing records ensures **instantaneous search and contact,** reducing delay in locating rare units.
- **National equity**: Integration bridges gaps between states, delivering equitable access to life-saving resources, especially in rural and remote areas.

What is a Rare Blood Donor Registry?

- A database of donors with **infrequent blood group phenotypes**, maintained typically by specialized centers such as **major hospitals**, **BMT registries**, and NGOs.
- Helps in **cross-matching** for patients needing rare blood — critical in **thalassemia**, **hemoglobinopathies**, and **immune-compromised conditions**.

About e-Rakt Kosh

- A **digital platform** interlinking government and private blood banks through a **central inventory**, facilitating donor search, blood-stock visibility, and camp info.
- It supports effective deployment of **mobile blood banks** to underserved regions, promoting voluntary donations.

Additional Info

- **Mobile app (2020)** boosts accessibility—hospitals, blood banks, and public can check availability across locations.
- Integration supports **NDHM/DPIA** goals of digital health, aligning with PM-JAY's mission to strengthen overall health infrastructure.
- Together, this supports goals under **SDG 3 (Good Health & Well-being)** via enhanced blood security and responsive systems.

"Health Confidence vs Hidden Strains" – Employees Positive But Healthcare Costs Bite

What's New?

- A **Mercer Marsh Benefits** survey of **18,000+ global employees**, including those in India, found **92% of Indian employees** are **confident** they can meet healthcare costs for themselves and their families.
- Trusted sources of care now include employers—**80% of** employees who can customise benefits feel their employer truly cares.

Why It Matters

- **Rising expectations**: Indian workers increasingly value personalised, long-term health support from employers—beyond basic insurance.
- **Affordability barriers persist**, despite high confidence: Delayed treatment is due to **out-of-pocket costs** and **long wait times**, pointing to deeper issues.
- **Global benefit shift**: Employers who offer **flexible and preventive care** packages gain competitive advantage—an important trend in the evolving Indian workforce.

High Medical Inflation

- India's healthcare costs are among Asia's **highest**, with inflation at **~14% annually**.
- A **Corporate India health report** showed **71% of employees** cover medical expenses themselves, while only **15%** have full employer support.

Treatment Deferred & Preventive Gaps

- A **GOQii survey** reported **71%** experienced skyrocketing costs; **36% of insured still skipped visits**, and **20% forewent critical treatment** due to expenses.
- Preventive care is low—**59% skip annual checkups, 90% avoid specialist visits**.

Workforce Stress & Workplace Impact

- **62% of Indian employees** report burnout—three times the global average—and **71%** spend ~5% of income on out-of-pocket care.
- Only **24% are satisfied** with employer health benefits; with many overlooking mental and outpatient care.

Additional Info

- **Public health funding** remains low at **~1.9–2.1% of GDP**, with **high out-of-pocket payments (~48%)**.
- Major schemes:
  - **Ayushman Bharat (PM-JAY)**: covers 500 million low-income Indians for hospitalization.
  - **RSBY (2008)**: early government health insurance for BPL families.
- Insurance penetration is limited: only ~15% workforce has employer cover; **median sum insured is ₹3 lakh**.

"Full Dose Wins" – India Halves "Zero-Dose" Children to 0.06% in 2024

What's New?

- India's rate of **zero-dose children**—those who haven't received even one vaccine—**fell from 0.11% in 2023 to 0.06% in 2024**, per the Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- This achievement casts India as a **global leader in child immunisation**, acknowledged by the UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation.

Why It Matters

- **Fewer unprotected children** means dramatically lower risks of vaccine-preventable diseases like **diarrhoea, pneumonia, meningitis, and encephalitis**.
- Strong immunisation efforts contributed to reduction in **maternal mortality ratio (MMR)** from **130** (2014–16) to **80 per lakh live births** and major drops in **under-5 and neonatal mortality**.
- WHO's **Measles & Rubella Champion Award** in 2024 spotlights India's consistent vaccine coverage.

Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP)

- UIP, launched in 1985, funds vaccines for **12 diseases**, including measles, polio, TB, hepatitis B, rotavirus, JE, Hib, and pneumococcus.
- **Mission Indradhanush**, launched 2014, targets under-immunised areas and strengthened multi-agency delivery.

Strategic Campaigns & Coverage

- "Zero Dose Implementation Plan 2024" prioritised **143 high-risk districts**; **5.46 crore children** and **1.32 crore pregnant women** vaccinated under Mission Indradhanush.
- During World Immunisation Week 2025, the **Zero Measles-Rubella Campaign** was launched as part of the drive toward 100% coverage.

Health Outcomes & Global Recognition

- India's **infant mortality (IMR)** and **under-5 mortality (U5MR)** have declined faster than global averages—78% vs 61% (U5MR) and 70% vs 54% (neonatal) respectively.
- Decline in **MMR** from 130 to 80 per lakh marks an 86% drop—far outpacing global 48% reduction.

Additional Info

- **Zero-dose children** are a key metric under WHO/UNICEF's **Immunization Agenda 2030**—India's minimisation of this group shows strong primary healthcare delivery.
- UIP is part of the **National Health Mission (NHM)** and reflects India's push toward **universal health coverage** through free, nationwide immunisation.

Education

"Classroom Champions" – Chandigarh, Punjab & Delhi Lead in School Education

What's New?

- The **Ministry of Education** released the **Performance Grading Index (PGI) 2.0** for **2023–24**, evaluating school education across **36 states and UTs**, based on 73 indicators across six domains.
- **Top performers**:
  - **Chandigarh**: Leading with **703 points**, only UT in **Prachesta-1** band.
  - **Punjab**: Scored **631.1** (Prachesta-3).
  - **Delhi**: Scored **623.7** (Prachesta-3).
- The **lowest**: **Meghalaya** with **417.9 points**, in the Akanshi-3 band.

Why It Matters

- PGI 2.0 supports **NEP 2020** and **SDG 4**, offering a **uniform benchmark** to drive improvements.
- The **performance gap** between top and bottom states narrowed from **51% (2017–18)** to **41% (2023–24)**, indicating better parity.

Chandigarh's Success Model

- Marked **hat-trick** top ranking for three consecutive years.
- Scored high in:
  - **Infrastructure & Facilities**: 148/190
  - **Equity**: 216.5/260.
- Initiatives include:
  - 100% student retention
  - Digital attendance, Aadhaar seeding (98%+)
  - Co-located Anganwadis, vocational education, assistive devices, kitchen gardens, social audits under PM POSHAN.

Broader Trends Across India

- **Punjab & Delhi** in Prachesta-3; **Gujarat**, **Odisha**, **Kerala**, and others in the same band (581–640 points).
- **24 states/UTs** improved since last year; however **12 showed performance declines**—including **Bihar**, **West Bengal**, **Karnataka**.
- **Learning outcomes** stagnant, reflecting outdated data (NAS 2021); highlights need for fresh PARAKH scores.

Additional Info

- **PGI 2.0 domains**:
  1. Learning outcomes & quality
  2. Access
  3. Infrastructure & facilities
  4. Equity
  5. Governance processes
  6. Teacher education & training.
- **Scoring bands**:
  - Out of 1,000 points; grades from **Daksh** (90–100%) down to **Akanshi-3** (<30%).
- Upcoming updates: **PARAKH 2024** expected July 2025; results will refine learning outcomes and equity scores.

"Pratibha Setu" – UPSC's Bridge from Exam Near-Misses to High-Quality Careers

What's New?

- The **Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)** officially launched **Pratibha Setu**, a revamped version of its **Public Disclosure Scheme (PDS)**.
- The platform connects **over 10,000 high-performing but non-recommended** candidates—those who cleared written exams and interviews but didn't make the final merit list—with **verified government and private employers**.

Why It Matters

- **Unlocks elite human capital**: Utilizes intellectual investments in aspirants often overlooked due to final list cut-offs.
- **Expands career pathways**: Offers aspirants meaningful alternatives in PSUs, ministries, think tanks, consultancies, NGOs, and corporate roles.
- **Boosts recruitment efficiency**: Employers gain streamlined access to verified, UPSC-tested talent through a secure portal.

How It Works

- **Candidate participation** is voluntary; only those who cleared all exam stages and opt in are listed.
- **Employers**—PSUs, ministries, private corporations—register with valid credentials (e.g., CIN, email); earn login access to browse candidate profiles.
- **Portal features** include candidate filtering (by exam, stream, region), soft biodata access (qualifications, contact details), and direct employer outreach.

From PDS to Pratibha Setu

- The PDS, active since 2018, provided static lists on the UPSC website. Now, as **Pratibha Setu (Professional Resource And Talent Integration – Bridge)**, it evolves into a dynamic recruitment tool.

Coverage

- Includes top-tier exams like **Civil Services**, **Engineering Services**, **Forest/CAPF**, **Medical Services**, **Economic/Statistical Services**, **Geo-Scientist**, and **CDS** where candidates clear all stages except final selection.

Additional Info

- The database hosts **10,000+ candidates** and uses a **consent-based, verified, secure system** ensuring data privacy.
- Empowers employers with a rich, vetted talent pool while preventing wastage of aspirants' preparation and expertise.

"Double the Opportunity" – CBSE Class 10 Board Exams Twice a Year from 2026

What's New?

- From **2026**, the **Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)** will conduct **Class 10 board exams twice annually**:
  - **First attempt (mandatory)** in mid-February (results by April)

- o **Second attempt (optional)** in May (results by June) — students can use this to **improve scores or reappear in up to 3 subjects** (Science, Math, Social Science, Languages).
- **Internal assessments and practicals** remain **once per year** (first attempt).
- Implementing **NEP 2020 reform (Para 4.37)** to reduce **"high-stakes" pressure** and support **competency-based assessment**.

Why It Matters

- **Multiple chances**: Reduces stress by offering a second attempt in the same year and allows retention of the **best marks**.
- **Supports inclusive education**: Helps students facing exam anxiety, personal crises, or missed opportunities due to illness/travel/sports.
- **Global best practices**: Mirrors systems like the **SAT in the US**, promoting flexibility, formative learning, and self-improvement over rote success.

Exam Schedule & Mechanics

- **Phase I**: 17 Feb–6 Mar 2026; **Phase II**: 5 May–20 May 2026.
- The same **centres**, **fee paid once** during registration (non-refundable), subject choices fixed at first registration.
- **Supplementary replaced**: May exams act as retakes; no extra supplementary sessions.

Academic & Administrative Impacts

- **Best-score policy** ensures fairness and fairness—only the higher mark is retained per subject.
- Students with **compartment in Phase I can** use Phase II to clear their subjects.
- **Practicals/internal assessments** occur once—marks count for both efforts.

Additional Info

- A draft scheme launched Feb 2025, with stakeholder feedback sought by March 9, 2025; final policy expected shortly.
- Estimate: **26.6 lakh students** in Class 10 exams 2026.
- Aligned with NEP's focus on **flexibility**, **modularity**, **reduced pressure**, and **formative evaluation**.

Economy & Finance

ADB Pledges $10 Billion for India's Urban Transformation, Focus on PM Gati Shakti

The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** has announced a major **$10 billion, five-year initiative** to support the transformation of India's urban infrastructure. This landmark commitment was unveiled following a meeting between **ADB President Masato Kanda** and **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** in New Delhi around June 1, 2025.

The substantial funding aims to accelerate the development of sustainable and resilient urban centres across India, focusing on critical areas such as **metro rail extensions,**

new Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) corridors, and comprehensive upgrades to essential urban services. This initiative is also set to align with and bolster flagship programs like the **PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan**, aiming for integrated and efficient infrastructure development.

ADB Funding Initiative:

- **Substantial Investment:** A commitment of up to **$10 billion over five years**, which will include a mix of sovereign loans, private sector financing, and mobilization of third-party capital.
- **Focus on Urban Mobility & Services:** Key areas include:
  - o Expanding existing metro networks and developing new ones.
  - o Building new RRTS corridors for improved regional connectivity.
  - o Modernizing essential urban infrastructure and services like water supply, sanitation, solid waste management, and affordable housing.
- **Support for Urban Challenge Fund (UCF):** The initiative will be anchored around India's flagship **Urban Challenge Fund (UCF)**, which ADB is supporting to attract private investment into urban infrastructure projects.
- **Technical Assistance:** ADB will also provide **$3 million in technical assistance** to help design bankable projects and enhance the institutional capacity of state governments and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).
- **Alignment with Viksit Bharat @ 2047:** ADB President Masato Kanda emphasized that this support aligns with India's "bold vision" of **Viksit Bharat @ 2047**, aiming to transform India into a developed nation by its 100th year of independence.
- **Job Creation and Skill Development:** Beyond infrastructure, ADB will also support skill development through initiatives like the National Industrial Training Institute Upgradation Programme to boost manufacturing competitiveness and create quality jobs, particularly for India's youth.

RBI Drafts New Gold Loan Rules; FinMin Seeks Relief for Small Borrowers

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has proposed a new set of **draft guidelines for gold loans**, aiming to create a more harmonized regulatory framework for all lenders, enhance transparency, and protect the interests of borrowers. These draft directions, issued in **April 2025** and currently under review after stakeholder feedback, come amidst a significant surge in the gold loan portfolios of banks and Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), driven by rising gold prices and increased credit demand.

While the RBI's intent is to standardize practices and curb irregularities, the **Union Ministry of Finance** has stepped in with suggestions, urging the central bank to **exempt small borrowers (with loans up to ₹2 lakh)** from some of the more stringent proposed norms. The Finance Ministry has also recommended that the new guidelines be

implemented from **January 1, 2026**, to allow sufficient time for operational adjustments at the field level.

RBI's Draft Gold Loan Guidelines:

- **Standardized Loan-to-Value (LTV) Ratio:** The draft proposes capping the LTV ratio at **75%** of the value of gold for all gold loans meant for consumption purposes across all regulated entities (banks, NBFCs, cooperative banks, RRBs). For bullet repayment loans, the interest component must also be included within this LTV cap, potentially reducing the disbursable loan amount.
- **Valuation and Assaying of Gold:**
    - Only gold jewellery, ornaments, and specially minted bank-issued gold coins (22-carat or higher) are eligible as collateral. Primary gold like bars or bullion is not allowed.
    - Silver jewellery and bank-issued silver coins are also proposed to be accepted as collateral under specific conditions.
    - Lenders must adopt a standardized procedure for assaying the purity of gold, conducted by qualified assayers in the borrower's presence.
    - Gold is to be valued based on the 22-carat price, using the lower of the 30-day average closing price or the previous day's closing price.
- **Proof of Ownership:** Borrowers will need to provide proof of ownership for the pledged gold. A declaration explaining ownership can be submitted if purchase receipts are unavailable. Loans are not to be extended if ownership is doubtful.
- **Caps on Collateral:** The aggregate weight of gold ornaments pledged by a single borrower is proposed to be capped at **1 kilogram**, and gold coins at **50 grams**.
- **Purpose-Based Lending and Monitoring:**
    - Distinction between consumption loans and income-generating loans.
    - Lenders must monitor the end-use of income-generating loans and, for consumption loans above a certain threshold, may also track fund usage.
    - The same collateral cannot be used concurrently for both consumption and income-generating loans.
- **Repayment and Collateral Return:**
    - Bullet repayment for consumption loans is capped at a 12-month tenure.
    - Upon full repayment, lenders must return the gold collateral within **7 working days**, failing which a penalty of ₹5,000 per day is payable to the borrower.
- **Auction Process Transparency:** In case of default, lenders must provide at least one month's notice before auctioning the gold. Auctions must be publicly advertised, with a reserve price not below 90% of the current market value. Any surplus from the auction must be returned to the borrower within 7 days.
- **Documentation and Transparency:** Loan agreements must be clear, detailing the gold's description, value, auction procedures, and all charges, preferably in the borrower's preferred language.

Gold Loans in India:

- Gold loans are secured loans where individuals pledge gold ornaments or coins as collateral to borrow money.
- They are popular due to quick disbursal, minimal documentation (compared to other loans), and the emotional and financial value attached to gold in Indian households.
- They serve various purposes, from meeting emergency expenses (medical, education) and consumption needs to funding small businesses and agricultural activities.
- Both banks and specialized gold loan NBFCs are major players in this market.

₹2000 Banknote Withdrawal: Over 98% Returned, RBI Confirms

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has announced that more than **98.26%** of the ₹**2000 denomination banknotes** have been returned to the banking system as of May 31, 2025. This indicates a near completion of the withdrawal process initiated two years ago.

Key Figures and Status:

- **High Return Rate:** Out of the ₹3.56 lakh crore worth of ₹2000 notes in circulation on May 19, 2023 (when the withdrawal was announced), only ₹**6,181 crore** (approximately 1.74%) remains with the public as of May 31, 2025.
- **Legal Tender Status:** The RBI has reiterated that the ₹**2000 banknotes continue to be legal tender**.
- **Exchange Facility:** While the facility to deposit or exchange these notes at commercial bank branches ended on October 7, 2023, individuals can still exchange or deposit them at the **19 Issue Offices of the RBI**.
- **Postal Facility:** Additionally, the public can send ₹2000 banknotes through **India Post** to any of the RBI Issue Offices for direct credit into their bank accounts.

Background of the Withdrawal:

- **Announcement:** The RBI announced the withdrawal of the ₹2000 denomination banknotes from circulation on **May 19, 2023**. This was done under its **"Clean Note Policy."**
- **Rationale for Withdrawal:**
    - The ₹2000 banknotes were introduced in November 2016, primarily to meet the urgent currency requirement of the economy after the demonetisation of ₹500 and ₹1000 notes.
    - That objective was met, and the printing of ₹2000 notes was stopped in 2018-19.
    - A majority of these notes were issued before March 2017 and were nearing the end of their estimated lifespan of 4-5 years.
    - It was also observed that this denomination was not commonly used for transactions, and the stock of banknotes in other denominations was adequate.
- **Smooth Process:** Unlike the 2016 demonetisation, this withdrawal was designed to be less disruptive. The public was given ample time (initially till September 30, 2023, later

extended to October 7, 2023, at bank branches) to exchange or deposit the notes.

Distinction from Demonetisation:

It's important to distinguish this withdrawal from the demonetisation exercise of November 2016.

- **Demonetisation (2016):** The legal tender status of existing ₹500 and ₹1000 notes was abruptly cancelled, leading to significant disruption and a rush to exchange notes.
- **₹2000 Note Withdrawal (2023):** These notes **continue to be legal tender**. The process was gradual, with a clear timeline and multiple avenues for exchange, ensuring a smoother transition. The primary aim was currency management rather than a sudden shock to the system.

RBI Cuts Repo Rate Sharply to Boost Growth, EMIs Set to Fall

In a significant move aimed at stimulating economic activity, the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has announced a larger-than-expected cut in its key policy rate. The **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)**, headed by Governor Sanjay Malhotra, decided on June 6, 2025, to reduce the **repo rate** by **50 basis points (0.50%)**, bringing it down from 6.00% to **5.50%**. This decision is expected to make loans cheaper and provide a fillip to the economy.

Key Highlights of the Policy Review

- **Repo Rate Slashed:** The primary lending rate, or repo rate, has been cut by 50 basis points to 5.50%. This is the third consecutive rate cut in 2025, signaling the RBI's focus on reviving growth.
- **Policy Stance Changed to 'Neutral':** The MPC has shifted its monetary policy stance from "accommodative" to **"neutral."** This is a crucial change. An accommodative stance indicates a readiness to cut rates further, whereas a neutral stance means the MPC could either cut or hike rates depending on how the economic situation evolves. It suggests that future rate cuts are not guaranteed and will be heavily **data-dependent**.
- **CRR Reduced to Boost Liquidity:** In a surprise move, the RBI also announced a **100 basis points (1%) cut in the Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)**, which will be implemented in a phased manner. This will inject more liquidity (money supply) into the banking system, encouraging banks to lend more.
- **Economic Projections:**
  - **GDP Growth:** The RBI has maintained its **GDP growth forecast** for the financial year 2025-26 at **6.5%**.
  - **Inflation:** The central bank has lowered its **retail inflation (CPI) projection** for FY26 to **3.7%** from an earlier estimate of 4%, citing moderating food prices and a favorable monsoon outlook.

Why Did the RBI Take This Decision?

The MPC's decision was primarily driven by the need to support economic growth, especially at a time when global economic uncertainties persist. With **inflation remaining comfortably below the RBI's upper tolerance limit of 6%**,

the committee found the space to "front-load" the rate cut. This proactive measure aims to stimulate private consumption and investment in the economy.

What Does This Mean for You?

- **Lower EMIs:** This is the most direct impact for the common person. Home, auto, and personal loans are expected to become cheaper as banks pass on the benefit of the lower repo rate to customers. This will reduce the Equated Monthly Instalments (EMIs) for borrowers with floating-rate loans.
- **Boost to Industries:** Lower borrowing costs will encourage businesses to invest in expansion and new projects, which can lead to job creation and higher economic growth.
- **Lower FD Rates:** While borrowers will benefit, savers might see lower returns on their **Fixed Deposits (FDs)** as banks are likely to reduce deposit rates as well.
- **Stock Market Cheer:** The rate cut is generally seen as positive for the stock market, as it can boost corporate profitability and economic sentiment.

SEZ Reforms to Power India's Semiconductor & Electronics Push

What's New?

- The **Special Economic Zones (Amendment) Rules, 2025** were notified on **June 3, 2025**, with key relaxations aimed at boosting **semiconductor** and **electronics component** manufacturing.
- Updated norms include:
  - **Land reduction:** Minimum contiguous land for dedicated semiconductor/electronics SEZs cut from **50 ha to 10 ha**.
  - **Multi-product SEZs in hilly/NE states:** Reduced from **20 ha to 4 ha**.
  - **Encumbered land allowed:** Mortgaged/leased land to governments now eligible.
  - **Domestic sales permitted:** SEZ units can sell at home after paying duties, export elsewhere, or use bonded/FTWZs.
  - **Net Foreign Exchange (NFE):** Includes free-of-cost goods in calculations to reflect true foreign exchange value.

Real-world Impact

- **Micron Semiconductor Technology India** approved for **₹13,000 cr SEZ** in Gujarat.
- **Aequs Group** to invest **₹100 cr** in Karnataka SEZ.
- India's policy momentum: Already six semiconductor units in advanced stages, including **HCL-Foxconn facility in Uttar Pradesh** with ₹3,700 cr investment—targeting 36M display driver chips/month.

Additional Info

- **Semiconductor ecosystem in India** includes:
  - **India Electronics & Semiconductor Association (IESA)** and **SEMI India** lead industry coordination.

- o **Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY)** and **Department of Commerce** jointly oversee SEZ rules.
- o **ISM launched in 2021** with over 70 startups & 270 institutions supported; leveraging PLI & SPECS incentives.
- **Key components targeted**: display/camera modules, PCBs, Li-ion cells, batteries, wearables/hearables, discrete semiconductors.
- **Geography**: Multi-product SEZ support extended to North-East (Nagaland, Mizoram, etc.), Goa, Uttarakhand, Himachal, Puducherry, Lakshadweep, etc.

New Base Years for GDP, CPI & IIP Announced by MoSPI

What's the News?
- On **9 June 2025**, MoSPI Secretary **Saurabh Garg** confirmed a comprehensive revision of statistical base years:
  - o **GDP** and **IIP** will switch to **FY 2022–23** base,
  - o **CPI** will adopt **2024** as base, with weights derived from **HCES 2023–24**.
- Reporting timelines:
  - o **GDP series** to begin **27 Feb 2026**,
  - o **IIP series** from FY 2026–27,
  - o **CPI series** to launch **Q1 2026**.

