Monthly Current Affairs Magazine

September 2025
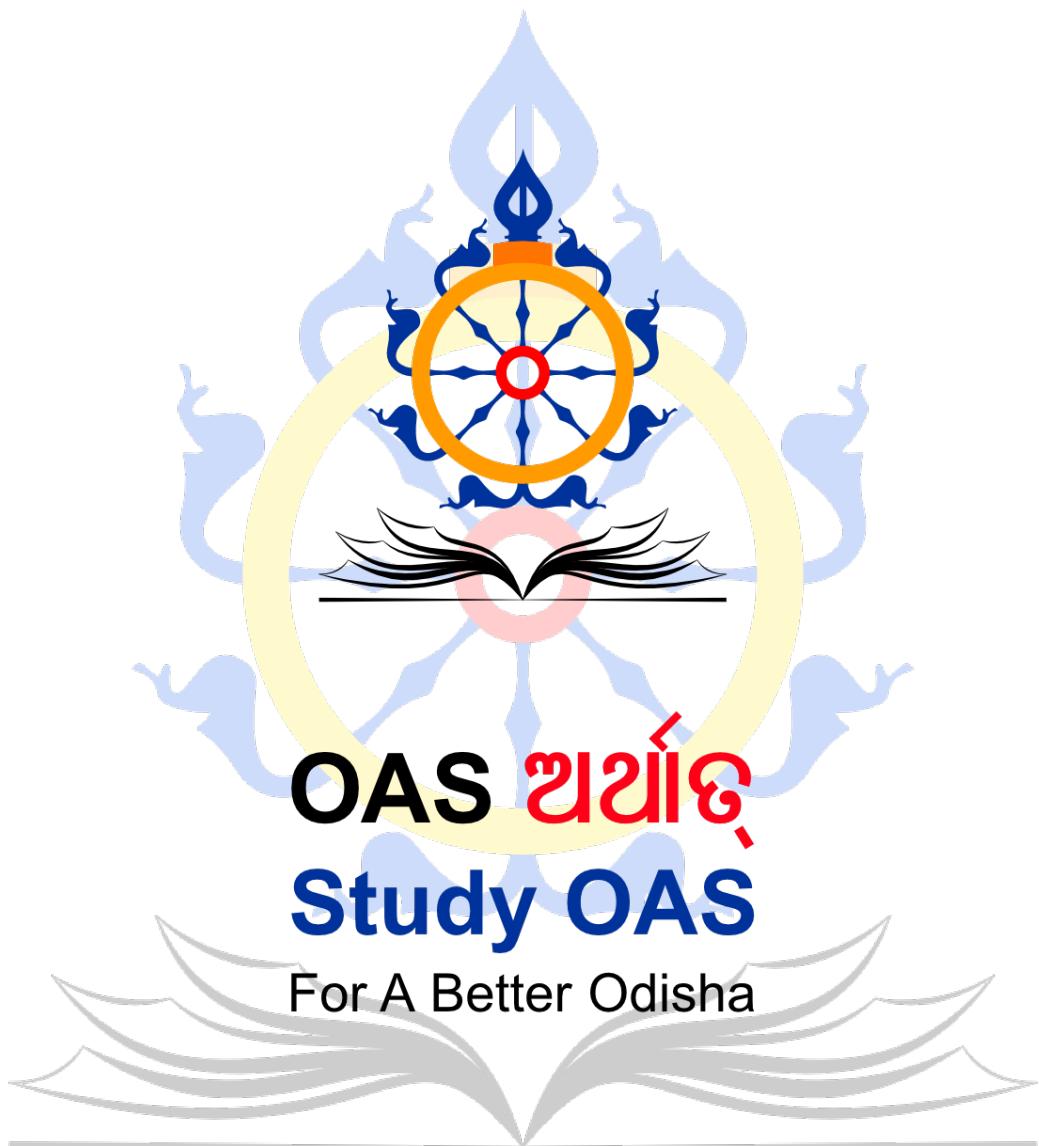
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Governance and Policy

Immigration & Foreigners (Exemption) Order, 2025

What's the News?

- The Government of India issued the **Immigration and Foreigners (Exemption) Order, 2025**, under Section 33 of the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025, replacing several prior exemption orders.
- It introduces targeted exemptions from requirements for valid passports, visas, and travel documents for defined categories of individuals and certain carriers.
- Exemptions apply to military personnel on duty and their families, citizens from Nepal and Bhutan crossing specified borders, select refugees and persecuted minorities, registered Tibetans and Sri Lankan Tamils, diplomats and foreign military visitors, as well as carriers under specific conditions. The order is in force immediately upon its Gazette notification.

Scope of Exemptions

- **Military and Families**
  - Members of the Indian Navy, Army or Air Force entering or exiting India on duty, and their accompanying family on government transport, are exempt from passport, visa, and travel-document norms.
- **Citizens of Nepal and Bhutan**
  - Citizens of these countries entering India by land or air across shared borders are exempt from passport and visa requirements, except in contexts involving China, Hong Kong, Macau, or Pakistan.
- **Refugees and Religious Minorities**
  - Registered Tibetans already in India and Sri Lankan Tamil refugees who entered by January 9, 2015, are granted exemptions.
  - Religiously persecuted individuals from specific minorities (Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, Christian) who entered from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan on or before December 31, 2024—even without valid documents—are exempt.
- **Diplomats & Foreign Military**
  - Holders of diplomatic or official passports under intergovernmental agreements and foreign military personnel aboard warships or for goodwill, exercise, bunkering, or relief visits are exempted, unless otherwise specified.
- **Carrier Exemptions**
  - Carriers (rail or road) are not held liable under certain sections of the Act for passengers:
    - Traveling on forged documents undetectable without specialists
    - Who are stowaways and taken back
    - Arriving via diverted aircraft or ships
    - Using Temporary Landing Permits
    - Belonging to exempt categories above

Cabinet Approves Incentive Scheme for Critical Mineral Recycling

What's the News?

- **Union Cabinet** approved a **₹1,500 crore** incentive scheme under the **National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM)** to promote recycling of **e-waste**, **lithium-ion battery (LIB)** scrap and other secondary feedstocks for recovery of **critical minerals**.
- The scheme targets creation of large-scale domestic recycling capacity to reduce import dependence and strengthen supply-chain resilience for strategic minerals.

Scheme design & expected impact

- **Duration & scope**
  - Six-year programme covering new units and expansion/modernisation of existing recyclers.
- **Financial support**
  - **20% capital subsidy** on plant, machinery and utilities for units meeting timelines.
  - **Operational subsidy** linked to incremental sales, disbursed as **40% in year 2** and **60% in year 5,** subject to targets.
  - Per-entity caps: **₹50 crore** (large) and **₹25 crore** (small); operational subsidy ceilings **₹10 crore** and **₹5 crore** respectively.
- **Inclusion**
  - Both established recyclers and smaller/start-ups eligible. **One-third** of outlay earmarked for small and new recyclers.
- **Outcomes projected**
  - Build **~270 kilotonnes** annual recycling capacity and produce **~40 kilotonnes** of critical minerals annually.
  - Mobilise **~₹8,000 crore** investment and generate **~70,000** direct and indirect jobs.

DGCA Grants Historic Safety Clearance to Air India SATS

What's the News?

- **DGCA** granted the first-ever **safety clearance** for ground-handling operations to **Air India SATS (AISATS)** under **Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR) Section 4, Series X, Part II**.
- The clearance recognises AISATS' **Safety Management System (SMS)**, training, risk controls and infrastructure after regulator inspections.
- The move aligns India with **ICAO** guidance and makes India the second country in the Asia-Pacific to formalise such a safety framework for ground handlers.

Safety Clearance — scope & implications

- **Scope**
  - Covers core ground-handling tasks such as **ramp operations**, **baggage**

handling, **aircraft servicing**, **refuelling** and **passenger services**.

- **Regulatory basis**
  - o Issued under **CAR Section 4, Series X, Part II** which mandates safety clearance and SMS for ground handlers.
- **Operational implications**
  - o Raises minimum safety and training benchmarks for handlers operating at major airports.
  - o Expected to shorten unsafe turnarounds, reduce incidents and improve auditability of ground operations.

Aadhaar Authentication Transactions Surge in August 2025

What's the News?

- **UIDAI** reported **221 crore** Aadhaar authentication transactions in August, up about **10% year-on-year**.
- **Face authentication** rose sharply to **18.6 crore** transactions in August, from **6.04 crore** in the same month last year; UIDAI recorded an all-time single-day high of **over 1.5 crore** face authentications.
- **e-KYC** usage remained large, with **38.53 crore** e-KYC transactions executed in the month.

Adoption, technology & policy implications

- **Overview**
  - o **Aadhaar** authentication continues to expand across public and private services.
  - o Growth driven by wider **face-based** authentication adoption and more service providers integrating **e-KYC**.
- **Key details**
  - o **Scale**: 221 crore authentications in one month shows high operational load on authentication infrastructure.
  - o **Users**: 150+ government and private entities reported using face authentication for service delivery.
  - o **Cumulative reach**: face authentication cumulatively runs into hundreds of crores of transactions, indicating rapid technology uptake.

Digital Hallmarking System for Silver Jewellery

What's the News?

- The government has introduced a **voluntary digital hallmarking system for silver jewellery** and articles, effective September 1, 2025.
- This new system, based on a **Hallmark Unique Identification (HUID)** code, aims to ensure the purity and authenticity of silver and protect consumers from fraudulent practices.
- The **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)** has updated its hallmarking standard for silver with the publication of **IS 2112:2025**, which replaces the previous standard, IS 2112:2014.

The New Hallmarking System

- **HUID-Based Hallmarking**: Each piece of hallmarked silver jewellery will now carry a unique six-digit alphanumeric HUID code. This aligns the silver hallmarking process with the existing system for gold jewellery.
- **Components of the Hallmark**: The new hallmark consists of three components:
  - o The **BIS Standard Mark** with the word 'SILVER'.
  - o The **purity grade** of the silver.
  - o The **HUID code**.
- **Purity Grades**: The revised standard introduces seven purity grades for silver, including 800, 835, 925, 958, 970, 990, and 999.
- **Consumer Verification**: Consumers can verify the details of any hallmarked silver item by entering its HUID code into the **BIS Care mobile application**. This provides information on the article's type, purity, hallmarking date, and the details of the Assaying and Hallmarking Centre (AHC).

IEPFA Forms Panel to Simplify Low-Value Claim Procedures

What's the News?

- A Committee set up by the **Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA)** under the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA)** has submitted recommendations to simplify the documentation process for **low-value claims**, aimed at faster settlement and improved transparency.
- The simplified procedure would reduce paperwork and expedite refunds without compromising regulatory objectives.

Scope of Recommendations

- Applicability thresholds proposed:
  - o **Physical securities** up to **₹5 lakh**
  - o **Dematerialized securities** up to **₹15 lakh**
  - o **Dividends** up to **₹10,000**
- Committee membership includes representatives from:
  - o **MCA**, **IEPFA**, **SEBI**
  - o Professional bodies: **ICAI**, **ICMAI**, **ICSI**
  - o Industry bodies: **FICCI**, **CII**, **PHDCCI**, **RAIN**

Rationale & Significance

- Small investors often face procedural hurdles when claiming unclaimed shares, dividends, or matured deposits. The move aims to:
  - o **Shorten processing timelines**
  - o **Reduce documentation burden**
  - o **Enhance procedural transparency**
  - o **Improve investor accessibility and trust**
- The reforms align with broader investor-friendly governance and financial inclusion efforts.

Supreme Court Formalises Aadhaar as Valid ID for Bihar Voter-List Revision

What's the News?

- The **Supreme Court of India** ruled that the **Aadhaar card** shall be accepted by the **Election Commission of India (ECI)** as the **12th valid identity document** for the **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** of the electoral roll in Bihar.
- The Court clarified that **Aadhaar is not proof of citizenship**, and ECI officials must verify its authenticity before accepting it.
- Estimates suggest over **34 lakh voters** at risk of exclusion could now retain their place on the voter list due to this decision.

Special Intensive Revision (SIR) and Aadhaar's Role

- **Objective of Bihar SIR**:
  - Launched by ECI in June 2025 to revise electoral rolls ahead of Bihar Assembly elections.
  - Aims to identify and exclude **illegal immigrants** and duplicate entries while ensuring only genuine citizens are enrolled.
- **Aadhaar as Identity Proof**:
  - The Court cited **Section 23(4) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950**, which recognizes Aadhaar as a valid document for establishing identity.
  - ECI officials must verify Aadhaar's genuineness but cannot demand additional documents solely if Aadhaar is provided.
- **Impact on Voter Inclusion**:
  - Aadhaar covers **~87% of India's population**, making it critical for marginalized groups who may lack other documents.
  - The directive prevents mass exclusion of vulnerable voters (e.g., poor, migrants) who rely on Aadhaar for identification.

CP Radhakrishnan Elected India's 15th Vice-President

What's the News?

- **C. P. Radhakrishnan**, the Governor of Maharashtra and veteran BJP–RSS leader, has been elected as India's 15th Vice-President, succeeding Jagdeep Dhankhar who resigned earlier in the year due to health concerns.
- The election, held via secret ballot in Parliament, resulted in Radhakrishnan securing **452 votes**, while his opponent, former Supreme Court judge **B. Sudershan Reddy**, received **300 votes**. The margin of **152 votes** exceeded expectations.
- Voter turnout was extremely high—approximately **98%**, with 767 MPs casting votes out of 781 electors; 15 ballots were declared invalid.

Election Dynamics

- **Electoral Process**:

  - The Vice President is elected by an **electoral college** consisting of members of both houses of Parliament (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha), including nominated members.
  - Voting is conducted via **secret ballot**, allowing for cross-voting, which played a role in this election.
- **Results Analysis**:
  - Radhakrishnan secured **452 votes** (60.1% of valid votes), while Reddy received **300 votes** (39.9%). Fifteen votes were declared invalid.
  - The opposition's claim of unity was questioned due to the **15-vote shortfall** from their expected tally of 315, indicating possible cross-voting or invalid votes.

NITI Aayog Proposes Revisions to India-UN SDG Framework

What's the News?

- NITI Aayog convened a mid-term review of **Outcome Group 2 (Nutrition & Food Security)** under the **Government of India-UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (GoI-UNSDCF 2023-2027)**.
- Meeting chaired by Prof. Ramesh Chand. Participants included senior officials from Ministries of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare; Women & Child Development; Food & Public Distribution; UN Resident Coordinator; UN agencies.
- Purpose: Propose revisions to align national priorities with global SDG targets; strengthen policies; improve coordination; accelerate progress by 2027.

Key Details & Significance

- **Change areas under review**:
  - Evidence-based policy interventions.
  - Better stakeholder coordination (Centre, States, UN agencies).
  - Enhanced implementation of nutrition programs under NFSA / PDS / ICDS.
- **Connection with NFSA**:
  - Outcome 2 explicitly references the **National Food Security Act, 2013** as a framework for entitlement and delivery of subsidised food grains through Public Distribution System (PDS).
  - NFSA currently covers ~81 crore people.
- **Revisions proposed or under consideration**:
  - No full new amendment announced yet; focus is on re-aligning implementation rather than wide legal overhaul.
  - Working on transforming Fair Price Shops (FPS) into **"nutrition hubs" (Jan Poshan Kendras)** in pilot districts.
  - Improving beneficiary identification, nutritional quality of food delivered, inter-ministry convergence.

Fast Track Immigration-Trusted Traveller Programme (FTI-TTP) Expansion

What's the News?

- The **Fast Track Immigration – Trusted Traveller Programme (FTI-TTP)** has been extended to five additional international airports: **Lucknow, Thiruvananthapuram, Kozhikode, Tiruchirappalli, Amritsar**.
- This rollout brings the total number of airports under FTI-TTP to **13**.
- The scheme is intended for **Indian nationals** and **OCI cardholders** who pre-register biometric data. Registered users can use e-gates for immigration, bypassing manual counters. The process claims to reduce immigration clearance time to ~30 seconds.

FTI-TTP Program Overview

- **Objective**: To streamline immigration clearance for pre-verified, low-risk travellers through biometric authentication and e-gates, aligning with **Prime Minister Narendra Modi's** vision of "speed, scale, and scope" in governance.
- **Eligibility**: Indian citizens and OCI cardholders who undergo online registration and biometric verification.
- **Process**:
  - Applicants register online at ftittp.mha.gov.in and submit documents.
  - Biometrics (fingerprints and facial image) are collected at **Foreigners Regional Registration Offices (FRROs)** or designated airports.
  - At airports, travellers scan their boarding pass and passport at e-gates for instant biometric verification and clearance.
- **Validity**: Registration is valid for **five years or until passport expiry**, whichever comes first.
- **Future Expansion**: The program will be extended to **21 airports**, including upcoming airports in **Navi Mumbai and Jewar**.

AIDIS & SAS 2026-27 Surveys Announced by MoSPI

What's the News?

- The **Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI)** has scheduled two flagship surveys: the **All India Debt & Investment Survey (AIDIS)** and the **Situation Assessment Survey (SAS) of Agricultural Households**, for the period **July 2026 to June 2027**.
- These surveys are nationally representative and cover both rural & urban households.
- Draft concept notes and schedules have been released. Stakeholders have been invited to give feedback by **30 September 2025**.

What Are AIDIS & SAS?

- **All India Debt & Investment Survey (AIDIS)**
  - Focuses on household finance: debts, assets, investments across rural & urban India.
  - Helps assess asset inequality, credit markets, informs policy for financial inclusion, helps with national accounts.

  - Last conducted in 2019 in NSS 77th round on request from RBI.
- **Situation Assessment Survey (SAS) of Agricultural Households**
  - Assesses economic conditions of farming households (including those without land).
  - Covers: income & expenditure, debt & access to credit, land & livestock ownership, agricultural & livestock production, adoption of technology, access to government schemes and crop insurance.
  - SAS has been part of NSS earlier rounds (launched 2003, expanded in 2013, strengthened in 2019).

Web Portal Launched for Special Campaign 5.0 to Improve Office Swachhata & Efficiency

What's the News?

- Union Minister **Dr. Jitendra Singh** inaugurated a dedicated web portal for **Special Campaign 5.0**, an initiative aimed at institutionalising cleanliness (*Swachhata*) in government offices and reducing pendency of administrative tasks.
- The portal will monitor multiple metrics: disposal of office waste, record-management, file weeding, grievance redressal, etc.

Special Campaign 5.0: Details & Significance

- **Objectives**
  - Improve sanitation and cleanliness in government premises.
  - Reduce backlog and pendency in files, references (MPs', Parliamentary, IMC, etc.).
  - Optimise office space through scrapping/e-waste disposal and weeding out old files.
- **Achievements so far (Campaigns 1-4)**
  - Generated ~ **₹3,296.71 crore** through disposal of office waste.
  - Freed up **696.27 lakh sq. ft.** of office space.
  - Identified **12.04 lakh cleanliness sites**.
  - Closed/weeded out **137.86 lakh files**.
- **Implementation Phases & Monitoring**
  - **Preparatory Phase**: 16-30 September.
  - **Implementation Phase**: 2-31 October.
  - **Post-implementation evaluation**: 15-30 November.
  - Weekly reviews by Secretaries & Nodal Officers. Reports consolidated to DARPG, PMO, Cabinet Secretariat.
- **Important Areas (Thrust Topics)**
  - Disposal of e-waste as per applicable rules.
  - Public grievances resolution, improvement in record management.
  - Office cleanliness drives, space optimisation.

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India Post and BSNL Partner for Rural Connectivity

What's the News?

- The **Department of Posts (DoP)** and **Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL)** have signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**.
- Under the MoU, over **1.65 lakh Post Offices** will act as **Points of Sale (PoS)** for BSNL SIM cards and mobile recharge services.
- The initiative aims to make telecom services more accessible and affordable in remote and rural parts of India.

Partnership Details

- **Objective**:
  - Improve accessibility and affordability of telecom services in underserved regions.
  - Bridge the **digital divide** and support national goals like **Digital India**, financial inclusion, and socio-economic development.
- **Roles**:
  - **BSNL** will supply SIM cards and provide training to postal staff.
  - **India Post** will onboard customers and handle transactions securely.
- **Coverage**:
  - Services will be available across **1.65 lakh post offices**, ensuring last-mile connectivity.

ECI Revamps EVM Ballot Paper Design

What's the News?

- The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** has revised guidelines under **Rule 49B of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961** for designing and printing **EVM ballot papers** to improve usability and clarity.
- These changes will be implemented starting with the upcoming **Bihar Assembly elections**.

Redesigned Ballot Paper Features

- **Colour Photographs**:
  - Candidate photos will be printed in colour, with the face occupying **three-fourths of the photo space** for better visibility.
  - Aims to reduce confusion in constituencies with candidates having similar names or phonetic similarities.
- **Uniform Font and Size**:
  - Names of all candidates and **NOTA (None of the Above)** will be printed in the **same font type** and a large, uniform size (bold **30-point font**) for readability.
  - Serial numbers and NOTA option will use **international form of Indian numerals** for consistency.
- **Enhanced Paper Quality**:
  - Ballot papers will be printed on **70 GSM paper** for durability.
  - For Assembly elections, **pink-coloured paper** with specified RGB values will be used for easy recognition by voters and polling staff.
- **Structural Layout**:

- Names of not more than **15 candidates** shall be arranged on one ballot sheet, with NOTA as the last option.

EC Rejects Rahul Gandhi Vote Deletion Claims as Baseless

What's the News?

- **Rahul Gandhi** alleged mass deletion and manipulation of voter rolls in the **Aland** constituency (Karnataka) and **Rajura** (Maharashtra). He accused use of software, fake logins, odd-hour deletions, and targeting of Congress strongholds.
- The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** has rejected these claims as **incorrect and baseless**. It said no vote or voter can be deleted online by the public. EC admitted attempts in 2023 to delete some voters in Aland were made but described them as **unsuccessful**.

Aland Voter Deletion Incident

- **Background**:
  - In December 2022, **6,018 applications** in **Form 7** (used for objecting to/include or delete a voter's name) were submitted online for the Aland constituency via apps like NVSP, VHA, and GARUDA.
  - Suspicion arose due to the unusually high volume, leading to verification by Booth Level Officers (BLOs).
- **Findings**:
  - Only **24 applications** were found to be genuine and processed.
  - The remaining **5,994 applications** were rejected as incorrect, and **no names were deleted** based on these fraudulent requests.
- **FIR and Investigation**:
  - An **FIR (No.26/2023)** was filed at the Aland Police Station on February 21, 2023, by the Electoral Registration Officer.
  - The ECI provided all available data, including objector details, Form Reference Numbers, EPIC numbers, mobile numbers, IP addresses, and submission timestamps, to the Superintendent of Police, Kalaburagi, for investigation.
  - The Karnataka CID has sought further technical details, such as **destination IP addresses and OTP trails**, to identify the perpetrators, claiming delays in receiving full cooperation from the ECI.

Election Commission to Conduct Special Intensive Revision in Delhi

What's the News?

- The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** has started preparations for a **Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls** in Delhi. This exercise, which is distinct from the regular annual revision, is aimed at ensuring the integrity and accuracy of voter lists.