Why It Matters
- **Base-year revision** ensures indicators remain **reflective of current economic structures**, consumption patterns, and sectoral contributions.
- Brings in **new data sources**:
  - o **GST records**, **UPI**, **EVahan**, and **RBI**, for more holistic GDP,
  - o **Scanner data**, **web scraping**, and **PDS item inclusion** for CPI.

Additional Info
- **ACNAS**: 26-member Advisory Committee, led by Prof **Biswanath Goldar**, includes experts from RBI, NITI Aayog, MCA, and GSTN.
- **Previous revision (2015)**: Base shifted from 2004–05 to 2011–12, moved to GVA valuation under SNA 2008.
- **New surveys**:
  - o **Service sector survey** (ASSSE) to start **Jan 2026**,
  - o **Monthly PLFS** from **Jan 2025**, covering rural+urban labour metrics.
- **CPI enhancements**: Including rent data from rural areas and PDS items; collaboration with **IRCTC**, Railways, and PPAC.

NHAI to Build Asset Register to Boost Private Investment

What's the News?
- On **10 June 2025**, NHAI released its first-ever **Asset Monetisation Strategy for the Road Sector**, aimed at attracting private investment by maintaining a comprehensive **asset register** of operational highway stretches.
- The register will contain all **technical, financial, legal, and revenue details** needed to assess assets' monetisation potential via **Toll-Operate-Transfer (ToT)**, **InvITs**, and **securitisation** models.

Key Details
- **Criteria included in asset register**:
  - o **Asset age**, type of stretch (e.g. expressway, NH),
  - o **Historic toll revenue**, cash flow projections,
  - o **Number of toll plazas**,
  - o **Legal compliance and arbitration readiness**.
- **Future strategy**:
  - o Launching **public InvITs** accessible to **retail investors** to broaden funding base.
  - o Seeking feedback and making the asset register public for **investor planning**.

Significance
- **Infrastructure financing**: Asset register ensures **structured, transparent monetisation process**.
- **Public policy relevance**: Ties into **National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP)**—₹1.6 lakh cr target via highways by FY 24-25, with NHAI delivering ~₹1.15 lakh cr so far.
- **Private participation**: Public InvITs allow **retail participation**, aligning with Minister Gadkari's vision of democratized infrastructure investment.
- **Financial stability**: Monetisation proceeds help NHAI **repay debt**, reducing liabilities from ₹3.42 lakh cr to ~₹3 lakh cr by FY 25-26.

Additional Info
- **NHAI**: Autonomous agency under MoRTH, managing ~50,000 km of national highways since 1995.
- **Monetisation modes**:
  - o **ToT**: Private players operate toll roads, pay upfront fee.
  - o **InvITs**: Trusts like **NHIT** created in 2021—NHIT has raised ~₹26,125 cr via three rounds covering 1,525 km of roads.
  - o **Securitisation**: Bundles of cash flows sold as financial securities.
- **NMP performance**: Road-sector target ₹1.6 lakh cr by FY 25; NHAI has already raised ₹1.15 lakh cr through TOT & InvITs.
- **Organisation structure**: NHAI governed by Board (Chairman: Santosh Kumar Yadav; Member Finance: Rajendra Kumar).

RBI Discontinues Daily VRR Auctions Amid ₹3 Lakh Crore Liquidity Surplus

What's the News?
- On **9 June 2025**, the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** announced it will **cease daily Variable Rate Repo (VRR) auctions** effective **11 June 2025**, citing a **surplus of around ₹3 lakh crore** in the banking system.

- VRR auctions, introduced on **16 January 2025** to address short-term funding pressures, will be withdrawn for now. The RBI plans to continue managing liquidity via **14-day VRRs**, **OMOs**, **Standing Deposit Facility (SDF)**, and **forex swaps**.

Key Details

- **Muted demand in recent auctions**: Banks bid only ₹3,700–3,850 crore against a ₹25,000 cr auction on 9–10 June.
- **CRR cut adds to liquidity**: A **100 basis point reduction in Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)** to 3% is expected to release ₹2.5 lakh crore more into the system.
- **Surplus driven by**: Fiscal inflows, forex operations, bond redemptions, and ongoing OMO purchases (₹4.8 lakh crore) since January .

Significance

- **Monetary policy signaling**: Reflects RBI's shift from easing liquidity pressure to maintaining **neutral stance**, aligning overnight rates close to the **repo rate** via alternate tools.
- **Liquidity strategy sophistication**: Showcases RBI's dynamic use of **liquidity management instruments**—daily VRRs, 14-day operations, OMOs, SDF—to maintain monetary stability.
- **Macro-financial impact**: Bank lending rates and treasury operations may adjust due to increased surplus and easier access to alternate funding.

Additional Info

- **VRR explained**: Variable Rate Repo allows banks to borrow overnight from RBI by bidding rates in an auction, reversing next day.
- **Other tools in RBI toolkit**:
  - **14-day VRR**: Managed fortnightly through the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF).
  - **OMOs**: The RBI has purchased government bonds worth ₹4.8 lakh crore since January.
  - **SDF and MSF**: Overnight deposit and lending facilities maintaining collateral-free access.
- **CRR mechanism**: A reduction from ~4% to 3%—Gradual phased implementation through November—adds significant liquidity.
- **Call money markets**: Use of call and tri-party repo (TREPS) is expected to rise as banks adjust to end of daily VRRs.

SEBI Mandates Verified UPI IDs for Market Intermediaries to Safeguard Investors

What's the News?

- From **1 October 2025**, the **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** will require **all registered market intermediaries**—brokers, mutual fund houses, IPO managers—to use **exclusive UPI handles** when collecting investor funds through the securities market.
- A dedicated tool called **'SEBI Check'** will enable investors to **verify UPI IDs or QR codes**, ensuring payments are routed only to **registered entities**.

Key Features & Mechanism

- **Unique, verified UPI IDs**: Each intermediary will receive a standardized, authenticated handle.
- **Verification icon**: A "thumbs-up" symbol in a green triangle will appear when the handle is genuine; absence of icon indicates possible fraud.
- **Flexible payment options**: Investors may continue using **NEFT/RTGS/cheques**, but if using UPI, they must use verified IDs.
- **Higher transaction limits**: Limit may be raised from ₹2 lakh to ₹5 lakh per day in future, subject to NPCI consultation.
- **Fraud-proof payments**: Aims to filter out fake brokers impersonating legitimate intermediaries.

Additional Info

- **UPI**: India's instant payment system launched in 2016 by NPCI under RBI's aegis; supports ID-based P2P/P2M transfers.
- **SEBI's 2025 UPI integration**: Builds upon its 2019 decision to allow UPI for IPOs and mutual funds.
- **'Pay Right' Framework**: Proposed by SEBI Chair Madhabi Puri Buch featuring UPI IDs, authentication icons, and KYC-led validation.
- **Stakeholder consultation**: Public feedback invited in Feb 2025; final mandate announced June 2025.

"Crypto on CBDT Radar" – Tax Authorities Target Digital Asset Evasion

What's New?

- The **Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)**, under the **Income Tax Department**, has launched an investigation into **unaccounted income and tax evasion** via **virtual digital assets (VDAs)** and **cryptocurrencies**, identified through **data analytics and TDS matching with crypto exchanges**.
- **Thousands** of **defaulting taxpayers** have been **sent emails** under the **NUDGE campaign**, asking them to review and revise their **ITRs** to include previously undeclared crypto income.
- Authorities are focusing on **high-risk individuals** who:
  - Did **not file Schedule VDA** in their returns.
  - Paid tax at **lower rates** or claimed **cost indexation** (not allowed).
  - Concealed gains despite **1% TDS on crypto trades** and a **flat 30% gain tax** (plus cess/surcharge) under **Section 115BBH**.

Simplifying the Issue

- Since **April 2022**, crypto gains are taxed at **30% flat**, with **no deductions** (except acquisition cost) and **losses not adjustable**.
- From **July 2022**, a **1% TDS** framework was introduced to track crypto transactions via **Virtual Asset Service Providers (VASPs)**, including exchanges.
- Recent **analytics** flagged discrepancies between:
  (a) **TDS returns from VASPs**, and
  (b) **Declared income in ITRs**, prompting scrutiny requests.

Why It Matters?

- **Taxation under Income Tax Act**:
    - **Section 115BBH** sets flat 30% levy on crypto gains.
    - **Schedule VDA** mandatory in ITRs.
    - **TDS regulations** – helps authorities trace digital transactions.
- **Regulatory innovation**:
    - The **NUDGE campaign** is a **data-driven, non-intrusive strategy** to encourage voluntary compliance.
- **Compliance challenges**:
    - Difficulty tracking **cross-border/foreign exchange-bypassed** transactions (example: Binance, P2P trades).
- **Institutional role**:
    - **Directorate General of Income Tax Investigation** handles crypto-related evasion probes.

Additional Info

- **Virtual Digital Asset (VDA)**: Defined broadly to include cryptocurrencies.
- **Schedule VDA**: Mandatory form in ITR to disclose VDA gains/losses.
- **Section 115BBH**: Introduced via Finance Act, 2022 — imposes **flat 30% tax** on gains from VDAs.
- **TDS regime (July 2022)**: 1% deducted at source on each crypto transaction via VASPs.
- **NUDGE campaign**:
    - CBDT pushes taxpayers gently to comply before initiating formal scrutiny.
    - Precedent campaigns covered **foreign assets** and **bogus deductions (80GGC)**.
- **TDS by VASPs**: Enables cross-verification of taxpayer data using techno-digital audit trails.

"Wholesale Relief" – India's WPI Drops to 14-Month Low in May

What's New?

- **Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation** slipped to **0.39 % in May 2025**, marking a **14-month low**, down from 0.85 % in April.
- Key drivers:
    - **Core kitchen staples** like vegetables, onions, pulses saw notable price drops.
    - **Fuel and power** prices also declined, helping pull overall inflation lower.
- **Experts caution**: Geopolitical tensions (e.g., Israel-Iran conflict) and global crude oil instability could reverse the trend.

Breakdown of WPI components (May vs April):

- *Vegetables*: –21.6 % (previous –18.3 %)
- *Fuel & Power*: –2.27 %
- *Manufactured goods*: +2.04 %
- *Food products*: +1.72 % (versus +2.55 %)

WPI vs CPI (retail inflation):

- Consumer Price Index (CPI) fell to **2.82 % in May**, the lowest in over six years.
- May retail inflation reached a **75-month low** of **2.8 %**.

Implications for policy:

- RBI's surprise **50 bps rate cut** earlier in June informed by falling inflation.
- Continued low inflation may justify **more monetary easing**, though global shocks remain a risk.

Additional Info

- **WPI definition**:
    - Measures **price change at the wholesale level**, covering **Primary Articles**, **Fuel & Power**, and **Manufactured Goods**.
    - Published monthly by the **Ministry of Commerce & Industry**.
- **Why WPI matters**:
    - Acts as a **leading indicator** for producer-level inflation pressures.
    - Complements CPI for comprehensive **inflation and policy analysis**.
- **RBI inflation target**:
    - The **medium-term CPI target range** is **2–6 %**, with a hard upper bound of 4 %.

"Seasonal Shake-Up" – India's Unemployment Rises to 5.6% in May

What's New?

- **Unemployment rate** climbed to **5.6 % in May 2025**, up from **5.1 % in April**, per the **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)** released by the Ministry of Statistics.
- **Female unemployment** stood slightly higher at **5.8 %**, compared to **5.6 %** for males.
- The uptick is mainly due to **seasonal factors**: completion of the Rabi harvest, shifting workers out of agriculture, and **heatwave conditions**, slowing economic activities.

Key Details

- **Youth unemployment** soared:
    - Urban youth (15–29 years): **17.9 %** (vs 17.2 % in April).
    - Rural youth: **13.7 %** (up from 12.3 %).
- **Rural-to-non-farm shift**:
    - Agricultural workforce dropped from **45.9 % to 43.5 %** in rural areas.
    - Movement into **manufacturing and services**, albeit with limited job absorption.
- **Labour force participation rate (LFPR)**:
    - Declined in May, especially among rural women due to seasonal slump.

Additional Info

- **PLFS (Periodic Labour Force Survey)**:
    - Launched in April 2017 by **MoSPI** to provide **monthly unemployment data**, replacing quarterly/annual updates.
- **Agriculture's seasonal nature**:

- o Rabi harvest ends in May, leading to employment fall in rural areas. Such **seasonal unemployment** is typical in agrarian economies.
- **Gender disparity**:
  - o Historically, women face higher unemployment, often due to **social norms**, lack of **skilling**, and **unequal access** to jobs .

"PAN-Bank Sync: Faster Refunds Ahead" – NPCI Enables Real-Time Validation on e-Filing Portal

What's New?

- The **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** introduced a **real-time PAN–bank account validation facility** via API on the **Income Tax Department's e-filing portal** (17 June 2025).
- The system now accesses data directly from banks' **Core Banking Systems (CBS)**, enabling instant validation of a taxpayer's **PAN**, **bank account active status**, and **account holder name**.

Why It Matters

- **Expedited refunds**: Eliminates delays caused by manual or batch validations, helping taxpayers receive refunds sooner.
- **Enhanced accuracy**: Minimises instances of refund rejection due to mismatches in PAN-account details.
- **Increased security**: Direct verification from CBS reduces errors and risks of fraud, bolstering trust in the digital tax infrastructure.

Tech Integration & API Mandate

- NPCI's circular (No. OC004 FY 25-26) mandates **all NACH member banks** to implement the PAN–bank account validation API as a priority.
- Designed for **Government departments**, including Income Tax e-filing, the API bridges backend CBS data with tax systems.

How It Works

1. Taxpayer logs into **e-filing portal**, enters bank details and IFSC.
2. **API call** sent to bank's CBS to verify:
   - o PAN validity,
   - o Account status (active/inactive),
   - o Account holder's name match.
3. Instant pre-validation marks the account as **refund-eligible**.

Additional Info

- **NPCI**: Established in **2008** by RBI and IBA as a payments fintech backbone, managing systems like **UPI, NACH, FASTag**.
- This fits into the broader push for **real-time payments** and infrastructure upgrades like **NACH 3.0** (salary/SIP payments).
- Taxpayers can already pre-validate bank accounts via the portal's **"My Bank Account"** feature—now enhanced with live CBS checks.

"Private Sector Powers Ahead" – India's Economic Activity Hits 14-Month High in June

What's New?

- India's **HSBC Flash Composite PMI** surged to a **14-month high of 61.0** in June 2025, up from 59.3 in May, marking nearly **four years of continuous expansion**.
- **Manufacturing PMI** rose to **58.4**, while **services PMI** reached **60.7**, its strongest level since August 2024.

Why It Matters

- Shows robust **domestic and export-led demand**, with **new export orders at record highs** since 2014—signaling strong global appetite for Indian goods.
- **Employment surged**, with manufacturing job creation hitting a **two-decade high**, and services employment also strong.
- **Inflationary pressures eased**: Input-cost inflation dropped to a **10-month low**, enabling firms to moderate their output price increases.
- The **favorable inflation trend** reinforces expectations that the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** may consider **interest rate cuts**.

Growth by Sector

- **Manufacturing**: Expanded to 58.4, driven by strong export orders, increased output, and record hiring.
- **Services**: PMI rose to 60.7, the best since Aug 2024, underpinned by domestic and international demand.
- **Composite PMI**: A sustained expansion at 61.0, significantly above the long-run average (~54–55).

Employment & Inflation Dynamics

- **Employment**: Manufacturing job additions reached a 20-year high; service-sector hiring remained strong.
- **Costs & Prices**: Input inflation eased; output price growth decelerated—boosting competitiveness and easing pressure on consumers.

External Drivers & Policy Signals

- **Exports**: Highest-ever growth in new export orders since 2014—especially in manufacturing—signifying shifting global supply chains.
- **Monetary Outlook**: Eased inflation supports RBI's potential targeting of interest rate reductions to stimulate growth.
- **Business Sentiment**: Despite strong activity, overall confidence fell slightly, weighed down by cautious service-sector outlook.

"EV Boost" – Portal Opens for Electric Car Makers Under New Production Scheme

What's New?

- On **24 June 2025**, the **Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI)** opened the **application portal** for the **Scheme to Promote Manufacturing of Electric Passenger Cars in India (SPMEPCI)**, enabling auto-makers to apply until **21 October 2025**—portal reopening possible up to **March 2026**.

- The portal launch was officiated by **Heavy Industries Minister H D Kumaraswamy**, signalling readiness to attract global electric vehicle (EV) investments.

Why It Matters

- **Encourages global EV investments**: Offers a **concessional 15% import duty (versus 70–100%)** on up to **8,000 high-value EVs annually**, subject to a **₹4,150 crore domestic investment commitment**.
- **Strengthens EV manufacturing capacity**: Mandates **25% domestic value addition (DVA) in 3 years**, increasing to **50% in 5 years**, fostering local industry and supply chains.
- **Competitive edge for India**: Offers relief to OEMs compared to high tariffs, positioning India as an attractive destination ahead of global entrants like Tesla.

Eligibility & Requirements

- **Applicant criteria**:
    - Group global automotive revenue ≥ ₹10,000 crore
    - Global fixed-assets investment ≥ ₹3,000 crore.
- **Investment obligations**:
    - Setup of manufacturing facility and commence production of electric 4-wheelers within **3 years**.
    - Receive duty waiver capped at **₹6,484 crore**, backed by bank guarantees.

Scheme Features

- **Duration**: Benefits extend for **5 years** post-approval.
- **Scope**: Applies to both **CBUs** and greenfield/brownfield manufacturing projects.
- **Export advantage**: Helps meet **CBAM compliance** by building EVs with substantial local content.

Interest & Global Response

- **Pre-launch interest**: Discussions underway with Tata, Mahindra, Hyundai, Skoda-VW; **Tesla** currently plans only showrooms.
- **Outreach**: MHI is engaging global automakers via embassies from the US, Germany, UK, Czech Republic, Vietnam.
- **Exclusions**: OEMs from China and border-sharing countries are barred; **VinFast** excluded from benefits unless further fresh investment occurs.

"Maritime Money Maker" – India's First Maritime NBFC Sets Sail

What's New?

- On **26 June 2025**, the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways**, led by Minister **Sarbananda Sonowal**, launched **Sagarmala Finance Corporation Ltd (SMFCL)**—India's **first sector-specific NBFC** dedicated entirely to the **maritime and blue economy**.
- Registered with the **Reserve Bank of India**, SMFCL is a **Mini-Ratna Category-I CPSE**, with an **authorized and paid-up capital of ₹1,000 crore**.
- The entity is a **restructured form** of Sagarmala Development Company Ltd (SDCL), now empowered to **raise its own funds** and provide specialized financing to **ports, shipyards, MSMEs, startups**, and other maritime stakeholders.

Why It Matters

- **Bridging financing gaps**: Ports and shipyards often face difficulty securing long-term funding—banks frequently view vessels as non-standard collateral.
- **Boosting infrastructure**: Supports critical sectors—**port modernisation**, **shipbuilding & repair**, **cruise tourism**, **green port infrastructure**, and **maritime training**.
- **Aligning with Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047**: The launch propels India toward its goal of becoming a **global maritime power**, leveraging **Sagarmala 2.0's push** for coastal and blue-economy growth.

Institutional Pedigree & Governance

- SMFCL is a **wholly government-owned CPSE**, formerly SDCL, now a regulated **Type-II NBFC (non-deposit, investment-credit)**.
- Governed by **RBI regulations** under the **NBFC framework**, SMFCL can **borrow from the market** and on-lend to maritime sector entities.

Financial Instruments & Services

- Offers **short-, medium-, and long-term loans**, **debt financing**, **lease rentals**, and **equity participation (up to 49%)** in project SPVs.
- Services target **ports (major & non-major)**, **shipping and logistics firms**, **maritime startups**, **marine MSMEs**, **cruise-tourism**, and **skill-building institutes**.

Broader Strategy & Impact

- Integrates with **Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047**, which includes ~300 strategic initiatives and Sagarmala 2.0—a ₹40,000 cr investment push aiming for port-led development and a robust blue economy by 2047.
- Enables India to channel both **public and private capital**, aided by plans like the **Maritime Development Fund**, **AIFs**, and **ARCs**, creating a comprehensive maritime financial ecosystem.

Additional Info

- **Sagarmala Programme**: Launched in **2015**, aims to enhance port infrastructure, connectivity, coastal industrialisation, community development, and inland water transport across India's **7,500 km coastline and 14,500 km waterways**.
- As of March 2025, Sagarmala achieved **272 projects** worth ₹1.41 lakh crore; its next phase focuses on shipbuilding, smart ports, and eco-friendly solutions.
- **SDCL's NBFC registration** with RBI was finalised in June 2025, converting it from a development company to a finance-focused entity—mirroring models like PFC (Power Finance Corporation).

"Wealth Waves" – PSUs Add ₹57 Lakh Crore in Market Cap Over 5 Years

What's New?

- Indian **Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs)** have collectively added a staggering **₹57 lakh crore** in market capitalization over the past **five years**, driven by strong governance, operational discipline, and sectoral tailwinds.

- **Profitability surged 4.3×**—from ₹1.3 lakh crore in FY19 to ₹5.5 lakh crore in FY24, with consecutive years of decline in loss-making entities.

Sector-wise Growth & Governance

- **BFSI sector** now contributes 38% of PSU profits, up from just 7% in FY20; **banking reforms** and cleaned-up balance sheets are key drivers.
- **Capital goods & defence PSUs** like **HAL**, **BEL** have recorded a **28% CAGR in profits** over FY20–25, supported by domestic capital investment in strategic sectors.
- The number of loss-making PSUs has shrunk dramatically—from 45% in FY18 to just 1% today.

Market Share & Sectoral Rally

- PSUs' **market share** rose to **17–17.5%** of total market cap in FY24, from just ~10% in FY22, and compared sportingly with private peers in market rebounds.
- **BSE PSU index** delivered an impressive +92% return in the past year, outpacing broader indices—attractive for both public and private investors.

Additional Info

- **Historical context**: In FY14–24, PSU market cap rose from ₹14 lakh crore to ₹66 lakh crore (CAGR ~16.6%), boosting their national economic presence.
- **Policy push**: Aligned with **'Atmanirbhar Bharat'** and **Make in India**, the government emphasised **localisation, defence indigenisation, and capex-heavy infrastructure**—propelling PSU performance.
- **Governance reforms**: Improved payout policies, autonomous management structures (Navratna, Miniratna, Maharatna status), and performance incentives underpinned the turnaround.

"Instant PF Funds" – EPFO Raises Auto-Claim Limit to ₹5 Lakh with 3-Day Settlement

What's New?

- The **Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)** has **increased its auto-settlement limit on advance claims** from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh, effective late June 2025, allowing quick access to funds for reasons such as **medical emergencies, education, housing, or marriage**.
- Under this **fully digital process**, eligible members receive **settlement within three working days**, without manual intervention or submitting documents.

Why It Matters

- **Rapid liquidity in crises**: Access to ₹5 lakh speeds emergency funding for families, students, or homeowners facing sudden expenses.
- **Technological efficiency**: Reflects EPFO's focus on **automation**, reducing processing time, paperwork, and grievances.
- **Trend in digital welfare**: Enhances user trust and aligns with India's shift toward **digital public service delivery** and social security reforms.

Digital Empowerment

- The **auto-settlement facility**, introduced during COVID-19 in 2020 and extended in 2024 (₹50k → ₹1 lakh → ₹5 lakh), now covers over **7 crore EPFO members**.
- **Adoption rates**: In FY 24–25, **2.34 crore claims** were settled digitally (a 161% jump), with ~59% via auto route; FY 26 early data shows **70%** via auto-settlement.

Process Simplification

- **Validation steps reduced** from 27 to 18; future plans aim for 6 steps.
- **AI-driven pre-checks** ensure ~95% claims are processed without human oversight.
- Upcoming features: **UPI & ATM withdrawals**, and **face-authenticated UAN activation** to further ease access.

Policy & Welfare Linkage

- The initiative reflects **NEP-aligned digital governance**, improving **ease of living** and worker welfare under the Ministry of Labour & Employment.
- EPFO's interventions align with larger goals like **universal social security**, **financial inclusivity**, and **effective welfare delivery**.

Additional Info

- **EPFO** was set up under the Employees' Provident Fund & Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1951, overseen by the **Ministry of Labour & Employment**.
- It administers the **mandatory EPF** for private-sector workers, covering **pension, disability, and death benefits**.
- EPFO covers diverse subscribers—formal sector employees, gig workers, and contract labor; **employer-linked KYC** (Aadhaar, PAN, bank) is essential to access the auto facility.

"Fraud Firewall" – RBI & Banks Team Up to Launch the Digital Payment Intelligence Platform (DPIP)

What's New?

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has initiated a collaboration with leading **public and private sector banks** to build the **Digital Payment Intelligence Platform (DPIP)**, classed as a **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)**, aimed at enhancing real-time detection and prevention of digital payment frauds.
- A **prototype** of DPIP is being developed by the **RBI Innovation Hub (RBIH)** with inputs from **5-10 banks**, following guidance from a committee chaired by **A.P. Hota** (former NPCI CEO).
- The platform is expected to be **operational within a few months**, reflecting the urgency with which RBI and the government are addressing the surge in digital frauds.

Why It Matters

- **Alarming increase in fraud**: Bank frauds have nearly **tripled to ₹36,014 crore in FY 25**, with **digital payments** (cards/internet) and **loan advances** being prime channels of compromise.

- **Real-time threat detection**: DPIP will consolidate data flows across institutions, deploying **AI/ML** to identify suspicious patterns and share intelligence promptly.
- **System-wide defence**: A shared platform replaces siloed risk systems, enabling the banking ecosystem to respond cohesively and reduce consumer losses.

Structure & Tech Stack
- **Entity structure**: Co-created by RBI and bank partners, with oversight from a high-level steering group.
- **Prototype development**: Led by RBIH with 5-10 major banks to fine-tune data pipelines, threat models, and interception protocols.
- **Tech tools**: AI/ML algorithms to detect anomalies; real-time dashboards; linkages with **NPCI and telecom platforms** for domain-level fraud prevention.

Ecosystem Linkages
- **Telecom collaboration**: Airtel has proposed a **fraudulent domain repository**, involving **banks, NPCI, and telecom players**, to preemptively shut down scam sites.
- **Cybersecurity & consumer trust**: The platform complements broader efforts in **digital resilience**, securing UPI, card networks, wallets, and enhancing public confidence.

Science & Technology

India Embarks on Building its First Indigenous Polar Research Vessel

In a landmark development for India's scientific and strategic capabilities, the country is set to construct its **first-ever indigenous Polar Research Vessel (PRV)**. This ambitious project will significantly boost India's ability to conduct research in the **Arctic, Antarctic, and Himalayan regions**, as well as the vast Southern Ocean.

Key Highlights of the Project:
- **Indigenous Construction:** The vessel will be built in India by **Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited (GRSE)**, a public sector undertaking under the Ministry of Defence, based in Kolkata. This is a major step towards self-reliance in specialized shipbuilding.
- **International Collaboration:** GRSE has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **Kongsberg Maritime of Norway**, a leading maritime technology firm. This collaboration will involve Kongsberg providing design expertise and advanced technological support.
- **Enhanced Research Capabilities:** The PRV will be equipped with **state-of-the-art scientific instruments and laboratories**. This will enable Indian scientists to:
  - Explore deep-sea ecosystems.
  - Conduct comprehensive studies on climate change and its impact on polar ice caps.
  - Study marine biodiversity and atmospheric conditions.

  - Gather crucial data on ocean currents and geological aspects of the polar regions.
  - Potentially support research in the Indian Ocean and the Himalayas.
- **Logistical Support:** The vessel will play a vital role in providing logistical support, including supplies and personnel rotation, to India's research stations in the Arctic (**Himadri**) and Antarctica (**Maitri** and **Bharati**).
- **Multi-functional Platform:** The vessel is expected to have **ice-breaking capabilities**, enabling it to operate in challenging polar environments. It will also likely feature facilities for operating helicopters and deploying remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) and autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs).
- **Timeline and Cost:** While the exact timeline for completion is yet to be finalized, previous government statements indicated a desire to have such a vessel within five years, with an estimated cost of around **₹2,600 crore**.

India Unveils BharatGen: Indigenous AI for Multilingual Innovation

In a landmark initiative to bolster India's capabilities in Artificial Intelligence (AI), **Union Minister of State for Science and Technology, Dr. Jitendra Singh,** launched **'BharatGen'** – India's first indigenously developed, government-funded, AI-based **Multimodal Large Language Model (LLM)** specifically designed for Indian languages. The launch took place at the **BharatGen Summit & Hackathon** in Delhi, marking a significant stride towards creating a self-reliant AI ecosystem in the country.

Features and Objectives of BharatGen:
- **Multilingual and Multimodal:** BharatGen is designed to integrate text, speech, and image modalities, offering seamless AI solutions in **22 Indian languages**. This capability is crucial for a diverse country like India.
  - The suite includes AI models for Speech (Shrutam), Text (Param), Document Vision (Patram), and Text-to-Speech (Sooktam).
- **Indigenous Development:** Developed under the **National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS)** and implemented by the **TIH (Technology Innovation Hub) Foundation for IoT and IoE at IIT Bombay**, with support from the **Department of Science and Technology (DST)**.
- **Ethical and Inclusive AI:** The mission aims to create AI that is **ethical, inclusive, and deeply rooted in Indian values and ethos**, ensuring that the benefits of AI reach all segments of society.
- **Sovereign AI Capability:** BharatGen is positioned as a national mission to build foundational AI models in India, reducing reliance on foreign technologies and fostering a self-reliant AI future.
- **Catalyst for Innovation:** It is envisioned as a platform for collaboration between government, industry, and academia to build open, scalable, and responsible AI solutions catering to India's unique needs.

- **Sectoral Empowerment:** The initiative aims to empower critical sectors such as **healthcare (e.g., AI doctor speaking regional languages for telemedicine), education, agriculture, and governance** by delivering region-specific AI solutions.
- **Hackathon for Grassroots Innovation:** The summit also marked the finale of a hackathon designed to encourage student innovators to craft India-centric AI solutions for real-world problems.

Indian Scientists Find Molecular Clue to 'Darwin's Abominable Mystery'

Scientists from Hyderabad's **Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB)** have made a groundbreaking discovery that offers a molecular explanation for what the naturalist Charles Darwin famously called an **"abominable mystery"** — the sudden appearance and rapid diversification of flowering plants in the fossil record. The research, published in a leading scientific journal, identifies a key genetic mechanism that likely gave flowering plants a significant evolutionary advantage.

What is Darwin's "Abominable Mystery"?

- In the 19th century, Charles Darwin was perplexed by the fossil record of his time. While his theory of evolution suggested gradual change over long periods, **flowering plants (angiosperms)** seemed to appear suddenly and diversify explosively around 130 million years ago, without clear ancestral links to earlier plants like ferns and conifers.
- This rapid rise to ecological dominance, seemingly out of nowhere, was a puzzle that Darwin couldn't solve with the evidence available to him, leading him to call it an "abominable mystery."

The CCMB Discovery: The 'SHUKR' Gene

The CCMB team, while studying the common model plant *Arabidopsis thaliana*, identified a previously unknown gene which they named **'SHUKR' (a Sanskrit word for 'pollen')**. This gene provides a powerful clue to solving Darwin's mystery.

- **A Master Controller:** The SHUKR gene acts as a master controller that is crucial for the development of healthy, viable **pollen** (the male part of the plant's reproductive system).
- **A Paradigm Shift:** Previously, it was believed that the development of gametes (like pollen) was controlled independently within the gamete cells themselves. The CCMB study found that SHUKR is expressed in the main plant body (the sporophyte) but controls the development of the pollen (the gametophyte). This shows that the main plant body took control of reproduction, a significant evolutionary shift.
- **Rapid Adaptation:** The SHUKR gene, along with the F-box genes it regulates, evolves very rapidly. This rapid evolution likely gave flowering plants the molecular tools to adapt their pollen production to changing and harsh environmental conditions like heat, cold, or drought. This adaptability would have been a massive advantage,

allowing them to spread and diversify quickly across the globe.

- **Origin and Dominance:** The study suggests this gene first appeared around 125 million years ago in a group called **eudicots**, which today constitute about 75% of all flowering plant species. This timeline aligns perfectly with the "abominable mystery" period.

Exposomics: A New Frontier in Environmental Health

As India grapples with the dual burden of environmental pollution and a sharp rise in non-communicable diseases (NCDs), a new scientific field called **Exposomics** is gaining attention. It offers a more holistic way to understand how our environment impacts our health over a lifetime, moving beyond traditional, single-factor studies. This approach is crucial for a country like India, which bears a significant portion of the global environmental disease burden.

What is the 'Exposome'?

- **Complement to the Genome:** For a long time, our **genes (genome)** were considered the primary factor determining our health and disease risk. However, genetics alone often explain less than half the risk for common diseases.
- **Totality of Exposures:** The **'Exposome'** is a concept that represents the **totality of all environmental exposures an individual encounters from conception to death**. This is a broad definition that includes:
  - **External Factors:** Air and water pollution, chemicals in food, radiation, pesticides, infections, and even social factors like stress and urban living conditions.
  - **Internal Factors:** How our body responds to these external factors, including metabolism, inflammation, and gut bacteria.
- **Dynamic and Personal:** Your exposome is unique to you and changes throughout your life based on where you live, what you eat, your occupation, and your lifestyle.
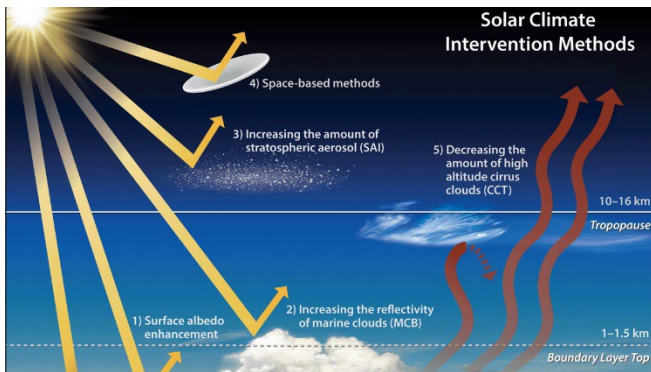
Why is Exposomics Important for India?

- **Rising Burden of NCDs:** India is facing an epidemic of **Non-Communicable Diseases** like heart disease, stroke, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, and cancer. While lifestyle factors like diet and lack of exercise are well-known causes, environmental factors play a massive, often underestimated, role.
- **High Environmental Risk:** According to the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) study, environmental and occupational risks are responsible for nearly **three million deaths annually in India**. Over half the burden of diseases like ischemic heart disease, stroke, and COPD is linked to environmental exposures, especially **air pollution (both outdoor and household)**.
- **Beyond Single-Cause Analysis:** Traditionally, we study health risks one by one (e.g., the effect of PM2.5 on lungs). Exposomics allows scientists to understand the **complex interactions** between dozens of pollutants and lifestyle factors simultaneously. For example, how do microplastics,

chemical contaminants, and air pollution interact with a person's diet and stress levels to cause disease?

- **Informing Public Policy:** By providing a clearer picture of cause and effect, exposomics can help create more effective public health policies. It can shift the focus from just treating diseases to **holistic prevention** by cleaning up the environment and creating healthier living spaces. It helps mainstream environmental risks into public health initiatives like the **National Health Mission**.

"Weather on Demand?" – Cloud-Seeding Study Makes It Realistic

Solar Climate Intervention Methods

What's New?

- A **recent study** has breathed new life into the controversial concept of **weather modification**, especially **cloud seeding**, by making it more **scientifically feasible** with **modern tech**, including **AI**, **drones**, and **smart sensors**.
- Key innovations examined:
  - **Drones equipped with electric charges** for precise cloud targeting.
  - **AI-based atmospheric modeling** enabling targeted seeding operations.
  - **Real-time sensors** for cloud structure and microphysics monitoring.
  - **Advanced seeding materials** such as **nanoparticles**, replacing traditional agents like **silver iodide** or dry ice.

What is Cloud Seeding?

- The process disperses **condensation or ice nuclei** (silver iodide, salts, dry ice) into clouds to stimulate precipitation.
- Two primary methods:
  - **Static seeding**: Introduce ice nuclei to form rain in supercooled clouds.
  - **Dynamic seeding**: Enhance updrafts to increase cloud mass and rainfall chance.
- Dispersion can be via **aircraft**, **ground generators**, **rockets**, **drones**, **lasers**, or **unmanned aerial vehicles**.

Real-world Examples & Historical Context

- **UAE** uses drones with electric charges; reports show ~**23 % increase in rainfall**, supported by statistical and radar evidence.

- **USA & China**: Cloud seeding operations abound—in Western US, China during Beijing Olympics, and Texas experiments using charged water particles.
- **India**: Pilots in Maharashtra since the 1970s showed ~**24 % rainfall increase** using **salt-based seeding**.

Additional Info

- **International law**:
  - **ENMOD Convention (1977)** prohibits hostile weather modification but allows peaceful uses.
  - **US–Canada agreement (1975)** mandates data-sharing on weather-mod activities.
- **Environmental & ethical considerations**:
  - Risks include ecological imbalance, cross-border effects, public consent, and governance challenges.
  - Toxicity of agents like silver iodide is minimal due to trace usage.

"Rediscovery of Losgna occidentalis: A New Parasitic Wasp in India"

What's the News?

- Scientists have rediscovered the **Losgna genus** in India—absent since 1965—and described a new species: **Losgna occidentalis**.
- Collected from a **dry scrub forest in Chandigarh** during winter 2023–24, the discovery was published in **Zootaxa** on **8 May 2025**.

About *Losgna occidentalis*

- **Taxonomy**:
  - Family: *Ichneumonidae* (parasitic Darwin wasps)
  - Subfamily: *Ichneumoninae*.
- **Key features**:
  - Body ~12.8 mm long.
  - Distinctive **flagellomere and coxae coloration** and **tergite patterns** differentiate it from related species.
- **Species name explanation**:
  - "occidentalis" denotes the **westernmost record** in the genus' range; earlier species were found only in eastern forests and Southeast Asia.

Ecological & Taxonomic Significance

- **Parasitic behavior**: These wasps help control **insect populations** by laying eggs inside host arthropods—making them crucial for **biological pest control**.
- The find highlights **urban biodiversity,** showing that even degraded areas like Chandigarh's scrublands host **undocumented species**.
- Reinforces the importance of **taxonomy in biodiversity conservation** and the need for further surveys, particularly in under-explored regions.

Additional Info

- **Ichneumonidae family**: One of the largest insect families (~25,000 species worldwide), mostly **parasitic wasps** including parasitoids of Lepidopteran larvae.
- **Genus Losgna (Cameron, 1903)**:

- o Prior species described from Khasi and Eastern regions—*L. forticeps*, *L. indica*, etc.—but none since 1965.
- **Research setting**:
  - o Field collection in Chandigarh's scrub forest; specimens stored in **WII National Repository**, Dehradun.
  - o Holotype male details meticulously described and compared with **Natural History Museum (London)** and **Oxford collections**.

AviList: First Unified Global Checklist of Bird Species Launched

What's the News?

- **AviList**, the **first ever unified global checklist** of bird species, was officially launched in **June 2025**, consolidating four major taxonomic databases into a single authoritative reference.
- The initial release includes **11,131 bird species**, organised into **252 families and 46 orders**, with data validation carried out over **four years** by expert groups.

Key Features

- **Taxonomic alignment**: Harmonises species names across **IOC, Clements, HBW/BirdLife**, and **Avibase** by resolving ~1,000 discrepancies.
- **Evidence-based decisions**: Uses **integrative species concept**—based on morphology, genetics, behaviour, ecology, and taxonomy—via expert voting on contested entries.
- **Annual updates**: Reflects new species discoveries and taxonomic developments with yearly revisions.
- **Free and open access**: Available under **Creative Commons** licensing; downloadable in formats like XLSX/CSV.

Additional Info

- **Avibase**: Premier taxonomic database, cataloguing over **1 million records** of 10,000 species and 22,000 subspecies, supporting region-specific avian information.
- **Founding entities**: AviList was curated by a **Working Group on Avian Checklists (WGAC)** under IOU, involving BirdLife, Cornell, and other research bodies.
- **Replacement scope**: Gradually supersedes existing lists—**IOC, Clements**, and **HBW/BirdLife**, with systems like eBird and BirdLife DataZone aligning accordingly.
- **Integrative taxonomy**: Decision-making includes museum specimen studies, bioacoustics, genetics, and ecological evaluation.

Molecular Breakthrough in Slowing Reproductive Aging

What's the News?

- A pioneering study identifies a molecular target—**Cathepsin B**—whose inhibition **preserves ovarian reserve** in animal models, offering a pathway to delay reproductive aging.

- Research used **mouse models** and **cultured goat ovaries**, showing that reducing Cathepsin B activity helps maintain **follicle count and reproductive lifespan**.

Key Features

- **Cathepsin B (CatB)**: A lysosomal enzyme whose overactivity contributes to follicle depletion. Its suppression slows ovarian aging .
- **Multi-omics atlas**: The study combined **snRNA-seq** and **snATAC-seq** on human ovaries, revealing age-dependent decline in granulosa and theca cells—key to ovarian health—and identifying gene regulators like **CEBPD** and the **mTOR pathway**.
- **Integrative species concept**: Reinforces parallels across species and mechanisms, with molecular drivers being conserved .

Additional Info

- **Reproductive aging**: Driven mainly by depletion of ovarian follicles and reduced oocyte quality; menopause marks end of female fertility.
- **Key cell types**:
  - o **Granulosa & theca cells**: Vital for supporting follicles; show significant decline with age.
- **Molecular pathways**:
  - o **mTOR**: Nutrient-sensing pathway implicated in ovarian aging.
  - o **CEBPD**: Transcription factor identified as a regulator in aging ovarian cells.
- **Emerging interventions**:
  - o CatB inhibitors, mTOR modulators, and potential gene therapies.
  - o Research continues in animal models to pave the way for human trials .

"Rooftop Revolution" – Start-Up Challenge to Boost Solar Innovation

What's New?

- On **June 21, 2025**, the **Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE)** launched a **National Start-Up Challenge** focused on **rooftop solar (RTS)** and **distributed renewable energy (DRE)** technologies.
- Organized in partnership with **National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE)** and **StartUp India (DPIIT)**, the challenge invites **Indian startups** to present solutions under four thematic areas — **affordability**, **resilience**, **inclusivity**, and **environmental sustainability**.
- Total prize pool: **₹2.3 crore**, with top prizes of ₹1 crore (1st), ₹50 lakh (2nd), ₹30 lakh (3rd), and **10 consolation prizes** of ₹5 lakh each.

Why It Matters

- **Stimulates innovation**: Pushes clean-energy startups to build scalable business and tech solutions tailored to India's energy and climate challenges.
- **Accelerates RTS adoption**: Supports MNRE targets like **1 crore households** under the **PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana** and boosts **DRE access** in remote areas.

- **Aligns with net-zero goals**: Supports India's pledge for **500 GW renewable capacity by 2030** and the global energy transition.

Challenge Themes
- **Affordability**: Low-cost solar kits, innovative finance models, cost-sharing mechanisms.
- **Resilience**: Solutions robust against climate threats, grid instability, natural disasters, cybersecurity.
- **Inclusivity**: Models like virtual net metering, community solar, end-user financing for underserved populations.
- **Sustainability**: Technologies for panel recycling, land-neutral solar, hybrid energy systems (solar + wind/biomass).

Support & Benefits
- Startups receive:
    - **Prize money** and recognition.
    - **Incubation and mentorship** from renewable energy experts.
    - **Pilot opportunities** to test solutions under real-world conditions.
    - **Access to national clean-energy ecosystem** via MNRE and NISE.

Additional Info
- **PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana** (2024) offers subsidies for solar rooftop panels to 1 crore households, free 300 units monthly.
- MNRE previously allocated **₹5,000 million (~₹500 crore)** under the Yojana's innovative component to fund pilot solar solutions via NISE — now complemented by this start-up push .
- Coordination includes **DISCOM incentives,** central financial assistance under RTS Phase II, and platform like **SPIN** and PM Surya Ghar portal.
- Entities like **IREDA** and **SECI (Navratna PSU)** serve as financing and implementation anchors within MNRE's domain.

"Trailblazers to the Stars" – Axiom Mission 4 Sends India, Poland & Hungary Back to Space
What's New?
- On **June 25, 2025**, **Axiom Mission 4** launched aboard a **SpaceX Falcon 9** from Kennedy Space Center, carrying former NASA astronaut Peggy Whitson and national astronauts from **India (Shubhanshu Shukla), Poland (Sławosz Uznański-Wiśniewski),** and **Hungary (Tibor Kapu)**—marking the **first ISS flights** for India, Poland, and Hungary in **over four decades**.
- The crew will stay aboard the ISS for **up to 14 days**, conducting **over 60 scientific experiments and tech demos** in areas like **biological sciences**, **earth observation**, and **human research**.
Why It Matters
- **Historic return**: India hadn't sent an astronaut since 1984 (Rakesh Sharma); Poland since 1978; Hungary since 1980.

- **Commercial space breakthrough**: Axiom, in partnership with SpaceX and NASA, exemplifies how **private missions enable diverse nations** to access space.
- **Boost for ISRO's Gaganyaan**: Shubhanshu Shukla's flight supports India's homegrown crewed mission by gaining experience and carrying India-led in-orbit research.

Crew & National Stakes
- **Shubhanshu Shukla** becomes the first Indian to visit the ISS; cost of seat ~$65 million.
- **Sławosz Uznański-Wiśniewski** is Poland's first ISS crew member; his mission ("Ignis") includes 13 Polish microgravity experiments.
- **Tibor Kapu** pilots Hungary's return to space, while Peggy Whitson commands her fifth orbital mission and sets a U.S. record for cumulative days in space.

Experiments & Outreach
- Nearly **60 experiments** from **31 countries**, including studies on **microalgae**, **muscle atrophy**, **cognitive impacts**, and **material science**.
- Includes **educational outreach** and cultural items from each nation, fostering **global scientific collaboration**.

Launch Delays & Safety
- Launch was delayed multiple times (June 10, 22) due to safety checks on the ISS's Russian Zvezda module; mission finally took off after leak resolution.

Additional Info
- The mission ships a **Crew Dragon capsule (first flight of C213)** and docks at the ISS's **Harmony module**, with launch at 2:31 a.m. ET and docking expected June 26.
- It strengthens the case for future **Indian Space Station (Bharatiya Antariksh Station)** planned for **2035**, by paving the way for experience and research collaborations.