- The revision will involve a house-to-house verification drive by **Booth Level Officers (BLOs)**. The process will be comprehensive, with a focus on identifying and removing the names of deceased, shifted, or duplicate voters, as well as including all eligible new voters.
- This initiative in Delhi follows a similar ongoing SIR in Bihar. The ECI's move to conduct a SIR across the country is part of its commitment to maintain clean and updated electoral rolls, a crucial element for conducting free and fair elections.

What is Special Intensive Revision?

- The **SIR** is a meticulous and thorough verification of electoral rolls that goes beyond the **Special Summary Revision (SSR)**. While the SSR focuses on incorporating new voters and making minor corrections, the SIR involves a more in-depth, door-to-door verification process.
- The primary goal of SIR is to address issues such as
  - **Inclusion of eligible citizens**: Ensuring that all citizens aged **18 years and above** are registered.
  - **Elimination of ineligible voters**: Removing duplicate entries, names of deceased persons, and those who have shifted.
  - **Ensuring accuracy**: Correcting errors in names, addresses, and other details.
- The ECI is using a past voter list from a previous SIR (e.g., the 2002 list in Delhi) to map with current constituencies. This will aid in the house-to-house visits and help verify place-of-birth details.

EC Delists 474 Unrecognised Political Parties for Norm Violations

What's the News?

- The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** has removed **474 Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs)** from its register for failing to contest any elections in the last six years.
- This is the second round in a cleanup drive. An earlier action delisted 334 such parties. Together, **808 RUPPs** have been removed in about two months.
- After this round, the number of RUPPs has fallen from **2,520** to **2,046**.

Delisting Drive: Key Aspects

- This delisting is part of a "comprehensive and continuous strategy" by the ECI to streamline the political system by removing inactive or non-compliant parties.
- The ECI has also identified **359 additional RUPPs** for failing to submit their annual audited accounts for the last three consecutive financial years and not filing election expenditure reports.
- State-wise, **Uttar Pradesh** had the highest number of delisted parties, with **121**, followed by Maharashtra with **44**, and Tamil Nadu with **42**.

Industrial Park Rating System (IPRS) 3.0 Launched

What's the News?

- The Government of India launched **IPRS 3.0** to benchmark industrial parks across the country, under the Make in India initiative.
- The system is developed by **DPIIT** with support from the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)**.

About IPRS 3.0

The IPRS 3.0 is a comprehensive assessment tool that builds upon its previous versions with a renewed focus on sustainability and tenant feedback.

- **Objective**: To benchmark industrial parks against global standards, foster competition among them, and guide policy-making to improve industrial infrastructure.
- **Assessment Pillars**: The rating framework is based on four core pillars:
  - **Internal Infrastructure & Utilities**: Quality of power, water, roads, and other internal facilities.
  - **External Infrastructure & Connectivity**: Proximity to highways, ports, airports, and other logistical links.
  - **Business Support Services**: Availability of common facilities, skill development centers, and other support systems.
  - **Environment & Safety Management**: Measures for environmental sustainability, safety protocols, and waste management.
- **New Features in IPRS 3.0**:
  - **Tenant Feedback**: For the first time, feedback from industries operating within the parks will be a key component of the rating.
  - **Sustainability Focus**: Increased emphasis on decarbonization, renewable energy usage, and sustainable practices.
  - **EV Sector Readiness**: Includes specific parameters to assess the readiness of parks for electric vehicle and component manufacturing.
  - **Integration with PM GatiShakti**: Leverages the **PM GatiShakti National Master Plan** for a more holistic assessment of connectivity and infrastructure.

PM Reviews Rs 65,000 Crore Projects at 49th PRAGATI Meet

What's the News?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired the **49th PRAGATI** meeting and reviewed eight critical infrastructure projects with a cumulative investment of over **₹65,000 crore**.
- The projects span **15 States and Union Territories**, covering sectors such as railways, mines, water resources, power, and industrial corridors.
- He urged timely execution, adherence to quality norms, and institutionalised review mechanisms at State and UT levels.

PRAGATI & Project Review

- **PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation)** is an ICT-enabled multi-modal platform to bring the Centre and States/UTs onto one table to resolve implementation bottlenecks.
- In this meeting:
  - Eight "critical" projects were reviewed — distributed across sectors (mines, rail, water, power) and geographies.
  - Emphasis was on **clear timelines**, **interagency coordination**, **proactive resolution of bottlenecks**, and **results orientation** at all levels.
  - The PM warned of "double cost" when projects are delayed — cost escalation + delayed benefits to citizens.
  - He urged states/UTs to adopt their own institutional frameworks for regular review of flagship projects.

Cabinet Clears ₹95,000 Crore-Scale Proposals Across Key Sectors

What's the News?

- The Union Cabinet approved **six proposals** amounting to approximately **₹95,000 crore**.
- A significant component is a **₹69,725 crore package** for the **shipbuilding & maritime sector**.
- Other approved items include:
  - **Productivity Linked Bonus (PLB)** of 78 days for ~10.91 lakh railway employees (~₹1,865 crore)
  - **CSIR capacity building / HRD scheme** with outlay of ~₹2,277 crore
  - Expansion of **medical education capacity** (Phase-III of Centrally Sponsored Scheme) adding PG seats + 5,023 MBBS seats
  - Doubling of Bakhtiyarpur–Rajgir–Tilaiya railway line (~104 km) at a cost of ~₹2,192 crore
  - Four-lane greenfield NH-139W section (Sahebganj–Areraj–Bettiah, ~79 km) worth ~₹3,822 crore

Maritime, Rail, Health & Science Reforms

- **Maritime / Shipbuilding Package**
  - Four-pillar strategy covering **capacity augmentation**, **financing**, **policy / taxation / legal reforms**, and **skill / technical support**
  - **Shipbuilding Financial Assistance Scheme** extended till March 2036; corpus ~₹24,736 crore
  - **Shipbreaking Credit Note** (~₹4,000+ crore allocation) to promote circularity and resource recovery
  - A **National Shipbuilding Mission** will oversee coordination and implementation
- **Rail & Infrastructure**
  - Approval to double the Bakhtiyarpur–Rajgir–Tilaiya section to boost regional connectivity & ease congestion

  - Greenfield NH section under Hybrid Annuity Mode to improve north Bihar connectivity toward Indo-Nepal border areas
- **Science & R&D / HRD in Science**
  - The CSIR scheme will support national labs, universities, Institutes of National Importance, Institutes of Eminence across STEMM disciplines
- **Medical Education Expansion**
  - Under the scheme, ~5,000 new PG seats + 5,023 MBBS seats will be created to strengthen doctor availability
- **PLB for Railway Employees**
  - 10.91 lakh eligible employees to receive 78 days' bonus. Acts as performance incentive ahead of festive season

People's Plan Campaign 2025-26: "Sabki Yojana, Sabka Vikas" Abhiyaan

What's the News?

- The **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** will launch the **People's Plan Campaign (PPC) 2025-26** - titled **"Sabki Yojana, Sabka Vikas" Abhiyaan** - nationwide from **October 2, 2025**.
- The campaign initiates the preparation of **Panchayat Development Plans (PDPs)** for the **Financial Year 2026-27**, through **Special Gram Sabha meetings** across all States and Union Territories.
- It aims to strengthen **participatory, transparent, and accountable rural governance**, aligning local priorities with national development goals.

Panchayat Development Planning Framework

- The campaign builds on the PPC model launched in **2018**, which institutionalized **evidence-based, inclusive, and convergent planning** at the grassroots level.
- Key operational features:
  - **Digital platforms** like **eGramSwaraj**, **Meri Panchayat App**, and **Panchayat NIRNAY** will be used to review past plans, assess progress, and prioritize pending works.
  - Over **18.13 lakh PDPs** (Gram, Block, and District levels) have been uploaded on eGramSwaraj since 2019-20, including **2.52 lakh** for FY 2025-26.
  - **Unspent Central Finance Commission (CFC) grants** will be reallocated to complete unfinished projects.
- The planning process will be guided by the **Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI)** and leverage tools like **SabhaSaar** to enhance **Own Source Revenue (OSR)** and community participation.

DoT and FIU-IND Sign MoU to Combat Telecom-Based Financial Frauds

What's the News?

- The **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** and the **Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND)** signed

a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** on **September 25, 2025**, to enhance real-time intelligence sharing and coordinated action against **telecom-enabled financial frauds and cybercrime**.

- The partnership enables **secure, system-based data exchange** between DoT's **Digital Intelligence Platform (DIP)** and FIU-IND's **Finnex 2.0 portal**, linking telecom and financial intelligence for early fraud detection.
- This initiative aims to **prevent fraudulent transactions**, block high-risk mobile numbers, and strengthen India's **digital payments ecosystem** amid rising cyber threats.

Key Mechanisms of the Partnership

- **Data Sharing Framework**:
  - **FIU-IND** will share mobile numbers linked to **Suspicious Transaction Reports (STRs)**, money mule accounts, and cyber-fraud cases.
  - **DoT** will provide its **Mobile Number Revocation List (MNRL)** and **Financial Fraud Risk Indicator (FRI)** data, which classifies numbers as **medium, high, or very high risk**.
- **Operational Impact**:
  - Banks and financial institutions can use FRI data to **flag or block high-risk transactions in real time**.
  - The system has already helped **prevent 48 lakh fraudulent transactions, saving ₹140 crore**, and **disconnect 2.84 crore fake mobile connections** via the **Sanchar Saathi** platform.
- **Technology Integration**:
  - Leverages AI-driven tools like **ASTR** (to detect fake KYC/SIMs) and **CIOR** (to block spoofed international calls).
  - Over **700 stakeholders**, including **36 State/UT Police**, **SEBI**, **NPCI**, and **650+ banks**, are integrated into DoT's DIP.

ECI Deploys Central Observers for Bihar Polls and Bye-Elections

What's the News?

- The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** has announced the deployment of **Central Observers** for the upcoming Assembly elections in **Bihar** and for bye-elections in eight constituencies across seven other states.
- These observers are tasked with ensuring that the elections are conducted in a free, fair, transparent, and impartial manner.
- A total of **470 senior officers** will be deployed, serving as the eyes and ears of the Commission on the ground.

Role and Types of Central Observers

Central Observers are senior civil servants appointed by the ECI to independently monitor various aspects of the electoral process, from the nomination stage to the counting of votes, ensuring strict compliance with ECI guidelines.

- **General Observers**:
  - Senior **IAS officers** from outside the state.
  - They oversee the overall conduct of the election, including the implementation of the **Model Code of Conduct (MCC)**, functioning of EVMs/VVPATs, and adherence to electoral laws.
- **Police Observers**:
  - Senior **IPS officers**.
  - Their primary role is to monitor the security situation, deployment of central and state police forces, and overall law and order to ensure a peaceful and intimidation-free polling environment.
- **Expenditure Observers**:
  - Officers from the **Indian Revenue Service (IRS)** or other central accounts services.
  - They are responsible for monitoring the election expenditure incurred by candidates and political parties to curb the use of black money and prevent illegal inducements for voters.

Over 6 Lakh Stolen Mobile Phones Recovered Under Sanchar Saathi Initiative

What's the News?

- The **Sanchar Saathi** initiative, launched by the **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** under the **Ministry of Communications**, has facilitated the recovery of **over 6 lakh lost or stolen mobile phones** across India.
- The initiative empowers citizens to **block and trace** their stolen devices using the **Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR)** portal, significantly reducing the resale value of stolen phones and deterring mobile theft.
- As of **October 2025**, more than **1.26 crore IMEI numbers** have been verified through the platform, and **over 10 lakh suspicious devices** have been identified and blocked for non-compliance with regulatory standards.