"Home at Last" – India's First Astronaut Docks at ISS
What's New?
- On **26 June 2025**, the **Axiom-4 crew docked** with the **International Space Station** aboard SpaceX's "Grace" Dragon capsule. **Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla** became the **first Indian** to board the ISS—with soft-docking at **4:02 PM IST**, fully completed by **4:16 PM**.
Why It Matters
- **Historic milestone**: India returns to the space after **41 years**—since Rakesh Sharma's 1984 flight—and joins Poland and Hungary in ending decades-long space absence.
- **Commercial diplomacy**: Reflects the growing **private-public collaboration** in space, with **Axiom Space, SpaceX, NASA, and ISRO** coordinating this private astronaut mission.
- **LEO research boost**: Crew will conduct **60+ experiments**, including **ISRO-led studies** on nutrition, muscle atrophy, microalgae, and cognition—gaining valuable insights for upcoming **Gaganyaan mission**.

Crew & Credentials

- **Shubhanshu Shukla**: 39-year-old IAF Group Captain with ~2,000 flying hours; trained in Russia and Houston; chosen for **Gaganyaan-4 crewed mission (2027)**.
- **Peggy Whitson** (USA): Axiom commander, record five-time space flyer.
- **Sławosz Uznański-Wiśniewski** (Poland) & **Tibor Kapu** (Hungary): First ISS crew members from their countries.

Science & Outreach

- Experiments span **biology, human physiology**, **material science**, **earth observation**, and **ISRO collaborative projects** (e.g., methi and moong sprouting, aquatic organism survival).
- Crew will engage in **live interactions with students** and space enthusiasts, strengthening science outreach and national pride.

Mission Timeline & Challenges

- Launch delayed multiple times due to **rocket leaks**, **weather**, and ISS safety checks—but finally launched **25 June**, docked **26 June**.
- Crew to remain aboard for **up to 14 days**, embarking on a full research and station-operations schedule.

Additional Info

- **Axiom Mission 4** is part of Axiom Space's plan to develop a **commercial space station**, marking a shift from ISS reliance.
- Supports India's **Gaganyaan and future space station timelines**—demonstrating LEO operations, rendezvous, and docking tech.

Agriculture

Government to Integrate Agri-Schemes on 'Krishi Nivesh Portal' for Unified Access

The Indian government is working to integrate various Central and State government schemes related to agriculture and allied sectors onto a unified digital platform called the **Krishi Nivesh Portal**. This initiative by the **Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare** aims to create a one-stop solution for farmers, agri-entrepreneurs, and investors, fostering transparency and efficiency in the agricultural investment landscape.

Features and Objectives of Krishi Nivesh Portal:

- **Centralized Platform:** The portal serves as a **single window** for accessing comprehensive information on numerous agricultural investment schemes from different ministries and state departments.
- **Scheme Integration:**
  - It currently aggregates information on around **17 flagship schemes** from about seven central ministries, including the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF), PM-KUSUM, Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF), and PM Kisan Sampada Yojana.
  - The plan is to eventually integrate **over 300 schemes** from various central ministries (around 14) and state departments (initially 9-10 states, later all states and UTs).
- **Ease of Access and Application:** Users can check eligibility criteria, understand scheme benefits, apply for schemes, and track the status of their applications digitally.
- **Transparency and Efficiency:** The portal aims to reduce bureaucratic delays, eliminate fragmented information, and improve the transparency of processes like loan disbursal.
- **Investment Facilitation:** It is designed to help farmers, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), agri-startups, and private investors identify relevant schemes and investment opportunities, thereby boosting private sector investment in agriculture.
- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** The portal is expected to incorporate features like Business Intelligence (BI), analytics, and AI/ML for better decision-making for both users and policymakers. It may also include subsidy calculators and investment tracking dashboards.
- **Digital DPR Submission:** It is likely to enable online submission of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs), further streamlining investment proposals.

Significance for the Agriculture Sector:

- **Empowering Farmers:** Provides farmers with easier access to information and benefits under various schemes, helping them make informed decisions.
- **Boosting Agri-Investment:** By simplifying processes and providing clear information, the portal aims to attract more private investment into agricultural infrastructure, value chains, and allied sectors.
- **Improving Scheme Delivery:** Integration can help in better monitoring of scheme implementation, reduce duplication of efforts, and ensure that benefits reach the intended beneficiaries efficiently.
- **Promoting Agri-Entrepreneurship:** Offers a supportive ecosystem for agri-startups and FPOs by providing easy access to relevant government support.
- **Modernizing Agriculture:** Aligns with the government's vision of modernizing Indian agriculture through the use of technology and digital platforms, contributing to the Digital India mission and Gati Shakti.

Key Agricultural Schemes often mentioned:

- **Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF):** A financing facility for the creation of post-harvest management infrastructure and community farming assets.
- **PM-KISAN (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi):** Provides income support to eligible farmer families.
- **PMFBY (Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana):** Crop insurance scheme.
- **PMKSY (Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana):** Aims to enhance irrigation coverage ('Har Khet Ko Pani') and improve water use efficiency ('More crop per drop').
- **e-NAM (National Agriculture Market):** An online trading platform for agricultural commodities.

- **PM-KUSUM (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan):** Aims to promote solar energy in agriculture.

CROPIC: AI-Based Crop Monitoring for Farmer Insurance & Resilience

What's the News?

- The **Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare** is launching **CROPIC** (Collection of Real-Time Observations & Photos of Crops), a pilot initiative using **field photographs and AI-based analysis** during **Kharif 2025** and **Rabi 2025–26** to monitor crop health and automate loss assessments under the **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)**.
- Farmers will upload **4–5 photographs** per crop cycle via the **CROPIC mobile app**, which uses computer vision on the **cloud** to identify crop type, growth stage, damage levels, and potential yield losses.

Key Features of CROPIC

- **Farmer participation**: Photographs crowd-sourced directly from the field.
- **AI-driven analysis**: Uses cloud-based computer-vision models to extract crop signatures.
- **Dashboard insights**: A web interface visualises crop health and risk areas.
- **Insurance integration**: Photo evidence supports **automated compensation claims** under PMFBY.

Additional Info

- **PMFBY**: National crop insurance scheme; 2025 Cabinet extended it with ₹69,515 cr outlay and ₹825 cr tech fund.
- **AI in agriculture**: India's AI-agri market growing at ~23% CAGR; projects include Kisan e-Mitra, IBM collaboration, drone-based disease detection, and IIT-KGP robotic spraying.
- **Support systems**: Mobile apps like Kisan Suvidha (weather, advisory), GIS tools by ISRO, and hybrid intelligence merging traditional knowledge with AI.

Strengthening Agri-stack: ₹6,000 crore Push for Digital Farming Transformation

What's the News?

- On **13 June 2025**, the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare held a **National Conference on Agri-stack**, unveiling a **₹6,000 crore Special Central Assistance** under the **Digital Agriculture Mission**.
- The funds are divided into:
  - **₹4,000 cr** for **State Farmer Registries** (including legal-heir data)
  - **₹2,000 cr** for **Digital Crop Surveys**, offered to states on a **first-come-first-served** basis.

Key Features of the Scheme

- **Farmer Registry digitisation**:
  - Linked to land records and Aadhaar

- Enables **unique Farmer IDs** for over **11 crore farmers** by FY 2026-27.
- **Digital Crop Surveys & Soil Mapping**:
  - Utilisation of **remote sensing**, **AI/ML**, **drones**, **geospatial mapping**
  - Digitally captures crop acreage, type, yield variability.
- **Integration with Agri-stack**:
  - Data merged into **Unified Farmer Service Interface (UFSI)**
  - Tied to existing schemes like **PM-KISAN**, **PMFBY**, **KCC**, and potentially fertiliser subsidies.

Additional Information

- **Agri-stack** is the agricultural **Digital Public Infrastructure** involving Farmer Registry, Geo-referenced Village & Crop Acreage registries, Soil Mapping, Crop Surveys, and Krishi Decision Support Systems.
- **Digital Agri-Mission (2024)** had a ₹2,817 cr allocation to pilot the DPI, covering 19 states and 6 pilot regions.
- **Budget focus**: 2025-26 Agri Budget exceeded ₹1.37 lakh cr, emphasising digital & AI-led schemes alongside infrastructure and credit expansion .
- **Tech tools**:
  - **Remote sensing**, **drones**, and **AI/ML** enhance data accuracy.
  - **Soil maps**: 142 million ha detailed mapping underway; assists precision farming.

"Cotton Safety Net" – CCI Procures 100 Lakh Bales at MSP to Shield Farmers

What's New?

- The **Cotton Corporation of India (CCI)**, the nodal procurement agency under the **Ministry of Textiles**, has procured **100 lakh bales** (≈ 525 lakh quintals) of **seed cotton** at the **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** during the **2024–25 season** (up to March 31, 2025).
- This accounts for **38% of cotton arrivals** (263 lakh bales) and **34% of total production** (estimated at 294.25 lakh bales).
- CCI paid approximately **₹37,450 crore** to nearly **21 lakh farmers** across cotton-growing states.

Why It Matters

- **Farmer protection**: MSP operations prevent distress sales when market prices fall below MSP.
- **Market stabilization**: With weak textile demand and rising cotton imports, CCI's intervention curbs price volatility.
- **Digital transparency**: Deploys Aadhaar-linked payments, QR-coded cotton bales via blockchain, and the **Cott-Ally mobile app** (available in 9 languages) for real-time tracking.

State-Wise Procurement

- **Telangana**: 40 lakh bales
- **Maharashtra**: 30 lakh bales
- **Gujarat**: 14.02 lakh bales

- **Karnataka**, **Madhya Pradesh**, **Andhra Pradesh**, **Odisha**: 5, 4, 4, and 2 lakh bales, respectively
- Northern states (**Haryana**, **Punjab**, **Rajasthan**): 1.15 lakh bales total

Pressure Points

- Weak domestic mill demand and rising **cheaper imports** (up 133% in May 2025) are **reducing CCI's sales, posing cost and competitiveness challenges**.
- CCI has sold ~35 lakh bales domestically thus far; remaining stock's **base auction price** is ₹2,000/candy higher than open-market rates.
- MSP likely to rise by **8%** next season, which may increase procurement costs further.

Additional Info

- **CCI**: A Public Sector Undertaking established in **1970**, under Ministry of Textiles, tasked with **market intervention** and **MSP procurement**.
- **Technological measures**:
  - **508 procurement centres** nationwide
  - **On-the-spot Aadhaar authentication, SMS/NACH direct payments**
  - **QR codes + blockchain** ensure full traceability.
- **Economic context**:
  - MSP for medium-staple: ₹7,121/quintal; for long-staple: ₹7,521/quintal. Domestic prices remain ₹6,700–7,000/quintal.
  - Imported cotton, even after an 11% duty, is priced ~8% cheaper, boosting mills' preference for imports.

"Field to Fortune" – India's Agriculture & Allied Sectors Surge to ₹29.5 Lakh Crore

What's New?

- According to the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI) data, output from **agriculture and allied sectors** reached **₹29.49 lakh crore in FY 2023-24**, marking a healthy increase over the previous year.
- MoSPI's **Statistical Report on Value of Output from Agriculture & Allied Sectors 2024** reveals steady growth across **crop**, **livestock**, **forestry**, and **fisheries** — highlighting the sector's resilience.

Why It Matters

- **Economic backbone**: Agriculture supports around **46% of India's workforce** and contributes approximately **16% of GDP**.
- **Diversification dividends**: Increased output from allied sectors like **livestock and fisheries** boosts farmer incomes and reduces crop dependency.
- **Resilience indicator**: Sustained growth, often above general inflation, underscores India's capacity to withstand economic and weather shocks.

Crop vs Allied Breakdown

- In FY 2022-23, output share: **Crops (54.3%), Livestock (30.9%), Forestry (7.9%), Fishing (6.9%)**.

- Among crops, **fruits & vegetables (28.3%)** slightly surpassed **cereals (27.3%)**, reflecting the shift toward high-value horticulture.

Sectoral Growth Rates (FY17–23)

- Overall sector grew at approximately **5% CAGR**, including agriculture & allied.
- Key growth drivers:
  - **Fisheries**: ~13.7% CAGR
  - **Livestock**: ~13% CAGR.

State-Level Highlights

- **Uttar Pradesh** leads in **cereal production**, **West Bengal** for vegetables, **Rajasthan & UP** for livestock.
- **Andhra Pradesh** dominates fishing and aquaculture, with its share rising from 17.7% to **40.9% by FY 23**.

Additional Info

- **MoSPI**: A key ministry formed in 1999—merging statistical and programme wings—oversees NSO.
- **NSO statistical report** traces data trends since 2011-12, offering deep insights into agricultural value shifts.
- **Economic Survey FY25** notes over **₹22.84 lakh crore** in agri-credit disbursed and **double-digit growth** in allied sectors.
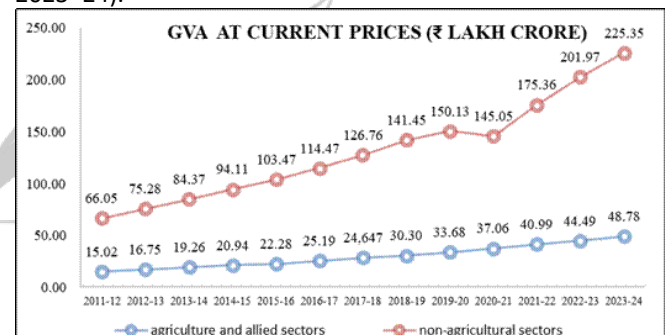

"Agri Prosperity Unveiled" – MoSPI Releases Output Report for 2011–24
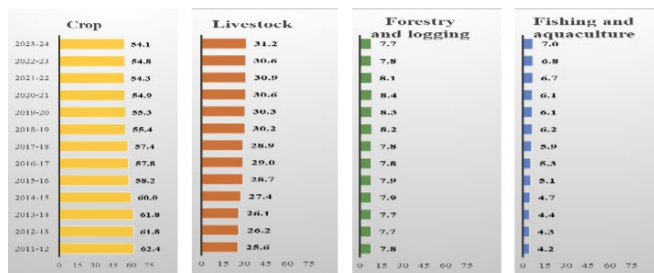
What's New?

- On **29 June 2025**, amidst **Statistics Day** celebrations, the **Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI)** released the **"Statistical Report on Value of Output from Agriculture & Allied Sectors (2011–12 to 2023–24)"** via the **National Statistical Office (NSO)**.
- The report provides detailed tables on output values for **crops**, **livestock**, **forestry & logging**, and **fishing & aquaculture**, in both **current** and **constant FY12 prices**.
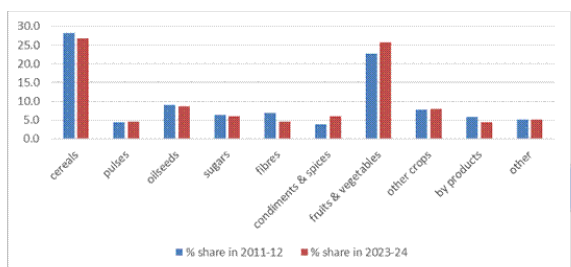
Why It Matters

- **225% growth** in Gross Value Added (GVA): Increased from **₹1,502 tn to ₹4,878 tn** (current prices, 2011–12 to 2023–24).

GVA AT CURRENT PRICES (₹ LAKH CRORE)

- **54.6% rise** in Gross Value of Output (GVO) at constant prices: From **₹1,908 tn to ₹2,949 tn**, reflecting real productivity gains.

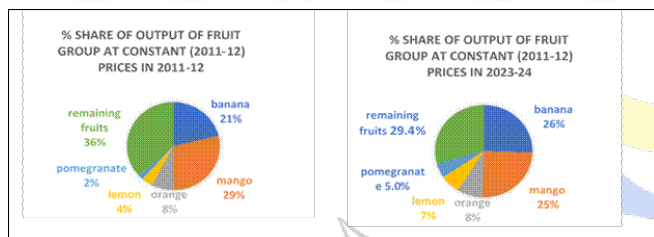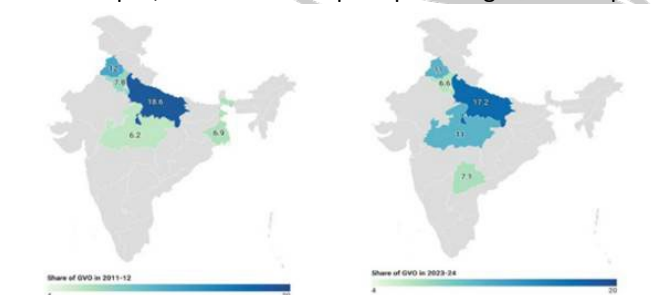- **Crop sector dominance**: Contributed **₹1,595 tn**, or **54.1%** of total GVO in FY 24 (constant prices).

Note: Other includes indigo, dyes & tanning material, drugs & narcotics, floriculture and kitchen garden

Crop Patterns

- **Cereals vs Fruits & Vegetables**: Together they made up **52.5%** of crop GVO; **paddy & wheat** accounted for **85%** of cereal output.
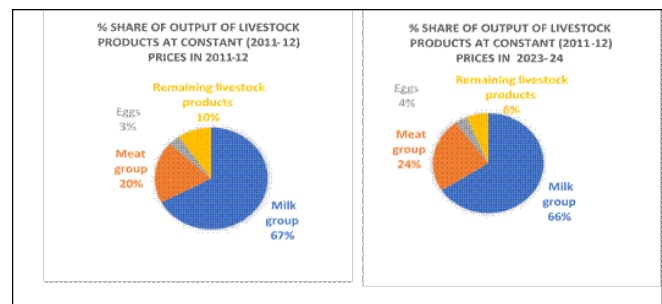

- **State contributors**: Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Telangana, and Haryana generated nearly **53%** of national cereal output; UP remained top despite a slight share dip.
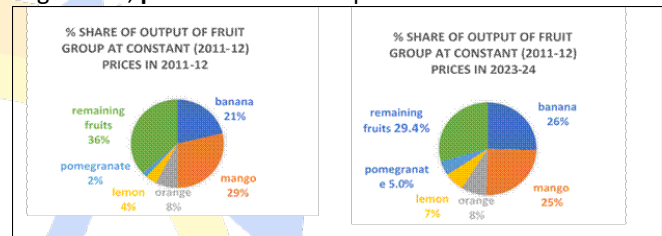

Livestock & Allied Growth

- **Livestock output** rose from **₹488 tn to ₹919 tn**, with dairy retaining its majority share (~66%) and meat increasing from **19.7% to 24.1%**.
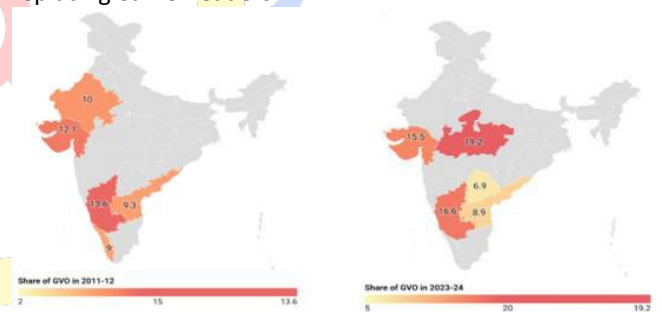

- **Forestry & Logging** saw output growth from **₹149 tn to ₹227 tn**, with industrial wood dominating (70%).
- **Fisheries & Aquaculture** contribution expanded from **4.2% to 7.0%** of agri output; marine fisheries share rose from 42% to 50%.

Horticulture & Specialty Crops

- **Floriculture** doubled its output (₹17.4 tn → ₹28.1 tn), indicating increased diversification and commercialisation.
- In fruits, **banana (₹47.0 tn)** overtook mango (₹46.1 tn); in vegetables, **potato** remained top.

- **Spices shift**: Madhya Pradesh became the leading producer, replacing earlier leaders.

Additional Info

- The **report** is a key input for **National Accounts** and **SDG monitoring**, and it's accessible via MoSPI's website.
- It encompasses **detailed technical data**, including production volumes, pricing trends, and state/commodity-level breakdowns.
- It supports evidence-based policy in **crop diversification**, **agritech**, **livestock**, **fisheries**, and **forest resource planning**.

Important Days

World Milk Day 2025: "Let's Celebrate the Power of Dairy"

World Milk Day, observed annually on **June 1st**, is a global initiative established by the **Food and Agriculture**

Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in 2001. The day aims to recognize the importance of milk as a global food and to celebrate the contributions of the dairy sector to nutrition, livelihoods, and economies worldwide. For **2025**, the theme is **"Let's Celebrate the Power of Dairy,"** inviting a focus on dairy's crucial role in sustainable agriculture, community livelihoods, and global nutrition.

Key Objectives and Significance of World Milk Day:

- **Highlight Nutritional Value:** To emphasize the importance of milk as a nutrient-rich food, providing essential calcium, protein, vitamins (like D and B12), and minerals crucial for growth, bone health, and overall well-being.
- **Recognize Dairy Sector's Contribution:** To acknowledge the dairy industry's role in supporting the livelihoods of millions of farmers and contributing to rural economies.
- **Promote Sustainable Dairying:** To encourage discussions and practices related to sustainable dairy farming, including animal welfare, environmental management, and resource efficiency.
- **Global Awareness:** To create a global platform for sharing information and experiences related to milk production, consumption, and its role in food security.

India: The World's Dairy Powerhouse

India holds the distinction of being the **world's largest milk producer**, accounting for nearly **25% of global milk production**. This remarkable achievement is largely due to the visionary **Operation Flood**, also known as the White Revolution.

- **Operation Flood (1970-1996):**
  - Launched by the **National Dairy Development Board (NDDB)** under the leadership of **Dr. Verghese Kurien**, revered as the "Father of the White Revolution in India."
  - **Objectives:** Increase milk production ("a flood of milk"), augment rural incomes, and provide fair prices for consumers.
  - **Strategy:** Replicated the **Anand pattern of dairy cooperatives**, empowering farmers by linking them directly to consumers through a national milk grid. It involved creating a three-tiered structure: village-level dairy cooperative societies, district-level milk unions, and state-level milk federations.
  - **Impact:** Transformed India from a milk-deficient nation to the world's largest milk producer. It significantly improved rural livelihoods, reduced poverty, empowered women (who form a large part of the dairy workforce), and ensured a steady supply of milk to urban consumers.

Nutritional Importance of Milk:

- Milk is considered a **complete food** due to its balanced composition of essential nutrients:
  - **Calcium:** Crucial for strong bones and teeth.
  - **Protein:** Essential for growth, muscle repair, and overall body function.
  - **Vitamins:** Rich in Vitamin D (often fortified, aids calcium absorption), Vitamin B12 (important for nerve function and red blood cell formation), Riboflavin (Vitamin B2), and Vitamin A.

  - **Minerals:** Contains phosphorus, potassium, and magnesium.
- Regular consumption of milk and dairy products is vital for children's growth and development and helps maintain bone health throughout life.

Government Initiatives for Dairy Development in India:

The Government of India has launched several schemes to boost the dairy sector:

- **National Programme for Dairy Development (NPDD):** Aims to create and strengthen infrastructure for milk procurement, processing, and quality milk testing. It supports the formation of dairy cooperative societies and enhances market access for farmers. The revised NPDD (2021-22 to 2025-26) has an enhanced outlay to further modernize dairy infrastructure.
- **Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM):** Launched in 2014 to develop and conserve indigenous bovine breeds in a scientific manner. It focuses on enhancing milk production and productivity of indigenous cattle, setting up Gokul Grams (integrated cattle development centres), and promoting artificial insemination.
- **Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF):** Aims to incentivize investments by individual entrepreneurs, private companies, MSMEs, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), and Section 8 companies to establish dairy processing and value addition infrastructure, and meat processing and value addition infrastructure.
- **National Livestock Mission (NLM):** Focuses on sustainable development of the livestock sector, including breed development, feed and fodder development, and skill development.
- **Livestock Health and Disease Control Programme (LHDCP):** Aims to prevent, control, and eradicate animal diseases, which is crucial for maintaining livestock productivity.

Acknowledging Pain, Protecting Futures: International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression

June 4th is observed globally as the **International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression**. This important United Nations observance serves as a solemn occasion to acknowledge the profound pain suffered by children around the world who are victims of physical, mental, and emotional abuse, particularly in situations of conflict and aggression.

Purpose and Origin of the Day:

- **Acknowledging Suffering:** The day is dedicated to recognizing the suffering of children who are victims of various forms of aggression. This includes children affected by war, armed conflict, physical violence, sexual violence, emotional abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- **UN's Commitment:** It affirms the United Nations' commitment to protecting the rights of children and calling for an end to abuses perpetrated against them.

- **Historical Context:** The **UN General Assembly**, during an emergency special session on the question of Palestine on **August 19, 1982**, was "appalled at the great number of innocent Palestinian and Lebanese children victims of Israel's acts of aggression." Consequently, the Assembly decided to commemorate **June 4th** of each year as the International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression (Resolution ES-7/8).

Scope of "Aggression" and its Impact on Children:

The term "aggression" in this context encompasses a wide range of harmful acts that children endure:

- **Direct Victims of Conflict:** Children killed, maimed, orphaned, or displaced due to wars and armed conflicts.
- **Recruitment as Child Soldiers:** Forcing children to participate in hostilities.
- **Abduction and Sexual Violence:** Targeting children for abduction, trafficking, and sexual exploitation, especially in conflict zones.
- **Attacks on Schools and Hospitals:** Denying children access to education and healthcare by attacking protected civilian infrastructure.
- **Psychological Trauma:** The severe and long-lasting emotional and psychological scars left by witnessing or experiencing violence and brutality.
- **Denial of Humanitarian Aid:** Preventing children from receiving life-saving assistance in conflict situations.
- **Domestic Violence and Abuse:** Children who are victims of abuse within their homes and communities, which can be exacerbated during times of societal stress and conflict.

Significance of the Observance:

- **Raising Awareness:** The day serves to draw global attention to the plight of child victims of aggression and the urgent need for action.
- **Call for Action:** It encourages governments, international organizations, civil society, and individuals to strengthen efforts to protect children from violence and ensure their rights are upheld.
- **Advocacy for Child Rights:** It reinforces the principles enshrined in the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** and other international human rights instruments.
- **Promoting Peace and Security:** Protecting children from aggression is intrinsically linked to building sustainable peace and security.

India and Child Rights:

India has a robust legal and policy framework for the protection of children. Key aspects include:

- **Constitutional Guarantees:**
    - **Article 21A:** Right to Education.
    - **Article 24:** Prohibition of employment of children in factories, etc.
    - **Article 39(e) & (f):** Directive Principles urging the State to ensure that children are not abused and are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity.
    - **Article 45:** Provision for early childhood care and education.

- **Key Legislations:**
    - **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012.**
    - **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.**
    - **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016.**
- **Institutional Mechanisms:** Bodies like the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and State Commissions.
- **International Commitments:** India is a signatory to the UNCRC.

World Food Safety Day 2025: Food Safety is Everyone's Business

Every year on **June 7**, the world observes **World Food Safety Day** to draw global attention to the health consequences of contaminated food and water. The theme for 2025 is **"Food Safety: Science in Action,"** highlighting the crucial role of scientific advancements in ensuring that the food we eat is safe from farm to fork.

The Global Burden of Unsafe Food

Unsafe food is a major cause of illness and death, posing a significant threat to public health worldwide.

- According to the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, an estimated **600 million people**—almost 1 in 10 people in the world—fall ill after eating contaminated food each year.
- This results in **420,000 deaths** annually, with children under 5 years of age carrying 40% of the foodborne disease burden.
- The economic impact is also severe, particularly for low- and middle-income countries, which lose around **$110 billion** in productivity and medical expenses annually due to unsafe food.
- Foodborne illnesses are caused by a wide range of bacteria, viruses, parasites, and chemical substances.

Why is World Food Safety Day Important?

Established by the **United Nations General Assembly in 2018**, World Food Safety Day is a joint initiative of the **World Health Organization (WHO)** and the **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**. The day aims to:

- **Raise awareness** about food safety issues.
- **Promote actions** to prevent, detect, and manage foodborne risks.
- Emphasize that **food safety is a shared responsibility** among governments, producers, businesses, and consumers.
- Highlight the connection between food safety and achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, especially SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). The 2025 theme, "Food Safety: Science in Action," encourages the use of data, diagnostics, research, and technology to build a safer and more resilient global food system.

Food Safety in India: Challenges and Initiatives

India, with its vast and diverse food sector, faces unique challenges such as food adulteration, a large informal food sector (street food vendors), and gaps in cold chain infrastructure. The primary regulatory body responsible for food safety in India is the **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)**.

Key FSSAI Initiatives:

- **Eat Right India Movement:** A comprehensive initiative to transform the country's food ecosystem to ensure safe, healthy, and sustainable food for all Indians.
- **State Food Safety Index (SFSI):** An index to measure the performance of states on various parameters of food safety, fostering a spirit of competitive and cooperative federalism.
- **Clean Street Food Hub:** An initiative to train and certify street food vendors to ensure they follow hygienic practices.
- **Heart Attack Rewind:** A mass media campaign to eliminate industrially produced trans fats from the food supply.

Progress Clear, Yet Much Remains: World Day Against Child Labour 2025

What's the News?

- **12 June 2025** marked **World Day Against Child Labour**, observed annually since **2002** under the aegis of the **International Labour Organization (ILO)**.
- The **2025 theme**: "**Progress is clear, but there's more to do — let's speed up efforts!**".
- Despite policy efforts, approximately **138 million children** remain in labour, including **54 million** in **hazardous conditions**.

Why This Matters

- **SDG 8.7** aimed to eliminate child labour by **2025**, but current estimates show the goal has **not been met**.
- **UNICEF–ILO report** warns funding cutbacks in education and livelihood support could **reverse decades of progress**.
- **Regional burden**: Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia shoulder nearly **90%** of child labour cases.

Achievements & Gaps

- **Progress**: Child labour has nearly halved since 2000—**94 million** fewer children working in that time.
- **Continuing challenge**: Still **138 million** children engaged in labour, with **54 million** in dangerous work.
- **Focus shift**: From raising awareness to accelerating **direct action**, including community outreach, education, and stronger enforcement .

Additional Information

- **ILO conventions**:
  - *No. 138* (1973): Sets **minimum age for work**.
  - *No. 182* (1999): Bans **worst forms of child labour**.
- **Global estimates**: ~160 million children in work by 2020; decline to 138 million by 2024 .
- **India context**:

  - **Bachpan Bachao Andolan** founded by Kailash Satyarthi in 1980, instrumental in child rescue and education efforts.
  - States like **Bihar and Karnataka** have active **rescue-rehabilitation programmes** and fine enforcement mechanisms .

"Stand Against Coercion" – UN Declares Dec 4 International Day vs. Unilateral Coercive Measures

What's New?

- The **UN General Assembly**, on **June 16, 2025**, adopted a resolution establishing **December 4** as the **International Day Against Unilateral Coercive Measures (UCMs)** starting in 2025.
- The resolution passed with **116 votes in favor**, **51 against**, and **6 abstentions**. Countries from the Global North—including the EU, the US, Canada, Australia, UK, and Japan—**voted against** it.
- It urges states to **refrain from imposing unilateral economic, financial, or trade measures** that violate **international law** and the **UN Charter**, especially those **hindering development in poorer countries**.

Why Does This Matter?

- **Unilateral Coercive Measures (UCMs)** are sanctions or penalties one country enforces on another without UN approval.
- Historically, UCMs are considered **contrary to international humanitarian law**, **intrude on state sovereignty**, and **hamper human rights**, especially in developing nations.
- Since the 1970s, the UN has condemned UCMs through documents like the **Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States (1974**, Article 32) and numerous GA resolutions.

Global Reactions & Stakeholders

- **China**, representing a group of 28 Global South countries, delivered a joint statement condemning UCMs as violations of **sovereign equality** and **international law**, describing them as causing "devastating, life-threatening consequences".
- The UN's **Special Rapporteur on UCMs**, Alena Douhan, visited **China** (May 6–17, 2024) and reported on the broad **socioeconomic impacts** of sanctions, including **over-compliance** issues.

Additional Info

- **UN Bodies Involved**:
  - **General Assembly**: Regularly adopts resolutions condemning UCMs.
  - **Human Rights Council**: Established a **Special Rapporteur** to monitor and report on UCM impacts.
  - **Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States (1974)**: Article 32 prohibits coercion of sovereign rights.
- **Example Cases**:

- o Sanctions on **Cuba**: Repeatedly condemned as violating development and human rights .
- o Sanctions on **China**: U.S. laws like the **Magnitsky Act** and Uyghur-related restrictions have led to documented economic and social disruption .

"Think Before You Eat" – Sustainable Gastronomy Day, June 18

What's New?
- Designated by **UNGA on 21 December 2016** (Resolution A/RES/71/246), **June 18** is observed annually as **Sustainable Gastronomy Day**, marking its first official celebration in 2017.
- The day celebrates the intersection of **food, culture, and sustainability,** with active support from **UNESCO, FAO**, and other UN bodies.

Why It Matters
- **"Gastronomy** = art of food: cooking, culture, and local cuisine.
- **Sustainable Gastronomy** = food systems that:
  - o Use **seasonal, local ingredients,**
  - o Minimize **resource wastage,**
  - o Preserve **biodiversity,**
  - o Support **health & nutrition,**
  - o And sustain **cultural heritage.**
- Underpins **SDG 2** (Zero Hunger) by reinforcing **food security, agriculture, and conservation.**

Key Aspects & UN Actions
- **UNESCO**: Mobilizes its **Creative Cities Network**, designating cities for culinary heritage and promoting clean energy use in food services.
- **FAO**: Encourages **green diets**, integration of sustainability in national dietary guidelines.
- **Partnerships**: Member states and civil society collaborate on promoting **public awareness,** ecosystem-friendly cooking practices, and food culture exhibitions

Real-World Examples
- **UNESCO-designated Gastronomy Cities**: 49 cities (as of 2024) share best practices in cultural and sustainable food preservation.
- Local and global campaigns highlight themes like **"More Taste, Less Waste"** through restaurant weeks, public cook-offs, and food festivals

Additional Info
- **Date & Resolution**:
  - o Declared in 2016 (Resolution A/RES/71/246), observed from 2017.
- **UN Entities**:
  - o **UNGA** – formal declaration,
  - o **UNESCO & FAO** – lead implementation
  - o **Civil society** – critical role in awareness
- **Five Principles of Sustainable Agriculture & Food** (FAO): Productivity, resource protection, inclusive growth, resilience, responsive governance.

- **Broader benefits**: Conservation of biodiversity, reduced food waste, healthier diets, cultural preservation, rural development.

"Voices of Change" – World Sickle Cell Day, June 19

What's New?
- **World Sickle Cell Day**, celebrated annually on **June 19**, was officially recognized by the **UN General Assembly in December 2008**, with the first observance in **2009**.
- The **2025 global theme** is **"Global Action, Local Impact: Empowering Communities for Effective Self-Advocacy"**, emphasizing community-led awareness and support.
- In India, the focus spans from **public awareness campaigns** to advocating **mandatory testing** in schools and colleges, with initiatives in states like **Jharkhand**.

Why It Matters
- **Sickle Cell Disease (SCD)** is a **genetic disorder** where altered hemoglobin makes red blood cells crescent-shaped, causing painful **vaso-occlusive crises**, anemia, and multi-organ damage.
- Globally, about **7.7 million** people are affected, with **~80%** cases in sub-Saharan Africa; significant prevalence also exists in **India** and **Middle Eastern** populations.
- **Early detection and equitable access to care** are crucial to reduce morbidity and mortality, especially among vulnerable tribal and under-served communities.

Related Aspects
- **Screening and Prevention**:
  - o Experts urge **mandatory student screening** in high-risk areas—central India tribal belts have seen targeted initiatives.
  - o **Jharkhand plans statewide screening within a year**, alongside establishing a transplant center and "Medico City" for comprehensive care.
- **Treatment Access**:
  - o Standard care includes **pain management**, **folic acid**, **hydroxyurea**, **blood transfusions**, and **penicillin/vaccination**.
  - o In India, public hospitals (e.g., Nagpur) treat thousands annually and screen pregnant women to prevent births of affected children.
- **Advanced Therapies**:
  - o **Gene therapies** like **Casgevy (exa-cel)** and **Lyfgenia (lovo-cel)** approved by the FDA in late 2023 offer potential cures via **CRISPR** or **lentiviral vectors**.
  - o The **NHS in England** has begun offering **exa-cel** (96–98 % success), while **Texas Children's and Baylor** pilot programs in sub-Saharan Africa.

Additional Info
- **Genetics**: SCD is inherited when both parents carry the mutated β-globin gene—carrier (trait) individuals are usually asymptomatic.

- **Public Health**:
  - Higher childhood mortality if undiagnosed; early testing improves life expectancy to **58–66 years**.
  - India's **National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission 2047** focuses on detection, care, and eradication goals.

"Solidarity with Refugees" – World Refugee Day 2025

What's New?
- **World Refugee Day**, observed annually on **20 June**, was officially designated by the **UN General Assembly in December 2000** (Res. 55/76) and first marked in **2001**, commemorating the **50th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention**.
- The **2025 global theme** is **"Solidarity with Refugees"**, amplifying the call for meaningful action and compassion in support of displaced populations.

Why It Matters
- Highlights the resilience of over **123 million forcibly displaced people** worldwide, as emphasized by **the UN Secretary-General**.
- Reinforces refugee rights under international law, especially the **1951 Convention & 1967 Protocol**, and coincides with issues like growing **xenophobia**, and strains on host communities.

Legal & Historical Background
- **1951 Convention & 1967 Protocol** form the core legal framework defining refugees and host obligations .
- **Origins**: In 2000, the UN General Assembly aligned the observance with **Africa Refugee Day**—celebrated since 1975—at **20 June**.

UN & Agency Roles
- **UNHCR** leads global advocacy, survivor profiles, and community integration campaigns.
- **WHO** emphasizes inclusive public health, advocating resilient healthcare systems for displaced communities.
- **Other UN agencies** (OCHA, UNHCR, OHCHR, WFP, UNRWA) coalesce during this observance to shelter dignity and shelter rights.

Real-World Examples & Events
- Global campaigns like **#WithRefugees** and solidarity events—concerts, education drives, sports tournaments—foster unity and visibility.
- Recent Secretary-General's message underlined displacement from **Sudan, Ukraine, Myanmar**, with emphasis on combating xenophobia and bolstering support to host nations.

Additional Info
- **UNHCR-recognized refugees**: Over **43 million** registered globally; real numbers—including IDPs—exceed **100 million**.
- **India's stance**: Though not a party to the 1951 Convention, India provides protection through domestic law, UNHCR registration, and ad hoc humanitarian entries (e.g., Tibetans, Sri Lankans).

"Yoga for One Earth, One Health" – 11th International Day of Yoga

What's New?
- **International Day of Yoga (IDY)** is celebrated every year on **21 June**, as declared by the **UN General Assembly in 2014** (Resolution 69/131). The first observance was in **2015**, marking a global embrace of yoga.
- The **11th edition in 2025** carries the theme **"Yoga for One Earth, One Health"**, announced by PM Modi on 30 March 2025 via *Mann Ki Baat*, aligning with the G20's *One Earth, One Future* vision.

Why It Matters
- Reinforces the **holistic bond** between **personal well-being** and **planetary health**, rooted in yogic philosophy like **ahimsa** and **santosha**.
- Highlights yoga's role in addressing **mental stress**, physical health, and **environmental consciousness**, amid global challenges.
- Record engagement: Over **245 million participants** worldwide by 2024, with extensive global institutional participation.

Significance of June 21
- Aligns with the **summer solstice**, the longest day of the year in the northern hemisphere—symbolizing **light**, **balance**, and **energy**, themes central to yoga ideals.

Key Events & Celebrations
- **Mass yoga sessions** in India at venues like **Visakhapatnam beach** (joined by PM Modi and naval ships), **Indira Gandhi Stadium, Delhi,** and in **Andhra Pradesh's Nellore** (1.1 million participants).
- **Diplomatic events** in countries such as the US (Lincoln Memorial), Japan (Toyota City), and Saudi Arabia (Riyadh embassy), all emphasizing the 2025 theme.
- **Global awareness initiatives**: community classes, eco-yoga drives, workshops, and tree-planting aligned with yoga sessions to emphasize sustainability .

Additional Info
- **UN linkage**: IDY came about following PM Modi's proposal in 2014, endorsed by **177 nations**.
- **Ayush Ministry's role**: Coordinated IDY 2025 through flagship programs like **Yoga Sangam**, **Yoga Samavesh**, and **Harit Yoga**.
- **Philosophical roots**: Grounded in ancient Indian texts like the **Yoga Sutras of Patanjali**, which call for unity in personal and planetary health.

"Let's Move? Together for Joy" – International Olympic Day 2025

What's New?

- **International Olympic Day**, observed annually on **23 June**, marks the foundation of the **International Olympic Committee (IOC)** in **1894**.
- The official **2025 theme**, launched by the IOC in collaboration with **WHO**, is **"Let's Move?" – Together for more motivation, community and joy**, emphasizing inclusive physical activity and social well-being.

Why It Matters

- **Combatting inactivity**: With one in three adults and **81 % of youth** not meeting activity standards, the campaign confronts a global health challenge.
- **Sport as unifier**: Reinforces Olympic values—**excellence, friendship, respect**—and promotes global unity, peace, and cultural cohesion.
- **Public health connection**: Aligns with SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) via cross-sector collaboration between the **IOC and WHO**.

History & Evolution

- First celebrated in **1948** across nine countries following IOC's acceptance in **1947** at St. Moritz, incorporating mass physical activity to revive Olympic spirit after World War II.
- The **Olympic Day Run**, begun in **1987**, now occurs in over **150 countries**, offering runs/walks across varied distances to encourage universal participation.

Global Celebrations

- Events across **schools, clubs, communities**, and **embassies**, featuring runs, workshops, cultural programs, and digital fitness campaigns.
- In **India**, nearly 1,000 participants joined an Olympic Day run in **Aizawl**, under the theme "move, learn, explore – together for a better world," supported by Mizoram Vision 2036 initiative.
- Major institutions, including the **US Olympic Museum** and **European Olympic Committees**, hosted live workouts and community fitness relays.

Additional Info

- **Three pillars**: *Move, Learn, Discover*—promoting physical activity, Olympic education, and exploration of sports/cultures.
- **IOC motto**: *Citius, Altius, Fortius – Communiter* (Faster, Higher, Stronger—Together), reflecting the emphasis on collective action.
- **Public engagement**: Countries offer free access to sports facilities, online campaigns, and school workshops to make sports inclusive and educational.

"Count on Us" – United Nations Public Service Day 2025

What's New?

- **United Nations Public Service Day** is observed every year on **23 June**, as per **UNGA Resolution 57/277 (Dec 2002)**; first officially celebrated in **2003**.
- The **2025 global theme**, aligning with the concurrent **Public Service Forum in Samarkand (June 23–25)**, is **"Five Years to 2030: Accelerating Public Service Delivery for a Sustainable Future"**.
- The **UN Public Service Awards (UNPSA)**, established in **2003**, honours innovative and impactful public administration practices on this day.

Why It Matters

- **Public institutions** are critical to delivering essential services—healthcare, education, social protection, justice, infrastructure—and underpin **peace**, **good governance**, and **SDG 16**.
- At a time of global uncertainty, the UN Secretary-General praised public servants as the **"unsung architects of a better future"**, emphasising their role in building **trust in institutions**.
- The day fosters **peer learning**, **youth interest**, and cross-country sharing of **governance innovations**—critical for adapting to pandemics, climate change, and digital transformation.

Forum in Samarkand

- **UN Public Service Forum 2025** takes place **23–25 June** in **Uzbekistan**, bringing together civil servants, ministers, academia, and experts under the Day's overarching theme.
- **Workshops focus on:**
  - Innovation in public administration
  - Skills for digital, AI-driven governance
  - Data governance and citizen-centric solutions
  - Motivation and capacity building of public servants.

UN Public Service Awards

- **Annual competition** across five regions—Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America & Caribbean, Eastern Europe, Western Asia.
- Recognises excellence in areas like digital governance, pandemic response, community resilience, and transparency.
- Aligned with **SDG 16 and 17**, supporting strong institutions and partnerships.

Additional Info

- **Date selection**: Commemorates ILO's 1978 Convention No. 151 on public service employment and conditions.
- **Coordination**: Led by **UN DESA's DPIDG**, supported by **ECOSOC**, with award ceremonies held at UN HQ or host nations.
- **UNSG message**: Highlights frontline civil servants in education, healthcare, justice, and sustainable development.

"Backbone Boosted" – International MSME Day Spotlights India's Growth Engine

What's New?

- Every year on **27 June**, the **UN-designated Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Day** honours their critical role in **economic development, employment**, and **poverty alleviation**.
- In India, **World MSME Day 2025** was marked by high-powered events:
    - **Axis Bank & India SME Forum** presented the **India SME 100 Awards 2025**, celebrating top-performing MSMEs across sectors.
    - **Economic Times/ET Digital** hosted a conclave focusing on the 3-I theme: **Innovation, Impact, Intelligence**.
    - **CII & regional governments** held seminars on sustainable MSME growth and female entrepreneurship.

Why It Matters

- **India's MSME footprint**: Over **64 million units**, employing ~**110 million people**, contributing ~30% to GDP and 45% to exports.
- These enterprises are central to **inclusive growth**, supporting rural economies, exporting value-added goods, and fostering innovation.
- Annual recognition stimulates **policy focus**, encourages formalisation, and propels global opportunities via buyer-seller meets and MoUs.

Axis Bank's Role

- Through its **Evolve programme**, Axis Bank has impacted 9,000+ MSME entrepreneurs across 50+ cities, promoting **digital adoption**, operational resilience, and growth mindset.
- Its **SME 100 Awards 2025** acknowledged excellence in innovation, finance, global outreach, and governance.

State-Level & Sectoral Highlights

- In **Kolkata**, the **Defence & DRDO** urged MSME participation in shipbuilding and technology projects, especially from the East.
- **Kerala** recorded **100% FDI growth** and launched youth-focused schemes like **ARYSE**, **K-Store**, **Mission 10000** nano units, and nano subsidies.
- In **Andhra Pradesh**, 101 MoUs exchanged at a buyer-seller meet, including participation from 30 global buyers and 38 women-led startups.
- **Uttar Pradesh** launched the **CM-YUVA app**, ODOP Centres of Excellence, and Youth Adda hubs to support youth MSME entrepreneurship.

Global & Institutional Engagement

- The UN's MSME Day theme for 2025—**"Business for MSMEs: Connecting Entrepreneurs"**—underscores global collaboration.
- The **NSIC CMD** emphasized MSMEs' journey from village charkhas to high-tech like Chandrayaan, positioning them as drivers of **Viksit Bharat**.