Sanchar Saathi: Key Components and Impact

- **CEIR (Central Equipment Identity Register)**:
  - Allows users to **report lost/stolen phones** using their **IMEI number**.
  - Enables **remote blocking** of devices across all telecom networks in India, rendering them unusable.
  - Facilitates **unblocking** if the device is recovered.
- **Know Your Mobile Connections**:
  - Let's citizens **view all mobile connections** registered under their Aadhaar number.
  - Helps detect and **disconnect unauthorized or fraudulent SIMs**.
- **Check IMEI**:
  - Verifies whether a mobile device's IMEI is **genuine and compliant** with DoT standards.
  - Flags **cloned, counterfeit, or non-compliant devices**.
- **Impact Metrics**:
  - **6,00,000+** stolen phones recovered.

- o **10,00,000+** non-compliant/suspicious devices blocked.
- o **1.26 crore** IMEI verifications conducted.
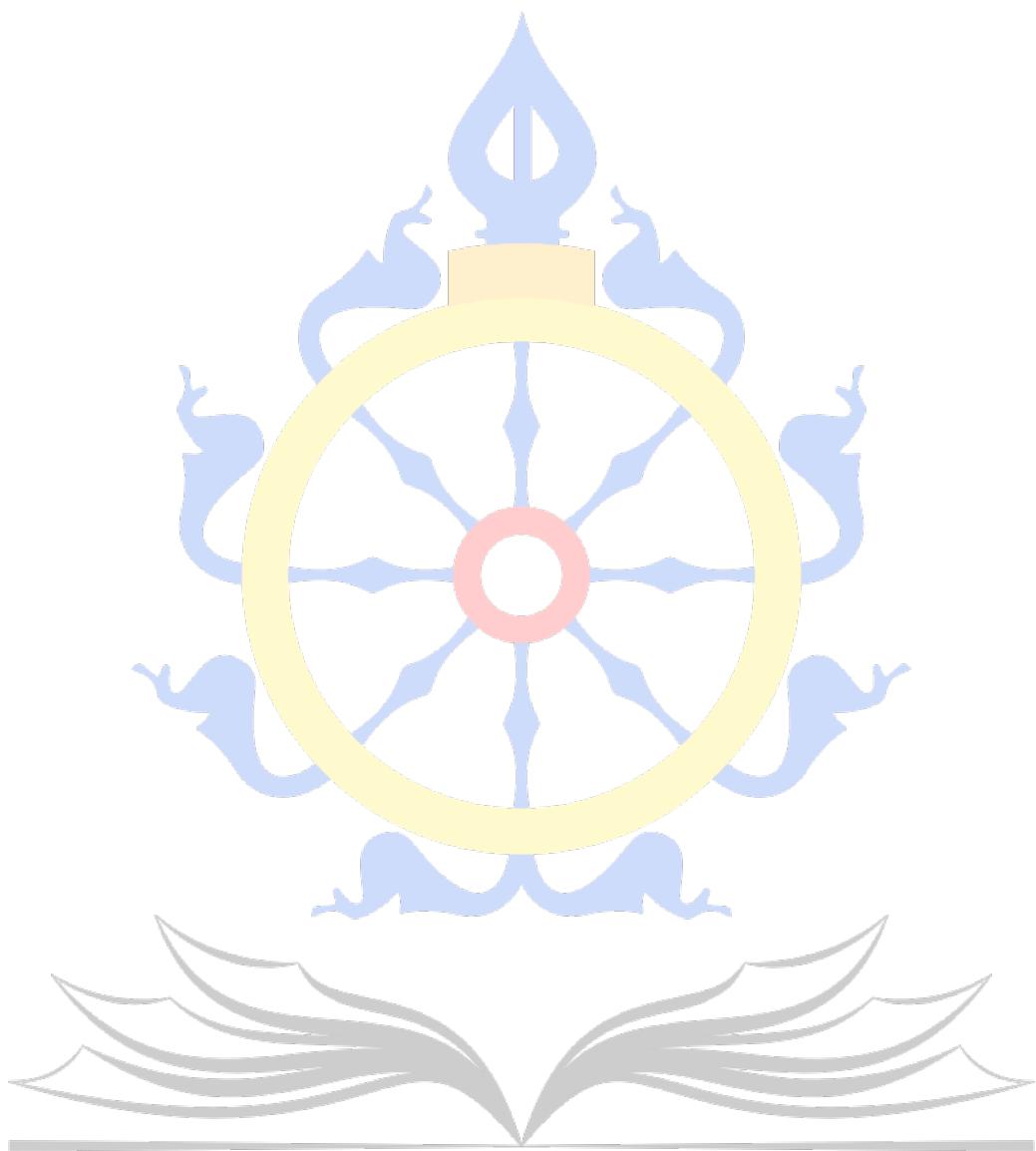
Social Issues

Road Accidents Rise 4.2%; 1.73 Lakh Lives Lost

What's the News?
- **Total accidents: ≈4.80 lakh** in 2023.
- **Fatalities: 172,890** (all-time high).
- **YoY change: +4.2%** in accidents; injuries up **4.4%**.

Road Safety Trends
- **Pattern**
  - **Overspeeding** caused **~68%** of deaths.
  - **Two-wheelers** accounted for **~44.8%** of fatalities.
  - **Rural areas** bore the larger burden with **~68.5%** of deaths.
- **Demographics & severity**
  - **Productive age (18–45)** made up **~66.4%** of fatalities.
  - **Daily average: ~1,317** accidents and **~474** deaths per day.

Release of "Children in India 2025": Key Indicators & Policy Signals

What's the News?
- The **Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI)** released the fourth edition of **Children in India 2025** at the 29th CoCSSO conference in Chandigarh.
- The publication offers updated data and analysis across **health, education, child protection, demographics**, and **SDG-related metrics**.
- Several notable trends are highlighted: a sharp decline in **infant mortality rate (IMR)**, drop in **school dropout rates**, and shifts in **child adoption figures**.

Key Indicators and Trends
- **Health & Nutrition**:
  - **IMR (2023)**: **25 per 1,000 live births** (26 for males, 25 for females).
  - **Under-Five Mortality Rate (U5MR)**: **29 per 1,000 live births**, down from 30 in 2022.
  - **Rural-Urban Divide**: U5MR is **33 in rural** vs. **20 in urban** areas.
- **Education**:
  - **Dropout Rates (2024–25)**:
    - **Preparatory**: **2.3%** (down from 8.7%)
    - **Middle**: **3.5%** (down from 8.1%)
    - **Secondary**: **8.2%** (down from 13.8%).
  - **Gender Parity Index (GPI)**: **1.1 at secondary level**, indicating parity or slight female advantage.
- **Child Protection & Social Indicators**:
  - **Child Marriage**: Still prevalent but declining; challenges remain in enforcement and socio-economic drivers.
  - **Adoptions (2024–25)**: **4,155 in-country** (2,336 girls, 1,819 boys), suggesting **greater preference for girl child adoption**.

- **New Data Inclusions**:
  - **Causes of death, mobile/device usage among children, adoption trends**, and **SDG-aligned indicators**.

Empowerment

Educate Girls Becomes First Indian Organisation to Win Ramon Magsaysay Award

What's the News?

- The Indian non-profit **Educate Girls** (Foundation to Educate Girls Globally) has made history by becoming the **first Indian organisation** to win the prestigious **Ramon Magsaysay Award** in 2025, often termed Asia's Nobel Prize.
- The award recognizes its transformative work in addressing gender-based educational disparities in India's rural and remote areas. Founded by **Safeena Husain** in 2007, the organization has enrolled over **2 million out-of-school girls** and improved learning outcomes for **2.4 million children** across 30,000 villages.
- The award ceremony will be held on **November 7, 2025**, in Manila, Philippines.

Grassroots Model and Impact

- **Overview**: Educate Girls employs a **community-powered model** to tackle barriers to girls' education, such as poverty, cultural stereotypes, and patriarchal norms. It aligns with government initiatives like the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** and focuses on enrollment, retention, and learning outcomes.
- **Key Initiatives**:
  - **Team Balika Volunteers**: A network of **55,000+ local volunteers** (men and women) who act as "gender champions" to identify out-of-school girls, mobilize communities, and counsel families.
  - **Development Impact Bond (DIB)**: Launched in 2015 as the **world's first pay-for-performance model in education**, linking funding to measurable outcomes like enrollment and learning gains.
  - **Pragati Open-Schooling**: For girls aged 15–29 who missed formal education, enabling them to complete their studies and access livelihood opportunities (scaled from 300 to 31,500 learners).
- **Impact Metrics**:
  - **90% retention rate** in schools where Educate Girls operates.
  - Operations span **4 states** (Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar) and target expansion to Northeast India.
  - **Goal to reach 10 million learners** by 2035 and share its blueprint globally.

Angikaar 2025 Campaign

What's the News?

- The **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** has launched the **Angikaar 2025** campaign under the **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban 2.0 (PMAY-U 2.0)**.
- The campaign is a nationwide outreach program designed to fast-track the implementation of PMAY-U 2.0 by raising awareness and ensuring last-mile delivery of benefits.
- It aims to expedite the verification of applications, facilitate the completion of sanctioned houses, and provide information on allied schemes.

Objectives & Campaign Overview

- **Purpose**
  - Fast-track implementation of PMAY-U 2.0 through targeted awareness and field outreach.
- **Key Activities**
  - **Door-to-door awareness** drives across **5,000+ Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)**.
  - Community events: **camps**, **loan melas**, **cultural programmes**, **PM Awas Mela – Shehri**.
  - **PMAY-U Awas Diwas** observed as anchor event.
- **Timeline**
  - Runs **4 September to 31 October 2025**.
  - **PM Awas Mela – Shehri** in two phases:
    - Phase 1: 17–27 September
    - Phase 2: 16–31 October at district and municipal levels.
- **Scale and Reach**
  - PMAY-U has **sanctioned 120 lakh houses**; **94.11 lakh pucca houses** have been delivered; campaign targets completion of remaining.
  - PMAY-U 2.0 aims to support **1 crore urban families** with up to **₹2.5 lakh** financial assistance for new houses.

Samudra Pradakshina: India's First Tri-Service All-Women Global Sailing Expedition

What's the News?

- The Government of India flagged off **"Samudra Pradakshina"**, the first ever **tri-service all-women circumnavigation** sailing expedition, from the **Gateway of India, Mumbai**.
- Ten commissioned officers from the **Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force** will sail aboard the **Indian Army Sailing Vessel (IASV) Triveni** for about **nine months**, covering roughly **26,000 nautical miles**.

Expedition Details and Significance

- **Route**: The crew will follow an easterly route, crossing the Equator twice and rounding the three great Capes:
  - **Cape Leeuwin** (Australia)
  - **Cape Horn** (South America)
  - **Cape of Good Hope** (South Africa)

- **Objective**: The mission is not only a showcase of **"Nari Shakti"** (women's power) and the spirit of adventure, but also a test of human endurance and the jointness of the three armed forces.
- **Scientific Collaboration**: The team will also conduct scientific research in collaboration with the **National Institute of Oceanography**, including studies on micro-plastics and documentation of marine life.
- **Indigenous Vessel**: The vessel, **IASV Triveni**, is a **50-foot yacht** indigenously built in Puducherry, highlighting India's self-reliance in defence and technology under the **"Aatmanirbhar Bharat"** initiative.

PMUY Expands by 2.5 Million Free LPG Connections

What's the News?
- The **Government of India** has approved an addition of **2.5 million** LPG connections under **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)** for FY 2025-26.
- This move pushes the total number of free LPG connections via PMUY to **105.8 million** households.