Additional Info

- **Udyam Registration (2020)**: Simplified MSME formalisation; over **4.77 crore enterprises registered**.
- **Credit Guarantee Fund (CGTMSE)**: Offers collateral-free loans up to ₹5 crore, enabling credit access with AI-based processing and coverage of ₹5.2 lakh cr by Dec 2024.
- **PM Vishwakarma Scheme (2023)**: ₹13,000 cr to empower traditional artisans and craftspeople under the Ministry of MSME.

"Touch Over Sound" – UN Marks First International Day of Deafblindness

What's New?

- On **27 June 2025**, the UN officially observed the **first-ever International Day of Deafblindness**, commemorating the birthday of **Helen Keller (1880–1968)**.
- The UN General Assembly adopted **Resolution A/RES/79/294** (June 16, 2025), recognizing **deafblindness as a distinct disability** and calling for global action to enhance support systems.

Why It Matters

- **Distinct disability recognition**: Deafblindness is unique—sight and hearing impairments together cannot be compensated independently—requiring specialized interventions.
- **Making the invisible visible**: People with deafblindness often face **statistical invisibility** and gaps in policies, programs, and services.
- **Global advocacy**: The initiative was led by **Croatia's UN mission, the World Federation of the Deafblind (WFDB)**, and supported by 99 member states.

Helen Keller & Symbolic Significance

- **Helen Keller**, celebrated for overcoming dual sensory loss, remains a powerful symbol of resilience and advocacy.
- The **red-and-white striped cane**, used by the deafblind community for mobility and as an identity marker, was acknowledged in the resolution.

Policy & Programmatic Implications

- The UN urged countries to:
    - Recognize deafblindness as a **distinct category** in disability policies
    - Train and deploy **deafblind interpreters/guide-interpreters**
    - Strengthen access to **education, health, employment**, and social services

Community & Visibility Actions

- **Global Deafblind Awareness Week (22–28 June)** accompanied the day, featuring webinars, school programs, and sensory-inclusive exhibitions in several countries.
- NGOs like **Sense International, NAB (Delhi)** support individual success stories such as **Rohan, Pushpa, and**

Rupa, demonstrating lived resilience and need for structural inclusion.

Additional Info
- The resolution highlights the importance of **data inclusion** under frameworks like the **CRPD (Article 24)** and **SDGs**, ensuring deafblind persons aren't left behind.
- The **CoSP18 side event (12 June, UN HQ)** hosted by Croatia and WFDB helped accelerate momentum towards the resolution.

"Cosmic Vigilance" – UN's World Asteroid Day Strengthens Planetary Defense

What's New?
- **World Asteroid Day**, observed on **30 June** since **2016**, is a United Nations-backed global awareness event highlighting the **risks posed by near-Earth objects (NEOs)**, such as asteroids and meteoroids.
- 2025 marks the **10th anniversary** of this initiative, commemorating the **1908 Tunguska event** in Siberia, when an asteroid caused wide-scale forest devastation.

Why It Matters
- **Earth's vulnerability revealed**: Tunguska flattened ~2,150 sq km of forest—proof that **even medium-sized asteroids** can pose catastrophic hazards.
- **Real-time risk monitoring**: Events like livestreams from the **Virtual Telescope Project**, displaying live NEO flybys, help the public grasp asteroid threats.
- **Science-policy synergy**: The day promotes international cooperation in **asteroid detection**, **trajectory mapping**, and **planetary defense technology**.

Origins & Institutional Support
- **Co-founded (2014)** by space experts like **Brian May** and **Rusty Schweickart**, and backed by **Stephen Hawking**, the initiative gained UN sanction in 2016 via Resolution A/71/90.
- The **Asteroid Foundation** in Luxembourg leads annual events, including panels, workshops, art-science exhibits (June 26–28, 2025).

Science & Technology
- **NEO monitoring networks**: NASA's Near-Earth Object Program, ESA's Hera mission, and B612 Foundation's Sentinel mission are spotlighted.
- **Deflection preparedness**: Research into **kinetic impactors**, **gravity tractors**, and collaborative missions to deflect asteroids is discussed during the event.

Public Education & NGO Involvement
- Over **700 events globally** engage students, communities, and disaster preparedness NGOs.
- NGOs and schools use the day to teach **space science**, **risk readiness**, and **planetary stewardship**.

Additional Info
- The UN has themed **2029 as the International Year of Asteroid Awareness**, coinciding with asteroid **Apophis** passing just 32,000 km from Earth.

- Typical NEO events: asteroids with "bullet-like" debris or **potentially hazardous asteroids** make close flybys annually, though none pose imminent threats.

State Affairs

Karnataka Ups Ante on Tobacco: Legal Age Now 21, Hookah Bars Banned

In a significant move to safeguard public health, particularly that of its youth, the **Karnataka government** has enacted stricter tobacco control measures by officially bringing into force the **Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) (Karnataka Amendment) Act, 2024.** The amended law, which received Presidential assent on May 23, 2025, and was notified in the state gazette on May 30, 2025, notably **raises the minimum legal age for purchasing and selling tobacco products from 18 to 21 years** and imposes a **complete ban on operating hookah bars** across the state. These stringent measures aim to curb the growing menace of tobacco addiction, reduce the exposure of young adults to harmful tobacco products, and address the health risks associated with hookah smoking, which is often perceived incorrectly as less harmful than cigarettes.

Provisions of the Karnataka Amendment Act:
- **Increased Legal Age:** The minimum age to purchase, sell, or offer for sale any cigarettes or other tobacco products is now **21 years**, up from the previous 18 years.
- **Complete Ban on Hookah Bars:** A new Section 4A prohibits the opening or running of any hookah bar in any place, including eateries, pubs, bars, or restaurants.
  - **Penalties for Hookah Bar Operations:** Violators face imprisonment for a term of not less than one year, which may extend to three years, and a fine ranging from ₹50,000 to ₹1 lakh (under the newly added Section 21A).
- **Prohibition on Sale of Loose Cigarettes:** The sale of loose cigarettes or single sticks is now prohibited.
- **Stricter Enforcement Around Educational Institutions:** The sale of tobacco products is banned within a radius of **100 meters** of any educational institution.
- **Expanded Definition of "Use" of Tobacco:** The definition of "use" of tobacco in public places has been expanded to include **both smoking and spitting of tobacco**.
- **Increased Fines for Public Smoking:** The fine for smoking in public places or selling tobacco to individuals below the newly defined legal age (21 years) has been significantly increased from **₹200 to ₹1,000**.
- **Designated Smoking Areas:** Provisions for designated smoking areas continue in hotels with 30 or more

rooms, restaurants with a seating capacity of 30 or more, and at airports.

Health Hazards of Tobacco and Hookah:

- **Tobacco Use:** Is a leading cause of preventable deaths globally, linked to various cancers (lung, oral, throat), cardiovascular diseases, respiratory illnesses (COPD, emphysema), and reproductive health issues.
- **Hookah Smoking - Not a Safe Alternative:**
    o Despite passing through water, hookah smoke contains numerous toxins, including **high levels of nicotine (the addictive substance), tar, carbon monoxide, heavy metals, and carcinogens.**
    o A typical one-hour hookah session can involve inhaling **100-200 times the volume of smoke** inhaled from a single cigarette.
    o Hookah smoking is associated with lung cancer, oral cancer, heart disease, and other serious conditions.
    o Sharing hookah mouthpieces also poses a risk of transmitting infectious diseases like tuberculosis, herpes, and hepatitis.
    o Even so-called "herbal" hookahs are considered harmful due to the combustion process and the presence of carbon monoxide and other toxins from the charcoal used to heat the tobacco/herbal mixture.

India's National Tobacco Control Efforts:

- **Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003:** The primary central legislation governing tobacco control in India. It includes provisions for:
    o Prohibiting smoking in public places.
    o Banning advertising, promotion, and sponsorship of tobacco products.
    o Prohibiting sale to minors (the central act still specifies 18 years, which states can make stricter).
    o Mandating pictorial health warnings on tobacco product packages.
- **National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP):** Launched to strengthen the implementation of COTPA, create awareness, and provide tobacco cessation services.
- **Ban on E-cigarettes:** India banned e-cigarettes in 2019 due to health concerns and their appeal to youth.

UP Boosts Post-Service Options: 20% Quota for Agniveers in Police & PAC

The **Uttar Pradesh government** has announced a significant decision to provide **20% reservation** for former **Agniveers** in direct recruitment to various posts within the state's **police force** and the **Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC)**. This move aims to offer meaningful post-service employment opportunities to youth who complete their tenure under the central government's Agnipath scheme.

Key Details of the Announcement:

- **Reservation Quantum:** A substantial **20% horizontal reservation** will be provided to ex-Agniveers.
- **Applicable Forces:** The reservation will apply to direct recruitment for the posts of:
    o Constables in the **Uttar Pradesh Police**
    o Constables in the **Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC)**
    o **Mounted Police**
    o **Firemen**
- **Eligibility:** The benefit is intended for Agniveers who have successfully completed their four-year engagement in the armed forces under the Agnipath scheme and are permanent residents of Uttar Pradesh.
- **Relaxations:**
    o **Age Relaxation:** A relaxation of up to **three years** in the upper age limit will be provided to ex-Agniveers applying for these posts (after deducting their period of service from their age, similar to the provision for ex-servicemen).
    o **Physical Standards:** The UP government has also indicated that there will be **relaxation in physical efficiency test standards** for Agniveers, recognizing their rigorous military training.
- **Implementation:** The first batch of Agniveers is expected to complete their service in 2026, and recruitment under this new quota is anticipated to begin then. This reservation is stated to be the highest offered by any state so far.

Understanding the Agnipath Scheme:

The Agnipath Scheme, launched by the Central Government in June 2022, is a new human resource management scheme for the armed forces.

- **Recruitment:** It allows patriotic and motivated youth (called **Agniveers**) to serve in the Armed Forces (Army, Navy, and Air Force) for a period of **four years**.
- **Age Limit:** The age for aspirants is typically between 17.5 to 21 years.
- **Post-Service:**
    o After four years, up to **25% of the Agniveers** from a specific batch may be selected to enrol in the regular cadre of the Armed Forces based on merit and organizational requirements.
    o The remaining 75% will be released with a **'Seva Nidhi' package** (a lump-sum amount of approximately ₹11.71 lakh, partly contributed by them and partly by the government, which is tax-free), skill certificates, and assistance for further employment or education.
- **Objectives:**
    o To create a more youthful and agile profile for the armed forces.

- o To provide a disciplined, skilled, and motivated workforce for society and the economy upon their exit.
- o To reduce the burgeoning pension bill for defence services over time.
- **Concerns:** The scheme has also faced concerns regarding job security for the 75% who are not retained, the potential impact on the cohesiveness and experience levels within military units, and the adequacy of the training period.

"Tap & Vote" – Bihar Launches India's First Mobile-Based E-Voting for Urban Polls

What's New?

- In a **historic move**, **Bihar** has become the **first Indian state** to roll out a **mobile-based e-voting system** for **urban local body elections**, scheduled for **June 28, 2025**.
- The **Bihar State Election Commission (BSEC)** launched this via two Android apps – **"e-Voting SECBHR"** (developed with C-DAC) and another by BSEC.
- **Registration** is open till **June 22, 2025**. So far, over **10,000 users** have enrolled, with capacity for around **50,000 voters**.

Why It Matters

- **Democratic inclusivity**: Enables voting for **migrants**, **senior citizens**, **divyangs**, **pregnant women**, and the **seriously ill** who can't reach polling booths.
- **Digital India alignment**: Elevates electoral participation and transparency via **blockchain**, **biometric authentication**, **liveness detection**, and an **audit trail**—mirroring VVPAT systems.
- **Security-first approach**: The platform includes **end-to-end encryption**, **OTP tokens**, **face-match**, and a **confirmation screen** before vote submission.

Technology & Oversight

- **Blockchain** protects vote integrity; the system logs a secure, indelible audit trail.
- **Face-scan with liveness checks** prevents fraud; parallels VVPAT for verifiability.
- **ECINET platform**: The **Election Commission of India** will deploy ECINET, a unified digital portal integrating 40+ apps (including voter roll, booth data) to streamline election management.

Global & Indian Context

- Worldwide, only **Estonia** has a long-running mobile e-voting system; Bihar follows as a pioneer in **Asia**.
- Bihar has a track record of **electoral tech innovations**: face recognition, OCR-based vote counting, and digital locks for EVM strong rooms.

Benefits & Challenges

Plus Points

- **Increases participation** among marginalized and digitally inclined voters.

- Lowers costs and logistical burdens associated with booths and EVM handling.
- **Speeds up vote count** via digital transmission.
- Strong safeguards for **transparency and trust**.

Hurdles to Monitor

- **Digital divide**: Not all voters have smartphones or literacy.
- **Cybersecurity threats**: System must resist hacking and impersonation.
- **Legal and constitutional fit**: The Representation of the People Act needs updates for remote voting legality and dispute mechanisms.

Additional Info

- **Pilot scheme**: Launched only in urban municipal wards; traditional booth voting continues alongside as optional.
- **Capacity ramp-up**: Pilot for ~50,000 voters; may scale after evaluation.
- **ECINET & ECI support**: Integral to push for voter registration accuracy and programme fairness.

"Purvodaya Powerhouse" – PM Modi Launches ₹18,600 Cr Odisha Push & Vision 2047

What's New?

- On **June 20, 2025**, PM **Narendra Modi** inaugurated **105 development projects** worth over **₹18,600 crore** in Odisha during the first anniversary of the BJP-led state government.
- He also unveiled the **Odisha Vision Document**, charting a strategic roadmap for the state to become a **$500 billion economy by 2036** (Odisha's centenary) and a **$1.5 trillion economy by 2047** (India's centenary).

Why It Matters

- **Infrastructure boost**: Projects span **drinking water**, **irrigation**, **healthcare**, **roads**, **railways**, **bridges**, and **urban transport**, strengthening connectivity and public welfare.
- **Green mobility push**: Flagged off **100 electric buses** under CRUT (Capital Region Urban Transport), promoting sustainable transit in Bhubaneswar.
- **Cultural tourism**: Launched **Baraputra Aitihya Gram Yojana** to convert birthplaces of Odia icons into heritage tourism hubs.

Rail & Urban Connectivity

- **First passenger train** to Boudh inaugurated via Sonepur–Purunakatak line.
- New rail lines launched: Sarla–Sason (3rd & 4th lines); Jharsuguda–Jamga (4th line).

Women & SHG Empowerment

- PM felicitated **"Lakhpati Didis"**—women from SHGs who crossed annual incomes of ₹1 lakh. Odisha leads with over **16.6 lakh such women**.
- Set to complement existing women-led welfare schemes like **Subhadra Yojana** targeting **1 crore women** with direct financial support.

Vision Document & Economic Outlook

- **Vision Document timelines**:
  - **2036**: 100 years of Odisha's formation → $500 billion economy
  - **2047**: 100 years of India's independence → $1.5 trillion economy.
- Framed post **public consultations (3.2 lakh inputs)** and AI analysis; aligns with "Purvodaya" industrial growth model.

Defence

Operation Shiva: Fortifying the Amarnath Yatra 2025

In response to heightened security threats, the Indian Army, in close coordination with Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and the Jammu and Kashmir Police, has launched **"Operation Shiva"**. This comprehensive and multi-layered security plan aims to provide foolproof protection for the annual **Amarnath Yatra**, a revered Hindu pilgrimage, which is scheduled to commence on July 3, 2025.

Why was Operation Shiva Launched?

The launch of this massive security operation comes in the wake of a deadly **terror attack in Pahalgam on April 22, 2025**, which claimed the lives of 26 civilians. This tragic incident has prompted security agencies to recalibrate and significantly upgrade the security infrastructure to ensure the safe and smooth conduct of the pilgrimage, which attracts lakhs of devotees from across the country. The operation sends a strong message of resilience and the government's commitment to conducting the yatra peacefully.

Key Features of the Security Plan

Operation Shiva involves an unprecedented deployment of security personnel and technology to guard the entire pilgrimage route. It is a highly coordinated effort to neutralize any potential threats.

- **Massive Troop Deployment:** Over **42,000 security personnel** from the Indian Army, CRPF, BSF, SSB, ITBP, CISF, and J&K Police will be deployed along the two primary yatra routes—the traditional **Pahalgam** route and the shorter **Baltal** route.
- **Three-Tier Security Grid:** A robust, multi-layered security setup will be in place, covering the yatra base camps, the routes, and the holy cave shrine itself.
- **Advanced Technological Surveillance:**
  - **Drones and CCTVs:** The entire route will be under constant surveillance using a network of high-resolution CCTV cameras and drones for real-time monitoring.
  - **RFID Tagging:** It is now **mandatory for all pilgrims and their vehicles** to have **Radio Frequency Identification (RFID)** cards. This will enable precise tracking and monitoring of their movement.
- **Enhanced Convoy Protection:**
  - For the first time, **jammers** will be used with the pilgrim convoys to neutralize threats from remote-controlled Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs).
  - During the movement of the yatra convoy, all approach roads leading to the national highway will be temporarily blocked for civilian traffic.
- **Route Sanitization: Road Opening Parties (ROPs)** and bomb disposal squads will conduct daily anti-sabotage checks along the pilgrimage routes to detect and neutralize any hidden explosives.
- **Quick Reaction Teams (QRTs):** Specially trained QRTs will be positioned at strategic and sensitive locations to respond swiftly to any emergency.

The Amarnath Yatra:

- **Significance:** It is one of the most sacred pilgrimages for Hindus. Devotees undertake an arduous trek to the **Amarnath Cave**, located at an altitude of 3,888 meters, to worship a naturally forming **ice stalagmite (Lingam)**, which is believed to be a manifestation of Lord Shiva.
- **Routes:** The yatra is conducted along two main routes:
  1. **Pahalgam Route (Anantnag district):** The traditional, longer route (approx. 48 km).
  2. **Baltal Route (Ganderbal district):** A much shorter (approx. 14 km) but steeper and more challenging route.

Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB):

- It is the government body responsible for the management of the Amarnath Yatra.
- Headed by the **Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir**, the board oversees registrations, health facilities, infrastructure development, and all other logistics for the pilgrimage.

"Rudrastra" – India's Indigenous VTOL UAV Takes Flight in Army Trials

What's New?

- The **Indian Army** tested the **Rudrastra**, an indigenously developed **hybrid VTOL (Vertical Take-Off and Landing) UAV**, at the **Pokharan Firing Range**
- It demonstrated:
  - **Vertical take-off/landing** capability combined with **fixed-wing flight** for extended range.
  - An operational **mission radius of over 50 km**, a total range exceeding **170 km**, and endurance around **1.5 hours**.
  - **Precision-guided anti-personnel strike** via a **low-height airburst warhead**, with real-time **EO/IR video feed**.

The Tech
- **Hybrid VTOL** combines the vertical lift of a helicopter with the speed and range of a small airplane.
- Carries ~**8 kg smart warhead**—dropping it from medium altitude creates a **low-altitude airburst** for wide-area effect.
- **Real-time video (EO/IR)** enables "**find–fix–finish**" operations—identify, engage, and complete mission.
- **Autonomous return-to-base** ensures mission completion without manual intervention.

Additional Info
- **Solar Defence & Aerospace Ltd (SDAL)**: Nagpur-based private company developing Rudrastra; part of Solar Industries India Ltd.
- **Pokharan Firing Range (Rajasthan)**: A major defence testing site for missiles and UAVs.
- **DRDO's Rustom Programme**: Indigenous UAV development initiative—Rudrastra aligns with this national trajectory.
- **VTOL UAVs**: No runway needed, ideal for remote area deployments and infantry operations.

Related Developments
- **Bhargavastra**: SDAL's **counter-drone micro-rocket system**, successfully trialed in **May 2025 in O**disha—and capable of destroying drone swarms using guided rockets.
- **Nagastra-1**: A portable loitering munition "suicide drone" developed by Economic Explosives Ltd and Z-Motion; used for targeted strikes with **1–1.5 kg warhead**, range 30–40 km.

"Operation Sindhu" – Safeguarding Indians Amid Iran–Israel Conflict
What's New?
- On **June 18, 2025**, the **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** launched **Operation Sindhu** to evacuate Indian nationals from Iran amid escalating tensions with Israel.
- The **first evacuation flight** carried **110 students** from Urmia Medical University via Armenia to Delhi, landing early on **June 19**.
- **Subsequent flights** from Mashhad and Turkmenistan brought back more—totaling around **1,713 Indians** by **June 22**.

Why It Matters
- Reflects India's **"No Indian Left Behind"** policy, extending beyond borders to protect citizens in crisis.
- Signifies robust **diplomatic coordination** with Iran, Armenia, Qatar, and Turkmenistan, ensuring safe exit corridors.
- Highlights India's ability to act swiftly during unpredictable geopolitical crises.

Evacuation Logistics
- Students moved **by road** from Urmia to Yerevan on **June 17**, then flew to Delhi on **June 18** via special commercial flights.

- Evacuation operations expanded through **Mashhad** and **Turkmenistan** routes, with coordinated embassy efforts.
- MEA set up **24×7 control rooms and helplines**, monitored by Jal Shakti MoS Kirti Vardhan Singh and Pabitra Margherita, at Delhi airport.

Voices from the Ground
- Many evacuees described **drone and missile attacks**, harrowing power cuts, and near-total communication blackouts .
- Reactions at Delhi airport ranged from **tearful reunions** to expressions of gratitude—"*We thank the Indian government*".

Context from India's Past
- Continues the legacy of past evacuations—**Operation Ganga (Ukraine, 2022), Operation Kaveri (Sudan, 2023), Operation Ajay (Israel, 2023)**—demonstrating India's evacuation toolkit.

Additional Info
- **Scope**: Over **4,000 Indians** in Iran (nearly half students); focus remains on high-risk zones and those in need.
- **Control Points**:
  - **Embassies in Iran, Armenia**: Managed safe movement corridors.
  - **MEA Control Room**: 24×7 helpline, situation monitoring.
- **Coordination**: Thanked **Iranian and Armenian governments for** cooperation and transit support.

"Operation Sindhu" – Safe & Swift: Over 4,400 Indians Evacuated Amid Iran–Israel Conflict
What's New?
- Launched on **18 June 2025**, **Operation Sindhu** is India's joint **MEA–IAF-led mission** to evacuate citizens from conflict zones in **Iran** and **Israel**.
- As of **27 June**, over **4,400 Indians** have been repatriated via **19 special flights**: approximately **2,295 from Iran** and **over 2,105 from Israel**.
- The evacuation involved **multiple routes**: flights from **Mashhad (Iran), Ashgabat (Turkmenistan)**, and **land-air corridors via Jordan and Egypt** from **Israel**, utilizing **C-17 IAF and chartered flights**.

Why It Matters
- **Humanitarian priority**: In the wake of escalated **Israel–Iran military strikes**, India's swift action underscores its duty to protect citizens abroad.
- **Evacuation complexity**: The mission navigates **contested airspace, overland routes**, and partnerships with **Iran, Armenia, Jordan, Egypt**, highlighting India's diplomatic and operational agility.
- **Crisis preparedness**: Operation Sindhu follows a lineage of high-impact missions—**Operation Ganga (Ukraine 2022), Operation Devi Shakti (Afghanistan 2021)**—demonstrating robust institutional readiness.

Evacuee Profile & Experiences

- Evacuated groups include **students (notably from Jammu & Kashmir), professionals, pilgrims, families**, including **women and children**.
- Returnees recounted **missile drills, drone fire**, and near-miss bombing, crediting the government's prompt evacuation for their safety.

Coordination & Control

- **MEA control room** operates 24/7; embassies in Tehran and Tel Aviv maintain continuous contact with citizens.
- Clearance and cooperation obtained from governments of **Iran, Armenia, Turkmenistan, Jordan, and Egypt** were critical.