Details & Implications under PMUY
- **Cost & Subsidy**
  - Total budgetary outlay: **₹676 crore**.
  - **₹512.5 crore** allocated for 25 lakh deposit-free LPG connections. Each connection costs **₹2,050**.
  - ₹160 crore for a **targeted subsidy** of ₹300 per 14.2-kg cylinder refill, valid for up to nine refills per household per year. Pro-rata for 5-kg cylinders.
- **Components of Free Connection** include:
  - Cylinder, pressure regulator, safety hose, gas consumer card (DGCC), installation charges.
  - Stove and first refill also provided free.
- **Eligibility & Application**
  - Women from poor households with no existing LPG connection.
  - Application via simplified KYC and Deprivation Declaration, either online or through public sector LPG distributors.
- **Symbolic Timing**
  - Announced during **Navratri**, positioned as a "gift" to women, underscoring themes of **women's empowerment**.

Viksit Bharat Buildathon 2025

What's the News?
- Union Minister for Education, **Dharmendra Pradhan**, launched the **Viksit Bharat Buildathon 2025**, India's largest school innovation challenge.
- The initiative aims to engage over **12 crore students** from approximately **6 lakh schools** across India.
- Students from **Classes 6 to 12** will ideate and prototype solutions under four themes: **Vocal for Local**, **Atmanirbhar Bharat**, **Swadeshi**, and **Samriddh**

Bharat, aligning with the vision of a developed India by **2047**.
- The Buildathon is a collaborative effort between the **Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL)**, the **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)**, and the **All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)**.

Buildathon Structure & Timeline
- **Registration Period**: September 23 – October 6, 2025
- **Preparation Phase**: October 6 – 13, 2025
- **Live Innovation Event**: October 13, 2025
- **Final Submission Deadline**: October 31, 2025
- **Evaluation Period**: November 1 – December 31, 2025
- **Announcement of Winners**: January 2026
- **Prize Pool**: ₹1 crore, distributed among district, state, and national level winners

Over 2.82 Crore Houses Completed Under PMAY-G

What's the News?
- Under the **Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G)**, more than **2.82 crore rural houses** have been completed so far.
- A total of **3.85 crore houses** have been sanctioned out of **4.12 crore houses** allocated to States and UTs under the scheme.
- The scheme's cumulative allocation target has been revised upward: from initial targets to **4.95 crore houses** under its extension to FY 2028-29.

PMAY-G: Progress, Strategy & Challenges
- **Objectives & Strategy**
  - Provide **pucca houses with basic amenities** (kitchen, toilet, etc.) to eligible rural households, especially those without homes or in kutcha houses.
  - Use **technology and transparency tools** — Awaas+ app, geo-tagging, AI/ML fraud detection, Aadhaar-based DBT, real-time dashboards — to monitor progress and reduce leakages.
  - Leverage convergence with schemes like **MGNREGS** to provide person-day employment during house construction.
- **Scale & Numbers**
  - Originally targeted ~2.95 crore houses (FY 2016–24).
  - With extension (FY 2024–29), additional 2 crore houses will be built, making the **cumulative target 4.95 crore**.
  - So far ~2.82 crore completed, ~3.85 crore sanctioned, out of ~4.12 crore allocated.
  - In the last nine years, ~**568 crore person-days** of labour have been generated via the scheme's linkage with rural employment programmes.

"Mukhyamantri Mahila Rojgar Yojana" Launched in Bihar to Support Women's Livelihoods

What's the News?

- The Bihar government, with support from the Central government, launched the **Mukhyamantri Mahila Rojgar Yojana**.
- Under the scheme, **₹10,000** will be directly transferred into the bank accounts of **75 lakh women** across Bihar via **DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer)**.
- The scheme allows for **additional support up to ₹2,00,000** depending on the success of the enterprise, evaluated after six months.
- The rural development department is the nodal agency, and the scheme will be executed via **Bihar Rural Livelihood Promotion Society (JEEViKA)**.

Scheme Details & Objectives

The primary goal of the **Mukhyamantri Mahila Rojgar Yojana** is to promote financial independence and self-employment among women.

- **Objective**: To empower women from poor families by providing them with seed money to start small-scale businesses or other income-generating activities.
- **Key Features**:
  - **Financial Assistance**: A one-time grant of **₹10,000** will be provided directly to the beneficiary.
  - **Target Group**: The scheme specifically targets unemployed women who are permanent residents of Bihar and belong to economically disadvantaged households.
- **Eligibility Criteria**:
  - The applicant must be a woman and a permanent resident of Bihar.
  - She must be unemployed.
  - She must belong to a poor family, as per government norms.

Culture and Arts

First-Ever Women-Led Delegation from India at TIFF 2025

What's the News?

- In a landmark initiative, **Women in Film (WIF) India**, with the support of the **Ministry of Information & Broadcasting**, has announced the country's first-ever women-led delegation to the **Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) 2025**.
- The delegation features six projects spearheaded by women in key creative roles, selected from over 200 applications received nationwide.
- This program, facilitated by the **National Film Development Corporation (NFDC)** and supported by **WAVES Bazaar**, aims to bridge the gender gap and create international opportunities for Indian women filmmakers.

The Delegation & Its Significance

- The six selected filmmakers and their projects are: Arshaly Jose ("A Dandelion's Dream"), Deepa Bhatia ("Rabbit Hole"), Katyayani Kumar ("Sons of The River"), Madhumita Sundararaman ("The Guest House"), Paromita Dhar ("Ulta"), and Pramati Anand ("A Late Autumn Dream").
- The initiative is designed to provide the filmmakers with **international visibility, mentorship, and curated networking**, along with training in pitching and deal-making.
- The program is part of a broader effort to create a long-term pathway for Indian women to access global collaborations, funding, and distribution.

Remembering Acharya Vinoba Bhave

What's the News?

- Prime Minister paid tribute to **Acharya Vinoba Bhave** on his birth anniversary, calling him a spiritual leader, freedom fighter, and social reformer.
- PM said Bhave's life and thoughts—non-violence, empowerment of the marginalised—continue to inspire efforts toward a "Viksit Bharat".

Bhoodan & Gandhian Social Reform

- **Bhoodan Movement**: Initiated by Bhave. A voluntary donation campaign in which landowners were asked to donate land to landless people. Aimed at reducing inequality in land ownership.
- **Gandhian Ideals & Constructive Programmes**: Bhave was deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi. He engaged in Khadi, sanitation, hygiene, Nai Talim, rural industries, etc.

Dr. Manmohan Singh Honoured Posthumously with P.V. Narasimha Rao Memorial Award

What's the News?

- Former Prime Minister **Dr. Manmohan Singh** has been posthumously honoured with the **P. V. Narasimha Rao Memorial Award for Economics**.
- The award was received by his wife, **Gursharan Kaur**, on his behalf at a ceremony in New Delhi.

Award Significance and Historical Context

- **P.V. Narasimha Rao Memorial Award**:
  - Instituted by the **P.V. Narasimha Rao Memorial Foundation (PVNMF)**, based in Hyderabad, to honor outstanding contributions in economics, public policy, and governance.
  - Previous recipients include **Ratan Tata** (for philanthropy) and the **Dalai Lama** (for peace and compassion).
- **Dr. Manmohan Singh's Legacy**:
  - As **Finance Minister (1991–1996)** under Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, he spearheaded reforms including **de-licensing, reduction of import tariffs, market-driven exchange rates, and encouragement of foreign direct investment (FDI)**.
  - As **Prime Minister (2004–2014)**, he introduced transformative laws such as the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)**, **Right to Information (RTI) Act**, **Right to Education (RTE) Act**, and the **Food Security Act**.
  - His policies lifted **270 million people out of multidimensional poverty** and shielded India from the **2008 global financial crisis**.

India Commemorates 60 Years of 1965 War Victory

What's the News?

- India is commemorating the **60th anniversary** of its victory in the **1965 India-Pakistan War**.
- The **Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh**, paid tribute to war veterans and the families of fallen soldiers at a commemorative event in New Delhi, acknowledging their valor and sacrifice.
- The minister highlighted the strong-willed leadership of then-Prime Minister **Lal Bahadur Shastri**, which united the nation and provided decisive political guidance during the conflict.

The 1965 War and its Significance

- The war, which lasted for **22 days**, was a response to Pakistan's **"Operation Gibraltar,"** a plan to infiltrate Jammu and Kashmir and incite an insurgency against Indian rule.

- India's armed forces displayed courage and resilience, with key battles taking place across the Western Front, from Jammu and Kashmir to the plains of Punjab and the deserts of Rajasthan.
- The war demonstrated India's resolve to protect its sovereignty and integrity, and it marked a crucial turning point in the country's defense and strategic policy.

77th Primetime Emmy Awards 2025: Key Takeaways

What's the News?

- The **77th Primetime Emmy Awards** rewarded US television shows and talent for work between mid-2024 and mid-2025.
- Major wins: *The Pitt* won **Outstanding Drama Series**; *The Studio* won **Outstanding Comedy Series**; *Adolescence* won **Outstanding Limited or Anthology Series**.
- Awards also given in acting, writing, directing and technical categories.

77th Primetime Emmy Awards

- Outstanding **Talk Series**: **The Late Show with Stephen Colbert (CBS)**
- Outstanding **Writing** for a **Drama Series**: **Dan Gilroy** - Andor
- Outstanding **Writing** for a **Comedy Series**: **Seth Rogen, Evan Goldberg, Peter Huyck, Alex Gregory, Frida Perez** - The Studio
- Outstanding **Writing** for a **Limited or Anthology Series or Movie**: **Jack Thorne, Stephen Graham** - Adolescence
- Outstanding **Drama Series**: **The Pitt** (HBO Max)
- Outstanding **Comedy Series**: **The Studio** (Apple TV+)
- Outstanding **Limited or Anthology Series**: **Adolescence** (Netflix)
- Outstanding **Lead Actor** in a **Drama Series**: **Noah Wyle** - The Pitt (HBO Max)
- Outstanding **Lead Actress** in a **Drama Series**: **Britt Lower** - Severance (Apple TV+)
- Outstanding **Lead Actor** in a **Comedy Series**: **Seth Rogen** - The Studio (Apple TV+)
- Outstanding **Lead Actress** in a **Comedy Series**: **Jean Smart** - Hacks (HBO Max)
- Outstanding **Lead Actor** in a **Limited or Anthology Series or Movie**: **Stephen Graham** - Adolescence (Netflix)
- Outstanding **Lead Actress** in a **Limited or Anthology Series or Movie**: **Cristin Milioti** - The Penguin (HBO Max)
- Outstanding **Supporting Actor** in a **Limited or Anthology Series or Movie**: **Owen Cooper** - Adolescence (Netflix)
- Outstanding **Supporting Actress** in a **Limited or Anthology Series or Movie**: **Erin Doherty** - Adolescence (Netflix)
- Outstanding **Reality Competition Programme**: **The Traitors** (NBC)
- Outstanding **Scripted Variety Series**: **Last Week Tonight with John Oliver** (HBO Max)

- Outstanding **Supporting Actor** in a **Drama Series**: **Tramell Tillman** - Severance (Apple TV+)
- Outstanding **Supporting Actress** in a **Drama Series**: **Katherine LaNasa** - The Pitt (HBO Max)
- Outstanding **Supporting Actor** in a **Comedy Series**: **Jeff Hiller** - Somebody Somewhere (HBO Max)
- Outstanding **Supporting Actress** in a **Comedy Series**: **Hannah Einbinder** - Hacks (HBO Max)
- Outstanding **Directing** for a **Drama Series**: **Adam Randall** - Slow Horses
- Outstanding **Directing** for a **Comedy Series**: **Seth Rogen** - The Studio
- Outstanding **Directing** for a **Limited or Anthology Series or Movie**: **Philip Barantini** - Adolescence
- Outstanding **Writing** for a **Variety Series**: **Last Week Tonight with John Oliver**
- Outstanding **Variety Special (Live)**: **SNL50: The Anniversary Special** (NBC)

Emmy Awards:

- The Emmy Awards are presented by three distinct, yet related, organizations in the United States:
  - The **Academy of Television Arts & Sciences (ATAS)**, which administers the Primetime Emmy Awards.
  - The **National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences (NATAS)**, which oversees the Daytime, Sports, and News & Documentary Emmy Awards.
  - The **International Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (IATAS)**, which administers the International Emmy Awards.
- The first Emmy Awards ceremony was held in **1949**.
- The statuette, a winged woman holding an atom, represents the "muse of the arts" and the "electron of science."

71st National Film Awards 2025

What's the News?

- The **71st National Film Awards** were presented on **September 23, 2025**, at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, by President **Droupadi Murmu**, honoring the best of Indian cinema for films released in 2023.
- **Shah Rukh Khan** and **Vikrant Massey** jointly received the **Best Actor** award for their performances in *Jawan* and *12th Fail*, respectively.
- **Rani Mukerji** won the **Best Actress** award for her role in *Mrs. Chatterjee vs. Norway*.
- **Mohanlal** was conferred the **Dadasaheb Phalke Award** for his lifetime contribution to Indian cinema.

Highlights

- **Best Feature Film**: *12th Fail*
- **Best Hindi Film**: *Kathal – A Jackfruit Mystery*
- **Best Director**: Sudipto Sen for *The Kerala Story*
- **Best Popular Film Providing Wholesome Entertainment**: *Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahani*
- **Best Supporting Actor**: Vijayaraghavan (*Pookkaalam*) and M. S. Bhaskar (*Parking*)
- **Best Supporting Actress**: Urvashi (*Ullozhukku*) and Janki Bodiwala (*Vash*)

- **Best Debut Film of a Director**: Ashish Avinash Bende for *Aatmapamphlet*
- **Best Film Critic**: Utpal Datta

WaveX to Open 7 New Incubators for Media-Entertainment & AVGC Sector

What's the News?

- The **Ministry of Information & Broadcasting** announced that **WaveX**, a government-led startup accelerator under the **WAVES** initiative, will establish **seven new incubation centres** across India to support startups in **media, entertainment, AVGC (Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comics)** and **XR (Extended Reality)** domains.
- These incubators will be located at campuses of **IIMC (Delhi, Jammu, Dhenkanal, Kottayam, Amravati)**, **FTII Pune**, and **SRFTI Kolkata**, in addition to the existing facility at **IICT Mumbai**.
- Each centre will admit about **15 startups** in its inaugural cohort. A **monthly fee of ₹8,500 + GST** is proposed.
- The infrastructure will include production / post-production labs, game development / editing / testing facilities; support via partner institutes (IICT, FTII, SRFTI) and digital resources.
- Startups under WaveX will also get access to mentoring, policy clinics, investor connect, and international exposure (e.g. VivaTech, GDC).
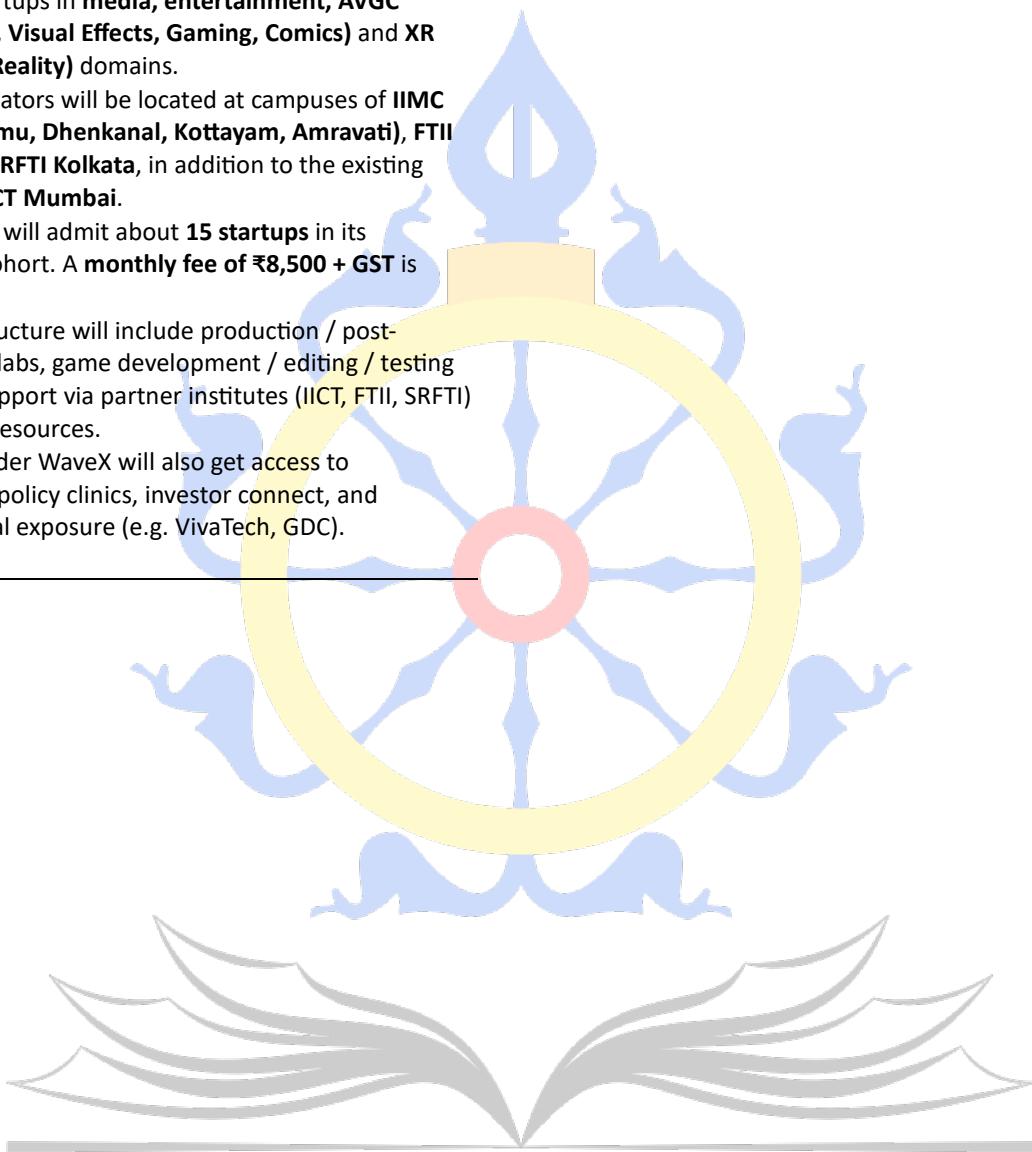
Environment

India Adds 30 GW Renewable Energy Capacity in 2025

What's the News?

- India added **30 gigawatts (GW)** of renewable energy capacity between January and August 2025, marking significant progress toward its clean energy goals.
- The country is on track to achieve **39–43 GW** of new renewable capacity by the end of 2025, accelerating efforts to meet its **500 GW non-fossil fuel target by 2030**.
- **Solar and wind energy** dominated the additions, with **18.4 GW of solar** and **3.5 GW of wind** installed in the first half of 2025 alone.

Record Growth and Strategic Initiatives

- **Half-Yearly Performance**:
  - **22 GW** added in H1 2025 (Jan–Jun), a **57% increase** from 14.2 GW in H1 2024.
  - Key drivers include the **Interstate Transmission System (ISTS) charge waiver**, which reduces project costs for developers.
- **Current Capacity**:
  - India's total renewable energy capacity (excluding large hydro) reached **187.86 GW** as of July 2025.
  - Including large hydro and nuclear, non-fossil capacity stands at **246.27 GW**, representing **50.07%** of India's total installed power capacity of **484.82 GW**.
- **Pipeline Projects**:
  - **186.3 GW** of renewable projects are under implementation, and **67.08 GW** have been tendered, totaling nearly **499 GW** when combined with existing capacity.
- **Government Measures**:
  - Addressing delays in **Power Purchase Agreements (PSAs)** and enhancing weather forecasting systems.
  - Launching the **second phase of PM-KUSUM** and the **third phase of the Green Energy Corridor** to strengthen transmission infrastructure.

India's First Port-Based Green Hydrogen Pilot Project Unveiled at VOC Port

What's the News?

- A **pilot facility** producing **green hydrogen** was commissioned at **V.O. Chidambaranar (VOC) Port**, marking India's first **port-based green hydrogen production**. The project supports **streetlights** and **EV charging** within the Port Colony, affirming a clean energy shift in maritime infrastructure.

Green Hydrogen Pilot Project

- **Capacity & Cost**: 10 Nm³/hour, developed at an estimated **₹3.87 crore**.

- Powered by renewable energy, the hydrogen produced will supply **street lighting** and an **electric vehicle charging station** within the port colony.
- The project aligns with India's broader **clean energy transition** and the development of the **Kandla–Tuticorin Coastal Green Shipping Corridor**, forming a component of both **Sagarmala** and **Viksit Bharat 2047** initiatives.

Additional Infrastructure Roll-out

- **Other Facilities Launched**:
  - **Green methanol bunkering facility**: 750 m³ at **₹35.34 crore**
  - **400 kW rooftop solar plant**: Raised port's total rooftop solar to **1.04 MW**—highest among Indian ports
  - **Link conveyor** (Coal Jetty-I to stack yard): ₹24.5 crore
  - **6 MW wind farm** (foundation laid): ₹59.2 crore
  - **Multi-cargo berth** (10 million tonnes capacity): ₹90 crore
  - **4-lane road** (3.37 km): ₹34.77 crore
  - **Tamil Nadu Maritime Heritage Museum**: ₹3 crore
- **MoUs Signed**:
  - With **IPRCL** for outer harbour rail connectivity
  - With **NTPC** for green mobility solutions at the port

Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan 2025: Funds Mobilized for Clean Air

What's the News?

- The **Union Environment Minister**, **Bhupender Yadav**, presented the **Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan Awards 2025**, recognising the top-performing cities under the **National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)**—130 cities evaluated for air quality improvement.
- At the ceremony, **₹1.55 lakh crore** was reported as mobilised for clean air and green infrastructure initiatives across these cities.
- **Indore** topped in the Category-1 group (population over 10 lakh) with a perfect score of **200/200**, followed by **Jabalpur** (199), and **Agra** and **Surat** tied at third (196). Smaller cities like **Amravati**, **Jhansi**, **Moradabad**, and **Alwar**, among others, were also recognised.

NCAP Awards and Key Achievements

- **Category-1 (Population >10 lakh)**:
  - **Indore**: Planted **16 lakh trees** (Guinness World Record), operates **270 green public transport buses** (120 electric + 150 CNG).
  - **Jabalpur**: Established **11 MW waste-to-energy plant** and expanded greenery.
  - **Agra & Surat**: Agra remediated legacy waste dump sites; Surat implemented **EV policy incentives** and maintains **38% green cover**.
- **Category-2 (Population 3-10 lakh)**:

- o **Amravati**: Improved **340 km road infrastructure**, greened 53 gardens, and converted **19 acres of barren land** into forest.
  - o **Jhansi & Moradabad**: Focused on urban greening and construction waste management.
- **Category-3 (Population <3 lakh)**:
  - o **Dewas**: Shifted industries to cleaner fuels.
  - o **Parwanoo & Angul**: Enhanced road infrastructure and public outreach.
- **Performance Metrics**:
  - o **64 cities** achieved **≥20% reduction** in PM10 levels (2017-18 baseline).
  - o **25 cities** achieved **≥40% reduction** ahead of NCAP's 2026 target.