Flight Statistics (as of 27 June)

Operation	Region	No. of Flights	Evacuees
Sindhu–Iran	Iran to India	~10	~2,295
Sindhu–Israel	Israel to India	~9	~2,105+

- In recent days: 286 evacuees landed from **Sharm-el-Sheikh via Egypt**, and 224 Indians from **Israel** on an IAF C-17.

"Adamya Ahoy!" – India Inducts First Indigenous Fast Patrol Vessel (FPV) under the 08-FPV Project

What's New?

- The **Indian Coast Guard (ICG)** formally commissioned **"Adamya"**, the **first of eight Fast Patrol Vessels (FPVs)** built under the **08-FPV contract**, by **Goa Shipyard Ltd (GSL)** on **26 June 2025**.
- These vessels, including **Akshar, Amulya, Akshay, Achal**, etc., are part of a **₹473 crore MoD contract** signed in March 2022.

Why It Matters

- **Aatmanirbharta in defence**: Boasts **over 60 % indigenous content**, in line with the "Make in India" and **Self-Reliant India** initiatives.
- **Enhanced maritime surveillance**: Designed for **EEZ patrol, anti-smuggling, fisheries protection**, ISR, SAR, and coastal convoy escort duties.
- **Fleet modernisation**: Each 52 m, 320 t vessel with **27 knots speed**, CPP propulsion, and **dual-class certification** (ABS & IR Class) strengthens ICG readiness.

Design & Capabilities

- Measures **52 m × 8 m**, powered by **diesel engines and controllable pitch propellers**, delivering **27 knots top speed** and a **1,500 nmi range at 13 knots**.
- Accommodates a crew of **35**, including **7 officers**, and mounts **30 mm main gun + 12.7 mm machine guns**.

Industrial & Strategic Impact

- GSL used a **state-of-the-art ship-lift system** for simultaneous launches of "Adamya" & "Akshar" in October 2024—the first such feat.
- Following these launches, GSL prepared to **deliver the vessels by March 2025**, showcasing its rising capacity.

Operational Roles

- Patrol duties across **India's 2 million sq km EEZ**, supporting **maritime law enforcement**, anti-piracy, and emergency response.
- Ready to **escort convoys**, act as **communication relays**, and support **naval operations in war**.

Additional Info

- **Goa Shipyard Ltd (GSL)**: A Defence PSU founded in 1957, now a key shipbuilder for ICG and Indian Navy.
- **08-FPV Project**: Contract signed March 2022 under **Buy (Indian-IDDM)** policy; 8 vessels of 51–52 m class, dual-certified, high indigenous share.
- The FPVs exemplify **India's shift from import-dependency toward a domestic shipbuilding base** aligned with broader defence sector reforms.

International Relations

India Takes the Helm: Wins Presidency of International Institute of Administrative Sciences

India has won the presidency of the **International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS)** for a three-year term from 2025 to 2028. This marks a historic first for India in the 100-year history of the Brussels-based global body, reflecting the country's growing influence in international governance circles. The election took place during the IIAS General Assembly meeting.

Shri V. Srinivas, Secretary of the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), represented India's successful candidacy. This victory, secured against Austria with a substantial majority of 61.7% of the votes, underscores the global recognition of India's advancements in administrative reforms and public grievance redressal.

India's Presidency:

- **Historic Mandate:** This is the first time India has secured the presidency of IIAS. It's also the first instance in IIAS's century-long existence that an election to the post of President was conducted through a ballot process.
- **Global Recognition:** The win highlights India's increasing prominence in international governance and public administration.
- **Focus on "Maximum Governance – Minimum Government":** India's presidency will aim to promote Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of "Maximum Governance – Minimum Government." This involves showcasing next-generation administrative reforms with a strong emphasis on **digital empowerment of citizens** and the **digital transformation of institutions**.
- **Bridging the North-South Divide:** India intends to foster an inclusive presidency, focusing on unity and bridging the North-South divide in governance practices, drawing from Gandhian values.

- **Vision for IIAS:** India has put forward a vision for a "Resource Rich, Publications Rich, Digitally Agile IIAS." This includes integrating best practices of digital public infrastructure to transform governance models globally.
- **Strengthening International Collaboration:** The presidency offers a platform for India to share its successful governance models and learn from global best practices, further strengthening international collaboration in public administration.

India Elected to UN ECOSOC, Vows to Champion Global Development

In a significant diplomatic achievement, India has been elected to the **United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**, one of the principal organs of the UN, for a three-year term beginning January 1, 2026. India was elected from the **Asia-Pacific States** category, receiving overwhelming support from member nations in the UN General Assembly. This election reinforces India's growing stature on the global stage and provides a crucial platform to shape international policies on sustainable development.

India's Role and Stated Priorities:

Following the election, India reaffirmed its commitment to championing development issues, with a special focus on the **Global South**. External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar emphasized that India will continue to work towards strengthening ECOSOC and advancing a human-centric global development agenda. India's priorities during its **2026-2028 term** are expected to include:

- **Accelerating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** Pushing for concrete action and international cooperation to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- **Climate Action and Finance:** Advocating for equitable and just climate action, along with accessible and affordable financing for developing countries.
- **Digital Transformation:** Promoting inclusive digital transformation that bridges the digital divide and empowers communities.
- **Voice of the Global South:** Articulating the perspectives and concerns of developing nations and working towards a more equitable international economic and social order.

Significance of India's Election:

- **Shaping Global Policy:** ECOSOC is the central UN platform for policy debate, dialogue, and recommendations on economic, social, and environmental issues. India's presence will allow it to directly influence these crucial discussions.
- **Leadership Role:** The election underscores the international community's trust in India's leadership, particularly as a consensus-builder and a leading voice for the developing world.
- **Strengthening Multilateralism:** In a world facing fragmented challenges, India's role in a key multilateral

body like ECOSOC is vital for fostering cooperation and finding collective solutions.
- **Monitoring SDG Progress:** As the main body for the follow-up and review of the SDGs, India will play a key role in assessing global progress and identifying areas needing urgent attention.

The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC):

- **Principal Organ:** ECOSOC is one of the **six principal organs** of the United Nations, established by the UN Charter in 1945. It is at the heart of the UN's work on sustainable development.
- **Composition:** It has **54 member states**, elected by the **UN General Assembly** for overlapping **three-year terms**.
- **Geographical Representation:** Seats are allotted based on equitable geographical distribution:
  - African States: 14 seats
  - Asia-Pacific States: 11 seats
  - Eastern European States: 6 seats
  - Latin American and Caribbean States: 10 seats
  - Western European and other States: 13 seats
- **Mandate and Functions:**
  - Serves as the central forum for discussing international economic and social issues.
  - Promotes higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress.
  - Coordinates the work of the **14 UN specialized agencies** (like WHO, ILO), ten functional commissions (e.g., Commission on the Status of Women), and five regional commissions.
  - Issues policy recommendations to the UN system and member states.
  - Plays a lead role in the follow-up to major UN conferences and summits.

African Union Joins India-Led CDRI, Strengthening Global South Cooperation

In a major boost to global cooperation on disaster management, India has formally welcomed the **African Union (AU)** as the newest member of the **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)**. This significant development took place during the G20 Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Working Group Roundtable at the **Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GPDRR) 2025** in Geneva.

The announcement underscores a deepening of partnership between India and African nations, reinforcing the spirit of **South-South cooperation**. This move comes after the African Union's historic inclusion as a permanent member of the **G20** during India's presidency in 2023, further highlighting India's role in championing the voice of the Global South on international platforms.

Key Highlights of the Development

- **Strengthening Resilience:** The inclusion of the 55-member African Union into the CDRI will foster a

robust exchange of knowledge, technology, and capacity-building resources. It aims to make infrastructure across the African continent more resilient to climate and disaster risks.

- **India's Commitment:** Representing India, the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Dr. P. K. Mishra, hailed the AU's entry as a reinforcement of a shared vision for "infrastructure that is safe, inclusive and future-ready."
- **Global Health Diplomacy:** On the sidelines of the event, India also reaffirmed its support for key **World Health Organization (WHO)** initiatives. This includes full backing for the **Second WHO Global Traditional Medicine Summit**, scheduled to be held in New Delhi, and continued commitment to the **WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine** in Jamnagar, Gujarat.

What does this mean for India and the World?
- **Leadership in Disaster Management:** This development solidifies India's leadership role in global disaster management. The CDRI, an initiative launched by India, is a prime example of its commitment to building a more resilient world.
- **A Safer Alternative:** The CDRI focuses on capacity building and sustainable development, providing a collaborative model for infrastructure development, which is often seen as an alternative to debt-heavy investment models.
- **Focus on Africa:** This aligns with India's long-standing foreign policy of engaging with African nations as equal partners, focusing on shared priorities like sustainable development, climate action, and public health.

Global Irony: Pakistan in Key UNSC Anti-Terror Roles Sparks Concern in India

What's New?
- On **4 June 2025**, Pakistan, a **non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (2025–26)**, was appointed to several sensitive anti-terror roles:
  - **Chair** of the **1988 UNSC Taliban Sanctions Committee**
  - **Vice-Chair** of the **Counter-Terrorism Committee** (mandated by Resolution 1373 post-9/11)
  - **Co-Chair** of two subsidiary working groups on **documentation** and **sanctions architecture**.

Why India is Uneasy
- Appointment comes soon after:
  - **Pahalgam terror attack** (22 April 2025) and subsequent **Operation Sindoor** military action.
  - India's diplomatic outreach to **33 UNSC members** to highlight Pakistan's terror connections.
- India sees this as contradictory, given ongoing efforts to isolate Pakistan on terrorism issues.
- Political reactions:

  - **Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge**: called the appointments "**ill-informed**, **unacceptable**", urging global "**de-hyphenation**" of India-Pakistan narratives.
  - **Pawan Khera**: labelled it a sign of "**foreign policy collapse**" given simultaneous IMF, WB, ADB financial support to Pakistan.
  - **Shiv Sena UBT** MP Priyanka Chaturvedi described UNSC decision as a "**joke**".

Strategic & Diplomatic Context
- **Counter-Terrorism Architecture**:
  - **Committee (post-9/11)**: Oversees global counter-terror obligations under Resolution 1373.
  - **1988 Sanctions Committee**: Monitors Taliban-related sanctions (assets freeze, travel ban, arms embargo).
- **Rotational UNSC roles**: Chairs require consensus among all 15 members; Pakistan's elevation indicates some level of international acquiescence.
- **Comparison**: India held the **Counter-Terrorism Committee chair** in **2022**, highlighting a role reversal now.

France–Brazil Blue NDC Challenge to Scale Up Ocean-Based Climate Action

What's the News?
- At the **third UN Ocean Conference (UNOC3)** held in Nice, France, **France and Brazil** jointly launched the **Blue NDC Challenge**, an initiative urging nations to **integrate ocean-based climate actions** into their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement.
- An **inaugural group of eight countries**—Australia, Fiji, Kenya, Mexico, Palau, and Seychelles—have already signed up to embed ocean-related goals ahead of **COP30 in Brazil** this November.

Key Elements of the Blue NDC Challenge
- **Core objective**: Place the **ocean at the centre** of national climate planning by recognising its role in **climate mitigation**, **adaptation**, and the **1.5°C goal**.
- **Focus areas include**:
  - **Blue carbon ecosystems**: mangroves, seagrasses, salt marshes
  - **Coastal resilience and disaster preparedness**
  - **Marine biodiversity protection**
  - **Ocean-friendly economic activities**: sustainable fisheries, renewable energy, blue economy governance.
- **Supporting organisations**: Ocean Conservancy, Ocean and Climate Platform, World Resources Institute (ORCA), endorsed by WWF-Brazil.

BRICS Parliamentary Forum Condemns Pahalgam Terror Attack, Vows Collective Action

What's the News?

- On **4–5 June 2025**, at the **11th BRICS Parliamentary Forum** in **Brasília, Brazil, Parliaments from all 10 BRICS countries**—including India, China, Russia, South Africa, Iran, UAE, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Indonesia—**strongly condemned** the **22 April Pahalgam terror attack**, which claimed **26 civilian lives**, mainly tourists.
- The Forum **approved a joint declaration**, committing to a **"zero-tolerance" policy** against terrorism and pledging **collective action**.
- **Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla**, heading the Indian delegation, pressed for:
    o **Curtailing terror financing**
    o Enhancing **intelligence sharing**
    o Preventing **misuse of emerging technologies**
    o Promoting **judicial and investigative cooperation**.
- India was entrusted to **host and chair** the **12th BRICS Parliamentary Forum** in 2026, with Om Birla named its Chairperson.

Why India is Watching Closely

- The coordinated BRICS denunciation reinforces India's **global diplomatic narrative** and **post-attack outreach**—**Operation Sindoor**—which saw multi-party delegations visiting over **30 countries**.
- It marks **enhanced solidarity** from major BRICS nations—including China and Iran—against **cross-border terrorism**, enhancing pressure on **Pakistan**.
- Om Birla's emphasis on **financial networks**, intelligence sharing, and **tech abuse** reflects growing **multilateral cooperation frameworks** aligned with **UNSCRs and FATF standards**.

Broader Strategic Context

- This joint stance emerges in the wake of **Operation Sindoor**, India's comprehensive diplomatic campaign to isolate **Pakistan internationally**.
- Aligns with **India–Central Asia Dialogue (4th edition)**, where partners urged bringing **terror financiers** to justice and ensuring UN-led cooperation.
- Reinforces usage of **parliamentary diplomacy** alongside **executive actions**, illustrating India's multi-pronged strategy in international forums.

India & China to Expedite Resumption of Direct Flights: A Diplomatic Thaw

What's the News?

- On **12–13 June 2025**, during talks between **Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri** and **Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong**, both countries agreed to **fast-track resumption of direct passenger air services**, currently suspended since early 2020 due to the pandemic and border tensions.

- They also pledged to **reinstate visa facilitation**, **media and think-tank exchanges**, and **functional economic dialogues** as part of broader efforts to **stabilize and rebuild bilateral ties**.

Key Developments

- **Direct flights halted** early 2020; negotiations underway since January 2025 to restore connectivity.
- Airlines like **Air India** and **IndiGo** are expected to restart routes between cities such as **Delhi–Beijing**, **Mumbai–Shanghai**, and **Kolkata–Guangzhou**, once technicalities like **slot allocation** and **ground handling** are finalized.
- Resumption of the **Kailash Mansarovar Yatra** was also noted as a significant people-to-people confidence-building step.

Additional Info

- **Air Services Agreement (ASA)**: Bilateral treaty regulating air connectivity—needs updating to facilitate flights.
- **Pre-2020 air traffic**: Up to ~50 flights/week between multiple Indian and Chinese cities.
- **Pilgrimage resumption**: Kailash Mansarovar Yatra halted since border tensions, now set to restart.
- **Border diplomacy**: Follows October 2024 **LAC patrol agreement**, January 2025 diplomatic exchange and broader trust-building steps .

"Turning the Tide" – UN Ocean Summit in Nice Drives Ocean Action

What's New?

- From **9–13 June 2025**, **France and Costa Rica** co-hosted the **3rd UN Ocean Conference (UNOC3)** in **Nice**, focusing on **SDG 14: Life Below Water** with the theme **"Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors"**.
- Over **170 nations** adopted the **"Nice Ocean Action Plan"**—a political declaration committing to urgent ocean conservation measures.
- More than **2,000 voluntary commitments** were registered, covering marine protected areas, plastic reduction, sustainable fisheries, and blue economy investment .

Major Outcomes

- **High Seas Treaty (BBNJ Agreement)**:
    o **49 countries** have now ratified the treaty—just 11 short of the **60 needed** for it to come into force.
    o A **moratorium on deep-sea mining**, establishment of marine protected areas (MPAs), and governance mechanisms were endorsed, with **India pledging to ratify soon**.
- **Marine Protected Areas & Plastic Pollution**:
    o Conference reaffirmed the **30×30 target**—protect **30% of oceans by 2030**.
    o Governments pledged to strengthen **marine pollution control**, especially plastics and ghost nets.

- **Climate Finance & Blue Economy**:
  - Roughly **$10 billion** mobilized, mostly from **public development banks**, against a required **$175 billion annually**.
  - Call for **clear governance** and better data to attract **private investment** into ocean-based climate solutions.

Additional Info
- **SDG 14**: Calls for ocean conservation, pollution reduction, and sustainable marine practices.
- **BBNJ Agreement**: Framework under **UNCLOS (2023)** for protecting biodiversity beyond national waters.
- **Kunming-Montreal Framework**: Biodiversity pact calling for 30% conservation, integrated into the Action Plan.
- **Blue Economy & UN Decade**: Supports investment in sustainable marine industries via blue economy initiatives.
- **One Ocean Science Congress**: Scientific event held 3–6 June built evidence-based inputs for policy.

"UPI Goes East Mediterranean" – India Signs MoU to Introduce UPI in Cyprus
What's New?
- On **16 June 2025**, during Prime Minister **Modi's official visit to Cyprus**, India's **NPCI International Payments Ltd (NIPL)** and **Eurobank** signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** to launch **UPI-based cross-border payments** between **Cyprus and India**.
- This agreement positions **Cyprus as one of the first European adopters** of **UPI**, enabling **tourists**, the **Indian diaspora**, and **businesses** to make quick, secure **remittances and payments** in real time .

UPI Internationalisation:
- A part of India's **Payments Vision 2025**, UPI has been expanding globally—already adopted in **UK, France, UAE, Singapore, Sri Lanka**, and **Greece**, among others.
- NIPL (formed in **April 2020**) spearheads these international expansions.

Role of Eurobank:
- Eurobank is a **major financial group in Greece and Cyprus**, with **€80.5 bn in assets** and **540+ branches**.
- The MoU enables Eurobank to manage **settlement, reconciliation, and disputes**, becoming a key node for **UPI remittances**.

Regional Collaboration via IGC Council:
- MoU aligns with broader economic diplomacy under the **India–Greece–Cyprus Business Council**, enhancing fintech, tourism, and trade.

Additional Info
- **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)**:
  - Launched in **2016** by **NPCI**; revolutionized payments with fast, secure, interoperable transactions.

- International rollout includes mobile and merchant payments, with allowances for **foreign cards and accounts** since September 2022 .
- **NIPL**:
  - A wholly-owned subsidiary of NPCI since **April 2020**; responsible for overseas deployment of UPI and **RuPay**.
- **Eurobank Group**:
  - Present in **Greece**, **Cyprus**, **UK**, and **Luxembourg**, aims to serve as **gateway for Indian payments into Europe**.

"Vietnam Steadies BRICS Ties" – Vietnam Becomes 10th BRICS Partner Country
What's New?
- On **June 13, 2025**, **Brazil's presidency of BRICS** officially welcomed **Vietnam** as a **BRICS Partner Country**—the **10th** addition in this category.
- This new status allows Vietnam to **attend BRICS summits** and **participate in key discussions**, though it remains distinct from full membership.

Why It Matters
- The BRICS bloc (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) is expanding as a **diplomatic and economic counterweight** to traditional Western influence.
- Vietnam's inclusion reinforces its role in **South-South cooperation**, **sustainable development**, and support for a **more inclusive global order**.
- With a **population of ~100 million** and a **dynamic, export-driven economy**, Vietnam's presence enhances BRICS' reach into **Southeast Asia**.

Strategic Context & Balance of Partnerships
- Vietnam opts for **partner status** rather than full membership, allowing it to **engage with BRICS without fully aligning**—maintaining balance with Western ties, notably the **U.S.**.
- Earlier statements from **Russia** and **Vietnam's PM** signaled mutual support for Vietnam's deeper cooperation, including in **nuclear energy**, during 2024 BRICS meetings.

Economic & Diplomatic Pathways
- By joining BRICS as a partner, Vietnam gains access to:
  - **BRICS Summit participation**
  - Collaborative space with institutions like the **New Development Bank**.

Broader Geopolitical Impacts
- BRICS recently welcomed full members such as **Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, UAE**, and **Indonesia**—positioning Vietnam among rising economies seeking global networking.
- Vietnam also reaffirms its stance on **WTO multilateralism**, aligning with China to oppose unilateral tariffs—showing a pattern of advocating for **rules-based global trade** .

both sides focused on **commercial, technological, and geopolitical engagement**.

"Diplomatic Reset" – India & Canada Agree to Reappoint High Commissioners

What's New?

- At the **G7 Summit in Kananaskis, Canada**, **Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi** and **Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney** agreed to **re-establish full diplomatic services** by appointing new **High Commissioners** to each other's capitals (17 June 2025).
- This move ends a **nearly two-year diplomatic freeze**, during which both nations had expelled diplomatic staff following contentious allegations related to the murder of Sikh separatist **Hardeep Singh Nijjar** in Canada.

Why It Matters

- **Restoring normalcy**: Reinstating High Commissioners resumes visa services and consular support, crucial for citizens and businesses.
- **Softening diplomatic tensions**: This is a significant thaw following charges by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) accusing India of "foreign interference," a claim New Delhi denies.
- **Strategic cooperation**: Both leaders emphasized shared democratic values, the rule of law, and cooperation in areas like **clean energy**, **digital infrastructure**, **food security**, **critical minerals**, and supply chains.

Background of Strained Ties

- Diplomatic relations plummeted after Canada's **September 2023 accusation** that India orchestrated Nijjar's killing. Both nations expelled diplomats in **October 2023**, halting visa issuance and consular functions.
- Despite the recent diplomatic reconciliation, **Canadian intelligence** accused India of orchestrating transnational repression—accusations which India firmly rejects.

Steps in Normalization

- First bilateral in-person meeting between **Modi** and **Carney** following Carney's election in **March 2025**.
- High Commissioners will soon be designated, enabling resumption of **visa processes**, **trade talks**, and **ministerial dialogues**.
- Discussions focused on strengthening cooperation on **joint intelligence sharing**, transnational security, and Indo-Pacific policy alignment .

Additional Info

- **High Commissioners vs Ambassadors**: India and Canada, both Commonwealth nations, exchange **High Commissioners**, not ambassadors.
- **Tied to past expulsion**: Canada expelled India's High Commissioner Sanjay Verma and five officials in October 2024 after labeling them persona non grata.
- **New diplomatic alignment**: Agreement marks a decisive break from nearly two years of tension, with

India Skips SCO Declaration Over Terrorism Silence

What's New?

- India, represented by Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh**, refused to sign a joint declaration at the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers' meeting** held in Qingdao, China.
- The primary reason for this was the **omission of any mention of cross-border terrorism**, a key concern for India. Specifically, the declaration failed to include the recent terror attack in **Pahalgam, Jammu & Kashmir**.
- India's proposal to include strong language against terrorism and hold its sponsors accountable was reportedly **blocked by one member nation**, widely understood to be **Pakistan**.
- Since the SCO operates on the principle of **consensus**, the declaration could not be adopted without India's signature, resulting in the meeting concluding without a joint communiqué.

Understanding India's Stand

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, in his address, strongly condemned countries that use **terrorism as an instrument of state policy** and provide safe havens to terrorist groups.
- He emphasized that there can be no **"double standards"** on terrorism and that peace and prosperity cannot coexist with such threats.
- India's refusal underscores its consistent **"zero-tolerance" policy on terrorism** and its commitment to not compromise on core national security issues for the sake of consensus.
- The move is significant as it demonstrates India's willingness to take a firm and independent stand on a major international platform dominated by China and Russia.