Strategic Significance & Key Details

- Demonstrates central and local governments' scale of investment in urban air quality and green infrastructure.
- Funds sourced via convergence of schemes: **Smart Cities Mission**, **Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban)**, **AMRUT**, **SATAT**, **FAME-II**, **Nagar Van Yojana**, alongside NCAP-specific grants.
  - o Since 2019:
    - ▪ **₹20,130 crore** – direct NCAP implementation
    - ▪ **₹13,237 crore** – performance-linked grants
    - ▪ **₹73,350 crore** – convergence share
    - ▪ **₹82,000 crore** – contributions from states and local bodies
    - ▪ **Total: ₹1.55 lakh crore** mobilised.
- Launched **"Ward-Level Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan Guidelines"** and a **Compendium of Best Practices** to deepen citizen engagement and knowledge sharing at sub-city level.

ADB-Loan for Sustainable Tourism in Uttarakhand

What's the News?

- The Government of India and the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** have agreed to a **USD 126.42 million** loan to boost sustainable tourism in Uttarakhand, focused on the **Tehri Garhwal** region.
- The initiative is aimed at helping **~87,000 local residents** and **2.7 million annual visitors** through improvements in infrastructure, sanitation, waste management, and disaster preparedness.

Sustainable Tourism & Climate Resilience

- The project is designed to make Uttarakhand an **"all-weather tourism destination"**.
- Key objectives of the loan include:
  - o **Infrastructure Upgrades**: Improving roads, sanitation systems, and other tourist facilities.
  - o **Climate Resilience**: Implementing nature-based solutions to mitigate the risks of landslides and floods.
  - o **Inclusive Development**: Providing livelihood matching grants to support tourism-related

businesses led by women and micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).
  - o **Disaster Preparedness**: Establishing a women-led disaster risk management initiative in pilot villages to enhance community resilience.
- The project is expected to benefit over **87,000 residents** and **2.7 million** annual visitors, while creating a model for sustainable tourism centered around a hydropower lake.

Development, Not Just Climate Change, Pushing Himalayas to the Edge

What's the News?

- Analysis indicates that human-driven development is becoming a stronger factor than climate change in pushing the Himalayas towards environmental and disaster risk thresholds.
- Himalayan states such as **Uttarakhand**, **Himachal Pradesh**, and **Jammu & Kashmir** are seeing increasing incidents of landslides, flash floods, slope failures.
- Infrastructure expansion (roads, hydropower, tunnels), unplanned urbanisation and deforestation are worsening geological fragility.

Key Drivers and Impacts

- **Infrastructure Projects**:
  - o **Hydropower Expansion**: Himachal Pradesh has **180 operational hydropower plants** with hundreds more planned, while Uttarakhand has **40 operational and 87 under construction**. These projects involve blasting, tunneling, and slope cutting, destabilizing mountains and altering river ecosystems.
  - o **Highways and Tunnels**: Projects like the **Chandigarh–Manali highway** and **Char Dham highway** (889 km, ₹12,000 crore) use **vertical cutting techniques**, creating near-vertical slopes prone to collapse during heavy rainfall. The Supreme Court noted these tunnels became "death traps" during monsoons.

- **Deforestation and Tourism Pressure**:
  - o Native trees like **deodar**, which bind soil, are cleared for hotels, roads, and urban expansion. This accelerates soil erosion and reduces natural drainage, increasing flood risks.
  - o Tourism-driven construction (e.g., in Dharali) encroaches on riverbeds and debris-flow fans, ignoring historical flood patterns. The **2025 Dharali disaster** buried the market under 12–18 meters of sediment.

- **Climate Change Amplification**:
  - o The Himalayas are warming **faster than the global average**, leading to glacial retreat and erratic rainfall. **Over 25,000 glacial lakes** pose GLOF risks, with events like the **2023 Teesta dam collapse** in Sikkim (₹1,200 crore loss) highlighting these threats.

- o Flash floods and landslides killed **705 people in Uttarakhand (2015–2025)**, with 389 deaths from flash floods alone.

Over 68,000 Ponds Created Under Amrit Sarovar Mission

What's the News?

- The government has announced that over **68,000 ponds** have been constructed or rejuvenated under the **Mission Amrit Sarovar**.
- The mission was launched in April 2022 with the initial goal of developing 75 ponds in each district of the country, totaling 50,000, as part of the **Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav** celebrations.
- A national workshop was recently held by the **Ministry of Rural Development** to discuss the second phase of the mission, focusing on enhancing technical capacity and fostering community participation.

Mission Amrit Sarovar: A Status Update

- **Target Exceeded**: The mission has surpassed its original target of 50,000 Amrit Sarovars, with over 68,000 now completed.
- **Key States**: Uttar Pradesh leads in the number of completed ponds with **16,630**, followed by Madhya Pradesh with **5,839** and Karnataka with **4,056**.
- **Phase II**: The mission's second phase will continue with a focus on **Jan Bhagidari** (people's participation) and technical innovations, including the use of volumetric measurement technologies like SONAR to assess water holding capacity.

Mission Amrit Sarovar:

- **Launch Date**: April 24, 2022.
- **Objective**: To develop and rejuvenate at least **75** water bodies in every district of the country.
- **Nodal Ministry**: **Ministry of Rural Development**. It is implemented with a "Whole of Government" approach, involving other ministries like the **Ministry of Jal Shakti**, **Ministry of Panchayati Raj**, and **Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change**.
- **Technical Partner**: The **Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Application and Geo-informatics (BISAG-N)** provides technical support and has developed a dedicated portal and mobile app for monitoring progress.
- **Funding**: There is no separate financial allocation for the mission. It converges with existing schemes such as the **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)** and the **15th Finance Commission Grants**.
- **Pond Specifications**: Each Amrit Sarovar is designed to have a minimum area of **1 acre** and a water holding capacity of approximately **10,000 cubic meters**.

PM Modi Inaugurates India's First Bamboo-Based Ethanol Plant in Assam

What's the News?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated India's first-of-its-kind, second-generation (2G) bioethanol plant at **Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL)** in the **Golaghat district of Assam**.
- The plant, built at a cost of approximately **₹5,000 crore**, utilizes bamboo as its primary feedstock to produce fuel-grade ethanol.
- This is a landmark project aimed at reducing India's dependence on imported crude oil, promoting green energy, and creating a sustainable bamboo-based economy in the Northeast. The plant's annual rated production capacity is **48,900 tonnes of ethanol**.

Plant Overview & Significance

- **Feedstock & Output**:
  - o Annual bamboo requirement: **5 lakh metric tonnes** (sourced locally).
  - o Annual production: **50 TMT ethanol**, **19 TMT furfural** (used in pharmaceuticals), **11 TMT acetic acid**, and **food-grade CO_2**.
  - o Generates **25 MW green electricity** through zero-waste processes.
- **Strategic Impact**:
  - o Advances **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** in energy by diversifying ethanol feedstock beyond sugarcane/molasses.
  - o Supports **tribal farmers** through bamboo cultivation and procurement (annual expenditure: **₹200 crore**).
  - o Aligns with **National Biofuels Policy 2018** (amended 2022), which accelerated E20 target to **2025–26**.
- **Economic & Environmental Benefits**:
  - o **Foreign exchange savings**: Estimated **$85 million/year** from polypropylene plant.
  - o **Carbon reduction**: Ethanol blending has already cut **69.8 million tonnes CO_2 emissions** (since 2014) and saved **₹1.36 trillion** in oil imports.

National Geothermal Energy Policy, 2025

What's the News?

- The **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)** has officially notified the **National Policy on Geothermal Energy, 2025**. It aims to accelerate clean energy transition and strengthen energy security by adding geothermal as a renewable source.
- The policy provides a structured framework for **exploration, development, project deployment, and incentives** for geothermal energy in India.

Policy Framework & Key Initiatives

- **Objectives**:
  - o Integrate geothermal energy into India's renewable mix to provide **baseload power** (24/7 supply).

- Enable direct uses: **district heating/cooling**, greenhouse farming, aquaculture, and **ground source heat pumps (GSHPs)**.
  - Repurpose **abandoned oil and gas wells** for geothermal extraction.
- **Incentives**:
  - **Fiscal**: Tax holidays, import duty exemptions, accelerated depreciation, and viability gap funding (VGF).
  - **Financial**: Concessional loans, green bonds, and **100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** allowed.
- **Governance**:
  - **MNRE** designated as the nodal agency for regulatory oversight.
  - Single-window clearances and state-level nodal agencies to streamline approvals.

India Secures Rights for Polymetallic Sulphide Exploration

What's the News?

- India signed a **15-year contract** with the **International Seabed Authority (ISA)** to get exclusive rights to explore **polymetallic sulphides (PMS)** in the **Carlsberg Ridge** of the Indian Ocean.
- Under this contract India becomes the first ISA member to have **two PMS exploration contracts**.

Exploring Polymetallic Sulphides (PMS)

- **What are PMS?**: Polymetallic Sulphides are mineral deposits formed by hydrothermal activity on the seafloor, commonly known as "black smokers." They are mounds of metallic sulphides precipitated from hot, mineral-rich fluids emanating from volcanic vents.
- **Composition**: These deposits are rich in valuable metals such as **copper, zinc, lead, gold, and silver**.
- **Strategic Importance**:
  - The metals found in PMS are crucial for developing renewable energy technologies like batteries, wind turbines, and solar panels.
  - This exploration aligns with India's economic growth objectives and its transition towards a green energy future.
  - The initiative is a key component of India's ambitious **Deep Ocean Mission**.

Switzerland's Gries Glacier Melting Rapidly

What's the News?

- The **Gries Glacier** in the canton of Valais, Switzerland, is retreating very fast. Its ice depth dropped by **six meters** over one year.
- Since 2000 it has shortened by **800 metres**. Compared with its length in 1880, it is now **3.2 km** shorter.
- At lower elevations the glacier might disappear within **five years**; at higher altitudes (≈ 3,000 metres) parts could remain for **40-50 years**.

Why It Matters?

- **Drivers of melt**
  - Dry years in **2022-23** and a very warm summer in 2025.
  - Snowfall in April 2025 offered brief relief but was insufficient to offset summer heat.
- **Consequences**
  - Glacial collapse risk, with past example: the **Blatten glacier collapse** destroyed a village.
  - Loss of glacier means less water storage, changes in river flows, increased risk of floods during melt periods and water scarcity otherwise.
- **Global pattern**
  - Many Swiss glaciers (≈ 100) have disappeared between **2016-2022**.
  - The World Meteorological Organization confirms nearly all glaciated regions are losing ice.

Production Gap Report 2025: Fossil Fuel Plans Exceed Climate Limits

What's the News?

- The **Production Gap Report 2025 (PGR)**, released on **September 22, 2025**, reveals that global fossil fuel production plans significantly exceed the limits set by the **Paris Agreement**.
- The report, compiled by leading research institutes including the **Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)**, **Climate Analytics**, and **International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)**, and backed by the **UN**, warns that planned fossil fuel production in 2030 will exceed levels consistent with limiting warming to **1.5°C** by more than **120%** and to **2°C** by **77%**.

Key Findings

- **Coal, Oil, and Gas on the Rise**:
  - **Coal**: Global output in 2030 is projected to be **500% higher** than the median 1.5°C pathway and **330% above** the 2°C benchmark.
  - **Oil**: Planned 2030 production exceeds Paris-aligned limits by **31%**.
  - **Gas**: Planned 2030 production exceeds Paris-aligned limits by **92%**.
- **Countries Ramping Up Extraction**:
  - **China**: Continues to back slower coal declines.
  - **United States**: Plans higher levels of coal, oil, and gas production.
  - **Saudi Arabia**: Projects significant increases in oil production.
  - **Brazil**: Projects a 47% jump in oil output by 2030.
  - **Nigeria**: Doubled its 2030 oil target.
- **Fiscal Costs**:
  - Government support for fossil fuels remains near record highs, despite international pledges to phase out inefficient subsidies.