Additional Info

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

- **What it is**: A permanent intergovernmental political, economic, and security organization of the Eurasian region.
- **Founded**: 2001. The precursor, the "Shanghai Five," was formed in 1996.
- **Members**: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, **India** (joined in 2017), **Pakistan** (joined in 2017), and Iran.
- **Main Goals**:
  - Strengthening mutual trust and good-neighborly relations among member states.
  - Promoting effective cooperation in politics, trade, economy, security, and culture.
  - Combating **terrorism, separatism, and extremism**.

- **Key Body**: The **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)**, headquartered in Tashkent, is a permanent organ to promote counter-terrorism cooperation.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

- **What it is**: A collection of infrastructure projects under construction throughout Pakistan, starting in 2013. It is a flagship project of China's broader **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**.
- **India's Objection**: India has consistently opposed CPEC because it passes through **Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK)**, a territory India claims as its own. India views the project as a violation of its **sovereignty and territorial integrity**.

International

US FDA Approves Moderna's New COVID-19 Vaccine "MnexSpike"

The **U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)** has granted approval to **Moderna's new COVID-19 vaccine, named mNEXSPIKE (mRNA-1283)**. This next-generation vaccine is indicated for use in **adults aged 65 years and older, and individuals aged 12 to 64 years with at least one underlying risk factor for severe COVID-19.**

The approval of mNEXSPIKE is seen as a crucial step in providing updated protection against evolving SARS-CoV-2 variants, especially as health authorities prepare for the 2025-2026 respiratory virus season. The new vaccine demonstrated higher efficacy compared to Moderna's original Spikevax vaccine in clinical trials and offers operational advantages like improved storage.

MnexSpike:

- **Enhanced Efficacy:** Phase 3 clinical trial data (NextCOVE study) showed that mNEXSPIKE (mRNA-1283) elicited a stronger immune response and higher relative vaccine efficacy against COVID-19 compared to the original Spikevax (mRNA-1273) vaccine, particularly in older adults (65+).
- **Targeted Protection:** The approval aligns with current recommendations to prioritize vaccination for older adults and high-risk individuals who are more vulnerable to severe outcomes from COVID-19.
- **mRNA Technology:** Like its predecessor, MnexSpike is an **mRNA (messenger RNA) vaccine**.
- **Lower Dose Potential & Formulation:** While detailed dosage specifics are part of the approval, Moderna has been working on next-generation vaccines that could offer strong protection with potentially lower doses or improved formulations. MnexSpike comes in a **pre-filled syringe format** and has improved storage capabilities (can be stored between 2°C to 8°C for up to 90 days), which can ease the burden on healthcare providers.
- **Safety Profile:** The safety profile of mNEXSPIKE was found to be comparable to other approved COVID-19 vaccines, with common side effects including injection site pain, fatigue, and headache.
- **Availability:** Moderna expects the vaccine to be available for the upcoming 2025-2026 respiratory season.

Understanding mRNA Vaccine Technology (Simplified):

Imagine your body's cells are like tiny factories. An mRNA vaccine doesn't inject a weakened or dead virus. Instead, it delivers a set of instructions (the mRNA) to these cell factories.

1. **Instructions Delivered:** The mRNA in the vaccine carries instructions to produce a specific, harmless piece of the virus – in the case of COVID-19, a piece of the "spike protein" found on the surface of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.
2. **Cells Make the Protein:** Your cells read these instructions and start making copies of this spike protein piece.
3. **Immune System Responds:** Your immune system recognizes that this spike protein piece doesn't belong there and starts building a defense against it by creating antibodies.
4. **Instructions Degrade:** After delivering the instructions, the mRNA itself is quickly broken down and eliminated by the cells. It does not enter the cell's nucleus and does not alter your DNA.
5. **Future Protection:** Now, if you are exposed to the actual SARS-CoV-2 virus later, your immune system remembers the spike protein and is ready to fight off the virus quickly, preventing severe illness.

Advantages of mRNA vaccines:

- **Speed of Development:** Can be designed and manufactured more rapidly than traditional vaccines, which is crucial during pandemics.
- **Safety:** They do not contain live virus, so they cannot cause the disease they are protecting against.
- **High Efficacy:** Have shown high levels of effectiveness.

COVID-19 Variants and Vaccine Updates:

- Viruses like SARS-CoV-2 naturally mutate over time, leading to new **variants**. Some variants may spread more easily, cause more severe disease, or evade the protection offered by existing vaccines or prior infection.
- This necessitates ongoing surveillance of circulating variants and, when required, updating vaccines to better match these new strains, similar to how annual flu vaccines are updated.
- The WHO and national advisory bodies regularly assess the genetic evolution of SARS-CoV-2 and make recommendations on the composition of future COVID-19 vaccines. For instance, the WHO recently recommended monovalent vaccines targeting newer strains like JN.1 or KP.2.

Annalena Baerbock of Germany Elected President of 80th UN General Assembly

Germany's former Foreign Minister, Annalena Baerbock, has been elected as the **President of the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)**. Her election, which took place on June 2nd/3rd, 2025 (as per news reports), marks a significant moment as she will guide the deliberations of the UN's most representative body during a period of complex global challenges. The 80th session of the UNGA is scheduled to commence in September 2025.

The Election and Presidency:

- **Candidate and Election:** Annalena Baerbock was elected by the 193 member states of the UN General Assembly. Reports indicate she received 167 votes. The election was held by secret ballot, a move reportedly requested by Russia.
- **Term and Role:** Ms. Baerbock will assume office at the beginning of the 80th UNGA session in September 2025, succeeding the current President, Philemon Yang of Cameroon (President of the 79th session). She will preside over the UNGA for a one-year term.
- **Representation:** Her election means the presidency for the 80th session comes from the **Western European and Others Group (WEOG)**, in line with the principle of geographical rotation.
- **Historic Significance:** Annalena Baerbock will be the **fifth woman** to hold the prestigious position of UNGA President in the UN's 80-year history. She is also noted as being one of the youngest individuals elected to this role.
- **Theme for Presidency:** Ms. Baerbock has announced that the theme for her presidency will be **"Better Together,"** emphasizing the need for unity and collective action in addressing global issues.
- **Priorities Outlined:** In her acceptance speech and vision statement, she highlighted priorities such as:
  - Making the UN system more **efficient and effective**.
  - Advancing the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**.
  - Ensuring the General Assembly is a **truly inclusive forum**, promoting gender equality, multilingualism, and engagement with civil society and youth.
  - Addressing the **UN80 initiative** for a stronger, fit-for-purpose organization.
  - Pledging to act as an **"honest broker and a unifier"** for all member states.

Russia Patents Space Drone Technology for Future Orbital Station

Russia's state space corporation, **Roscosmos**, has announced the patenting of a new technology to launch and operate drones directly from an orbital space station. This innovative system is designed to perform external inspections and maintenance, significantly reducing the need for astronauts to conduct high-risk spacewalks. This development is a key part of Russia's plan for its future independent space platform, the **Russian Orbital Station (ROSS)**, which is expected to begin deployment after 2027. The goal is to create the world's first space station designed from the ground up to be serviced by robotic systems.

How will the Technology Work?

- **Drone Deployment:** The patent covers a system that will allow small, automated spacecraft or drones to be launched from the exterior of the space station.
- **Robotic Maintenance:** These drones will be equipped with sensors and cameras to carry out detailed inspections of the station's outer hull, searching for micrometeoroid damage, structural stress, or other issues.
- **Reducing Spacewalks:** The primary aim is to automate routine checks and minor repairs. This will enhance astronaut safety by minimizing their exposure to the harsh environment of open space during **Extravehicular Activities (EVAs)**, commonly known as spacewalks.
- **Future Applications:** Russian officials have stated that this technology, once tested on ROSS, could also be adapted for future missions, including the exploration and maintenance of infrastructure on and around the Moon.

Global Poverty Line Rises: World Bank's June 2025 Update

What's New?

- On **5 June 2025**, the **World Bank** revised its **International Poverty Line (IPL)** using *2021 Purchasing Power Parities (PPPs)*.
- Key changes:
  - **Low-income countries**: IPL raised from **$2.15 to $3.00** per person per day.
  - **Lower-middle income**: Line updated from **$3.65 to $4.20**.
  - **Upper-middle income**: Adjusted from **$6.85 to $8.30**.

Impact on Poverty Statistics

- **Global extreme poverty** (2022): Re-estimated at **10.5%**, up from **9.0%**, meaning about **838 million people** live below IPL—an increase from **713 million**.
- **Regional shifts**:
  - **Sub-Saharan Africa**: Rate rose from **37.0% to 45.5%**.
  - **South Asia**: Declined from **9.7% to 7.3%**.
- **Future projection**: Extreme poverty expected to fall to **9.9% by 2025**, if trends continue.

Why It Matters?

- **PPP-based updates** challenge straightforward comparisons of poverty over time.
- **SDG 1 Target (End extreme poverty by 2030)** will now be measured against the adjusted IPL.

- **India's position**: Improved performance as South Asia shows declining poverty, supported by updated data including 2022 survey.
- **Policy implications**: Necessitates refined strategy—more focused targeting of vulnerable regions and recalibration of welfare thresholds.

Real-world Context

- **Policy adjustments**: Governments may need to **realign poverty alleviation programs** and **public distribution systems** to match new poverty estimates.
- **International comparison**: Raises debate over whether richer countries apply accurate poverty benchmarks beyond IPL—World Bank also defines **societal poverty lines**.
- **India**: As per Spring 2025 World Bank brief:
  - Extreme poverty fell from **16.2% (2011-12)** to **2.3% (2022-23)**.
  - Lower-middle poverty declined from **61.8% to 28.1%**, lifting **378 million people**.

India's Revised Poverty Profile (PIP 2025)

India's latest **Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES)** adopted the **Modified Mixed Recall Period (MMRP)** method, replacing the outdated Uniform Reference Period (URP). This shift:

- Used **shorter recall periods for frequently purchased items**
- Captured **more realistic estimates of actual consumption**
  As a result, consumption recorded in national surveys rose, leading to a **drop in poverty estimates**:
- In 2011–12, applying MMRP reduced India's poverty rate from **22.9% to 16.22%**, even under the **older $2.15 poverty line**.
- In 2022–23, poverty under the **new $3.00 line** stood at **5.25%**, while under the older $2.15 line it dropped further to **2.35%**.

Year	Poverty Line (PPP/day)	Poverty Rate	People Below Poverty Line
2011–12	$2.15 (2017)	16.22%	~205.9 million
2011-12	$3.00 (2021)	27.12%	~344.47 million
2022–23	$2.15 (2017)	2.35%	~33.6 million
2022–23	$3.00 (2021)	5.25%	~75.2 million

Additional Info

- **Purchasing Power Parity (PPP)**: Exchange rate that equalizes price of goods/services across countries.
- **Global poverty thresholds**:
  - IPL for **low-income**: now **$3/day**
  - Lower-middle income: **$4.20/day**
  - Upper-middle income: **$8.30/day**
- **World Bank's platform**:
  - **Poverty & Inequality Platform (PIP)** integrates new PPPs and updated country survey data.

- **SDG Alignment**: SDG 1.1 monitors extreme poverty under updated benchmarks.

Middle East Conflict Escalates: Iran Continues Strikes on Israel, UN Security Council in Session

What's the News?

- On **June 14, 2025**, **Iran's military** publicly announced it will **continue missile and drone strikes** against **Israel**, with plans to expand the campaign to include **U.S. military bases in the region**.
- The escalation follows Israel's **largest-ever aerial offensive** targeting Iranian **nuclear and military sites**—including Natanz and key leadership structures—marking a major turn in the longstanding Iran–Israel conflict.
- The **UN Security Council met** in an **emergency session** to address the crisis, focusing on de-escalation efforts and condemning the widening confrontation.

Key Details

- **Iran's retaliation**: Launching multiple missile and drone salvos—over 100 projectiles—toward **Tel Aviv, Jerusalem,** and military sites; at least **three Israelis killed**, dozens injured.
- **Casualties in Iran**: Israeli strikes reportedly killed **78 Iranian personnel**, including senior scientists and commanders, with over **320 injured**.
- **Target expansion**: Iran vows to strike **U.S., U.K., and French** bases if these forces assist Israel.
- **UN response**: The Security Council convened urgently; global leaders called for restraint amid fears of wider regional war.

Additional Information

- **Iran–Israel conflict context**: Longstanding rivalry focused on Iran's nuclear ambitions and regional proxy wars; Israel's preemptive strategy signals high-risk escalation.
- **UN Security Council role**: Meets under **Article 99/35** to coordinate diplomatic pressure against further escalation.
- **Article 51 (UN Charter)**: Iran cites it as justification for self-defense; Israel counters with its right to pre-emptive security operations.
- **U.S. involvement**: Deployed air defenses and naval assets; helped intercept incoming missiles, though not officially engaged.

"Tea Trade Tussle" – Iran-Israel Conflict Clouds Indian Exports

What's New?

- Recent **military escalation between Iran and Israel** has triggered concerns among **Indian tea exporters**, particularly with **tea shipments to Iran** potentially being halted or delayed due to increased geopolitical risk.

- India saw a strong **~10% YoY growth** in tea exports (254.7 mkg in 2024 vs. 231.7 mkg in 2023), driven largely by growing demand from **Iraq and Iran**.
- Exporters warn that if the conflict intensifies, **disrupted shipping routes**, **rising insurance costs**, and **higher freight charges** could jeopardize trade flows to Iran and the broader West Asia region.

The Issue

- **Iran as a key market**: India exported nearly **40 mkg of tea to Iran** in early 2024.
- **Trade logistics under threat**: Escalating tensions may force rerouting around the **Red Sea/Suez Canal**, raising shipping costs by **15–20%** and impacting profitability.
- **Market risk**: Even if consumption doesn't decline, shipment disruptions and insurance hikes create uncertainty for exporters.

Why It Matters?

- **India's export basket**: Tea ranks among top **agri-commodities**—understanding trade risks highlights **geo-economic vulnerabilities**.
- **Maritime routes**: Role of **Red Sea–Suez** corridor in connecting India with Europe, West Asia—disruptions affect wide sectors.
- **Global linkages**: Conflict illustrates how **West Asia security dynamics** (like the Iran-Israel standoff) affect Indian **trade, logistics, and economy**.
- **Policy push**: Cases like this strengthen the case for **India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC)** to reduce dependency on volatile sea routes.

Additional Info

- **India's Tea Exports**:
  - Total ~254.7 mkg in 2024; **Iran, Iraq, UAE**, and CIS remain key buyers.
- **Shipping Geography**:
  - Vital corridors include **Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Suez Canal**, linking India to European & West Asian markets.
- **Trade Corridor Development**:
  - **IMEC** proposed under G20 aims to diversify logistics and reduce such risks.
- **Insurance & Freight Economics**:
  - Geopolitical instability increases **marine insurance premiums** and **freight charges**, squeezing export margins.

"Global Unity Tested" – G7 Summit in Canada Amid Heightened Geopolitics

What's New?

- The **51st G7 Summit** took place from **June 16–17, 2025,** in **Kananaskis, Alberta, Canada,** marking the **50th anniversary** of the group's founding.
- **Prime Minister Mark Carney** made his debut as host during a tumultuous week overshadowed by the **Israel–Iran escalation.**

- Key focus: realigning **EU–US sanctions on Russia,** managing **Israel–Iran tensions,** and addressing **AI governance, global trade, and energy security.**

Strategic Context & Key Discussions

- **Israel–Iran conflict** soared up the agenda after missile exchanges; G7 leaders urged **de-escalation** and backed **Israel's right to defend** itself.
- Coordinated **18th EU sanctions package** and anticipated **US sanctions** on Russia spotlighted EU-US alignment.
- Economic resilience discussed alongside:
  - Central bank policy stability (Fed, BoE, BoJ)
  - **AI regulation**
  - **Climate change**
  - **Digital governance.**
- Transnational repression, migrant smuggling, and border security also received attention .

India's Role & Bilateral Engagements

- **PM Narendra Modi** attended as an invitation guest—his **sixth consecutive G7 appearance**, strengthening India-Canada ties and global diplomacy.
- Modi held **sideline bilateral talks**, including with **Croatia**, boosting EU-India engagement .

Additional Info

- **About G7**:
  - Comprises **"Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK, and US, plus EU representation**.
  - Origins in the **1975** oil crisis, formalised as G7 in **1976** with Canada's inclusion; Russia was part from **1998–2014**.
  - Informal consensus-driven forum without a permanent secretariat.
- **Summit Dynamics**:
  - **50th anniversary** celebrated in 2025.
  - Hosted previously by Canada in **2002** (as G8 at Kananaskis).
  - Next host: France, scheduled in June 2026 in Évian-les-Bains.

"Oil on Edge" – Why Prices Are Surging Amid Israel–Iran Tensions

What's New?

- Since **mid-June 2025,** the Israel–Iran exchanges—airstrikes on Iran's nuclear and military sites and Iran's retaliatory ballistic and drone launches—have sparked sharp increases in global crude oil prices.
- **Brent crude** rose approximately **9–11%** between June 13–17, crossing the **$75–$78/barrel** range—levels unseen in nearly five months.

Why It Matters

- **Strait of Hormuz risk**: Nearly **20% of global oil exports** pass through this chokepoint. Iran has hinted at possible blockades, raising fears of supply disruptions.

- **Physical vs. psychological impact**: Even without immediate supply cuts, **market risk premiums** have surged due to fears of escalation—investors are bracing ahead of actual disruptions.
- **Global economy effects**: Higher oil prices fuel **inflation**, **transport costs**, and **manufacturing expenses**—leading to **slowed growth**, tighter monetary policies, and consumer strain.

Related Dynamics

- **Supply shock scenarios**:
  - Disruption of **1.1 mbpd** of Iranian output could raise Brent to **$75–$78**.
  - A three-million bpd cut or Strait closure could push prices to **>$90–$130**, with worst-case forecasts of **$150+**.
- **Investor behavior**:
  - Oil and energy stocks (Shell, BP, Exxon, Chevron) have drawn investor attention as portfolios pivot from gold, bonds, and equities—seen as a more effective hedge.
  - In risk-off moves, U.S. Treasuries and safe-haven flows have also benefited—though energy looks more attractive given inflation fears .
- **Market cushioning**:
  - Production ramps from other OPEC/OPEC+ members and U.S. shale have so far muted extreme price spikes.
  - Historical patterns show oil surges often peak in 4–6 months unless escalations persist.

"Escalation Spiral" – U.S. Strikes on Iran Deal Blow to Nuclear Diplomacy

What's New?

- On **June 21, 2025**, the **U.S. military launched precision strikes** on three major Iranian nuclear facilities—**Fordow**, **Natanz**, and **Isfahan**—using B-2 stealth bombers with bunker-buster bombs and submarine-launched Tomahawks in **Operation Midnight Hammer**.
- Iran responded with **ballistic missile barrages** against Israel and a threat to block the **Strait of Hormuz**, a strategic passage for 20% of global oil exports.

Why It Matters

- **Diplomacy Disrupted**: European efforts to revive nuclear talks are now "in tatters," with EU foreign ministers stating diplomacy has collapsed.
- **Risk of Arms Race**: The IAEA warned that the strikes undermine non-proliferation and could incentivize Iran to push harder for nuclear deterrence.
- **Regional Escalation**: U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres called the strikes a "dangerous escalation" posing "catastrophic consequences," urging restraint and return to diplomatic channels.

Global Diplomatic Fallout

- **European alarm**: EU leaders are scrambling to revive diplomacy, frustrated by being blindsided and worried about destabilization.
- **Russia & China**: Both condemned the U.S. action, with Russia warning it may open a "Pandora's box" of nuclear instability; Iran sought Russian support.

Geopolitical & Economic Ramifications

- **Strait risk**: Parliamentary threats in Tehran to seal off the Hormuz Strait triggered a spike in oil prices and global market anxieties.
- **Energy markets**: Even with disruptions unmaterialized, oil prices jumped over 12% temporarily—raising costs globally.

Military & Strategic Reality

- **Iran's retaliation**: Iran launched missiles into Israel and kept all "options on the table," including potential regional escalation.
- **U.S. posture**: Designated as a successful mission using bunker-busters and Tomahawks, Trump warned Iran that further retaliation would be met with force.

"5 % or Bust?" – NATO's New Defence Spending Target Clarified

What's New?

- At the **NATO Summit in The Hague (June 24–25, 2025)**, member states are set to commit to a new defence spending framework: **5 % of GDP** by **2035**, divided into **3.5 % for core military needs** (troops, weaponry) and **1.5 % for broader defence-related investments** (infrastructure, cybersecurity, military mobility).
- **Spain has secured an exemption**, citing domestic welfare priorities and its lower current base (~1.3 % GDP).

Why It Matters

- **Security scale-up**: The increase reflects a strategic recalibration in response to multi-domain threats—**Russia, cyber threats, and geopolitical uncertainty**.
- **Burden sharing**: U.S. leaders, including former President Trump, have demanded greater European contribution; this sets a significantly higher bar than the previous 2 % norm.
- **Strategic integration**: The 1.5 % includes dual-use spending (infrastructure, energy security, cyber), signalling an integrated defence-economy approach.

Deadlines & Review

- **Target deadline**: Allies (excluding Spain) to reach 5 % by **2035** — earlier online proposals suggested **2032**, with a **2029 review** mechanism.

Member Commitments

- **Norway** aims for full 5 % post-2030, raising core to 3.5 % and security-related 1.5 %.
- **Sweden** and **Netherlands** pledged support, aligning budgets to meet the 5 % goal.

- **Spain** officially opted out, maintaining its 2.1 % core defence target.

Contention Over Inclusion

- Debate lingers on what counts as defence spending—some worry that adding infrastructure could blur the line with traditional military expenditure.
- Some, like Estonia, demand clarity to prevent dilution of the "hard defence" envelope.

- **MENA region**: Continues to be the least peaceful globally, while **Western Europe** remains the most peaceful despite minor declines.

"Peace Pulse: India at 115th on Global Peace Index 2025"

What's New?

- The **Global Peace Index (GPI) 2025**, published by the **Institute for Economics & Peace**, shows a **0.36% decline** in global peacefulness—the **13th deterioration in 17 years**, with **59 active state-based conflicts**, the highest since World War II.
- **India ranks 115th out of 163 countries**, improving slightly from rank 116 in 2024, with a GPI score of **2.229** (a 0.58% improvement).

Why It Matters

- **Regional leadership**: In the context of South Asia—the world's second least peaceful region—India outperforms neighbours like Bangladesh (123), Pakistan (144), and Afghanistan (158).
- **Evolving stability**: India showed improvement in **nine GPI indicators**, while **three worsened** and **nine remained unchanged**, indicating selective progress amidst longer-term challenges.
- **Indicator domains**:
    - **Societal Safety & Security**
    - **Ongoing Domestic & External Conflict**
    - **Militarisation**

Global Peace Trends

- The **average peacefulness score** has dropped by **5.4%** since 2008.
- About **87 countries** deteriorated, while **74 improved**—indicating a mixed global landscape.
- Concerns include **rising militarisation**, **internationalised conflicts**, and the highest number of **state-based wars** since WWII.
- **Economic drag**: Violence-related losses totaled **$19.97 trillion**, nearly **11.6% of global GDP** in 2024.

Peace Hierarchies

- **Top 10 most peaceful countries**: Iceland, Ireland, New Zealand, Austria, Switzerland, Singapore, Portugal, Denmark, Slovenia, Finland.
- **Least peaceful**: Russia (163), Ukraine (162), Sudan, DR Congo, Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria, South Sudan, Israel, Mali.

Regional Patterns

- **South Asia**: The region recorded the **largest decline** in peace, though India's gradual improvement stands out.