JNPA Launches India's First Electric Heavy Truck Fleet with Swappable Batteries

What's the News?

- The **Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA)** has deployed **India's first fleet of electric heavy trucks** equipped with **swappable battery technology** at the **Nhava Sheva Distribution Terminal**, marking a major step toward **green port logistics**.
- **Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal** flagged off the initial **50 electric trucks**, with plans to scale the fleet to **80 by end-2025** and electrify **90% of its 600-vehicle internal heavy truck fleet by December 2026**.
- A **dedicated heavy-duty battery swapping station** has been commissioned to support uninterrupted operations, making this the **first such infrastructure for heavy commercial vehicles at an Indian port**.

Green Logistics & Strategic Impact

- **Environmental & Operational Benefits**:
  - Expected to significantly cut **carbon emissions, noise pollution, and dust** within port premises.
  - Aligns with **India's Net-Zero 2070 target**, **National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP)**, and **Green Ports Initiative**.
- **Policy & Infrastructure Alignment**:
  - Supports **Maritime India Vision 2030** and **PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan** by integrating clean energy into multimodal logistics.
  - JNPA, which handles **nearly 50% of India's container trade**, aims to set a replicable model for other major and non-major ports.
- **Tariff Framework Collaboration**:
  - JNPA signed an **MoU with the Isaac Centre for Public Policy, Ashoka University,** to develop a **reference framework for port tariff determination** based on cost and benchmarking across cargo types.

Environmental Accounting on Forest 2025

What's the News?

- The **Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI)** released the **"Environmental Accounting on Forest - 2025"** report under the **SEEA (System of Environmental Economic Accounts)** framework, during the 29th Conference of Central & State Statistical Organisations (CoCSSO).
- This is India's **first dedicated forest-accounting publication**, compiling national and state-level data across forest extent, condition, and ecosystem services.
- The report monetises forest services (provisioning, regulating, cultural) and quantifies physical changes in forests to inform planning, climate policy, and natural capital accounting.

Forest Accounts & Trends

- **Physical Asset / Extent Accounts**
  - Between 2010-11 and 2021-22, India's forest cover rose by **17,444.61 sq km** (≈ 22.50 %),

reaching **7.15 lakh sq km**, which is ~21.76 % of the country's geographical area.
  - From 2013 to 2023, a net increase of **3,356 sq km** in Recorded Forest Area (RFA) (largely due to reclassifications and boundary adjustments).
  - States leading gains: Kerala (+4,137), Karnataka (+3,122), Tamil Nadu (+2,606) sq km.
- **Condition Accounts**
  - **Growing stock** (volume of usable wood in live trees) rose by **305.53 million cubic metres** (≈ 7.32 %) between 2013-2023.
  - Top contributors: Madhya Pradesh (136 mil m³), Chhattisgarh (51), Telangana (28); UT: Andaman & Nicobar (77) m³.
- **Service Accounts (Valuation)**
  - **Provisioning services** (timber + non-timber) value rose from ₹ 30.72 thousand crore to ₹ 37.93 thousand crore (≈ 0.16 % of GDP in 2021-22).
  - **Regulating services (Carbon retention)** value increased 51.82 % (from ₹ 409.1 to ₹ 620.97 thousand crore). In 2021-22, this equals ~2.63 % of GDP.
  - Major state contributors: Arunachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Assam for carbon services; Maharashtra, Gujarat, Kerala for provisioning.

Centre Unveils Guidelines for 72,300 EV Charging Stations Under PM E-DRIVE Scheme

What's the News?

- The **Government of India** has released operational guidelines for the deployment of **72,300 public EV charging** stations under the **PM Electric Drive Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement (PM E-DRIVE)** scheme.
- With a dedicated outlay of **₹2,000 crore** for charging infrastructure under the larger **₹10,900 crore PM E-DRIVE scheme**, the initiative aims to accelerate India's transition to **clean mobility** by addressing critical gaps in EV charging access.
- **Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL)** has been designated as the **Project Implementation Agency (PIA)**, while state and central ministries must appoint **nodal agencies** to identify priority locations and submit consolidated proposals via a dedicated portal.

Tiered Subsidy Framework & Focus Areas

The scheme adopts a **location-based subsidy model** to ensure equitable and strategic rollout:

- **Government Premises** (offices, hospitals, schools, residential colonies):
  - **100% subsidy** on both upstream infrastructure and EV charging equipment.
  - Condition: Chargers must be **open for public use**.

- **High-Traffic Public Locations** (railway stations, airports, metro/bus stations, toll plazas, PSU fuel outlets, municipal parking):
  - **80% subsidy** on upstream infrastructure.
  - **70% subsidy** on charging equipment.
- **General Urban/Highway Sites** (malls, markets, highways, expressways) and **Battery Swapping Stations**:
  - **80% subsidy** on upstream infrastructure.

Priority Zones for Deployment:
- Cities with **population >1 million**.
- **Smart Cities**, **state capitals**, and **metro-linked satellite towns**.
- **High-density National and State Highways**.
- Key **transport hubs**: railway stations, airports, and public fuel outlets.

Subsidies will be disbursed in **two tranches**, linked to **compliance and performance benchmarks** to ensure accountability.

Himachal Pradesh's Cold Desert Enters UNESCO's Biosphere Network

What's the News?
- India's **Cold Desert region of Himachal Pradesh** has been officially added to the **UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves**.
- The designation was made during the **5th World Congress of Biosphere Reserves (WCBR)** in Hangzhou, China.
- With this, India's count of UNESCO-recognized biosphere reserves rises to **13**.

Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve
- **Geographic spread & zones**:
  - Total area: **7,770 sq km**
  - Altitude: ~ **3,300 to 6,600 metres**
  - Zoning structure: **Core zone ~2,665 sq km, Buffer ~3,977 sq km, Transition ~1,128 sq km**
- **Constituent protected areas**:
  - **Pin Valley National Park, Kibber Wildlife Sanctuary, Chandratal Wetland, Sarchu plains**
- **Biodiversity highlights**:
  - **Flora**: Hosts **655 herb species, 41 shrubs, 17 tree species**, including **14 endemics** and **47 medicinal plants** used in the traditional **Sowa Rigpa (Amchi)** healing system.
  - **Fauna**: Home to **17 mammal** and **119 bird species**, with the **snow leopard** as the flagship predator; also supports **Himalayan ibex**, **blue sheep**, and **Himalayan wolf**.

Bihar Adds Two Wetlands to India's Ramsar List, Total Now 93

What's the News?
- **Two wetlands in Bihar—Gokul Jalashay (Buxar) and Udaipur Jheel (West Champaran)—have been** designated as **Ramsar Sites**, bringing India's total to **93 wetlands of international importance**.
- With this addition, **Bihar now has five Ramsar sites**, reinforcing India's position as the **country with the highest number of Ramsar sites in Asia** and covering a total wetland area of **13.6 lakh hectares**.
- Both sites are **oxbow lakes** formed by the meandering of rivers and serve as critical habitats for migratory birds, endemic flora, and local communities dependent on wetland resources.

Key Features of the New Ramsar Sites
Gokul Jalashay (Buxar)
- **Area**: 448 hectares
- Located on the **southern bank of the Ganga River**
- Functions as a **natural flood buffer** for surrounding villages
- Supports **over 50 bird species**
- Used for **fishing, irrigation, and agriculture**
- Hosts **annual community-led cleaning rituals**, reflecting strong local stewardship

Udaipur Jheel (West Champaran)
- **Area**: 319 hectares
- Surrounded by the **Udaipur Wildlife Sanctuary**
- Home to **over 280 plant species**, including the **endemic herb Alysicarpus roxburghianus**
- Serves as a **key wintering ground** for **~35 migratory bird species**, including the **vulnerable Common Pochard (Aythya ferina)**

Health

Indian Scientists Uncover New Role of Protein p47 as a 'Mechanical Chaperone'

What's the News?

- **Researchers at S. N. Bose National Centre for Basic Sciences (SNBNCBS)** report that **p47**, previously viewed as an accessory cofactor of **p97**, directly stabilises mechanically stressed proteins and acts as a **mechanical chaperone**.
- **Single-molecule experiments** show p47 binds stretched polypeptides and promotes refolding under load. This reveals a force-dependent protective activity with therapeutic potential for mechanically fragile diseases.

Key findings & scientific details

- **Method**
  - **Single-molecule magnetic tweezers** were used to apply controlled pulling forces on model proteins while observing folding/unfolding.
- **Quantitative results**
  - **Half-point folding force** for the model protein shifted from **8.4 pN to 16.6 pN** in presence of **p47**.
  - **Distance to transition state reduced from 8 nm to 0.93 nm**, indicating a mechanically compact state.
  - **Mechanical work output increased to** approximately **199.5 zJ**, demonstrating enhanced stability under load.
- **Interpretation**
  - **p47** can autonomously modulate protein energy landscapes and assist translocation/extraction processes that expose polypeptides to force.

WHO Declares End to Mpox Global Health Emergency

What's the News?

- The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has lifted the **Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)** status for **Mpox**, acknowledging sustained declines in case numbers across key African countries.
- **Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus** accepted recommendations from the WHO's **Emergency Committee**, which meets quarterly to assess such threats.
- He emphasized that lifting the emergency does **not mark the end of the threat**, nor does it signal a halt to public health responses.

Mpox Outbreak and Response

- **Background**:
  - The outbreak, caused by a new form of **clade Ib virus**, emerged in early 2024 in the DRC and spread to neighboring African countries via close contact, including sexual transmission.
  - It led to over 14,000 cases in Africa in 2025, with high mortality among vulnerable groups like children, pregnant women, and immunocompromised individuals.
- **Global Impact**:
  - Travel-related cases were reported in 16 countries outside Africa, including India (10 clade Ib cases between December 2024 and March 2025), the U.S., and the UK, but without widespread community transmission.
  - India's first clade Ib case was reported in September 2024 in a traveler from Kerala, prompting enhanced surveillance and contact tracing.
- **Key Factors for Downgrade**:
  - Decline in cases due to improved testing, surveillance, and public awareness.
  - Effective containment in non-endemic countries through rapid response measures.

Russia Develops New Cancer Vaccine 'Enteromix'

- Russia has announced the development of a new **mRNA-based cancer vaccine** named **"Enteromix"**, which has reportedly shown high efficacy and safety in preclinical trials.
- The vaccine is initially intended for the treatment of **colorectal cancer**, with research underway for its application against **glioblastoma** (a type of brain cancer) and **melanoma**.
- The announcement was made by the head of Russia's **Federal Medical and Biological Agency (FMBA)** at a recent international forum, stating that the vaccine is now "ready for use" and awaiting official regulatory approval.

Enteromix Vaccine Development

- **Technology**:
  - Reported as an **mRNA-based vaccine** (similar to COVID-19 vaccines) and/or using **four non-pathogenic viruses** to attack tumors and activate the immune response.
  - Designed to be **personalized**, tailored to individual patient's RNA or tumor profile.
- **Efficacy Claims**:
  - Preclinical trials showed **60–80% tumor reduction** and improved survival, with some sources claiming **100% efficacy** in early trials (though this is unverified and debated).
  - Also being developed for **glioblastoma** (aggressive brain cancer) and **melanoma**.
- **Trial Status**:
  - Preclinical trials completed over **three years**.
  - **Phase I clinical trials** (human safety trials) have reportedly begun with **48 volunteers**, showing low toxicity.

- o Not yet approved for widespread clinical use; regulatory clearance pending.
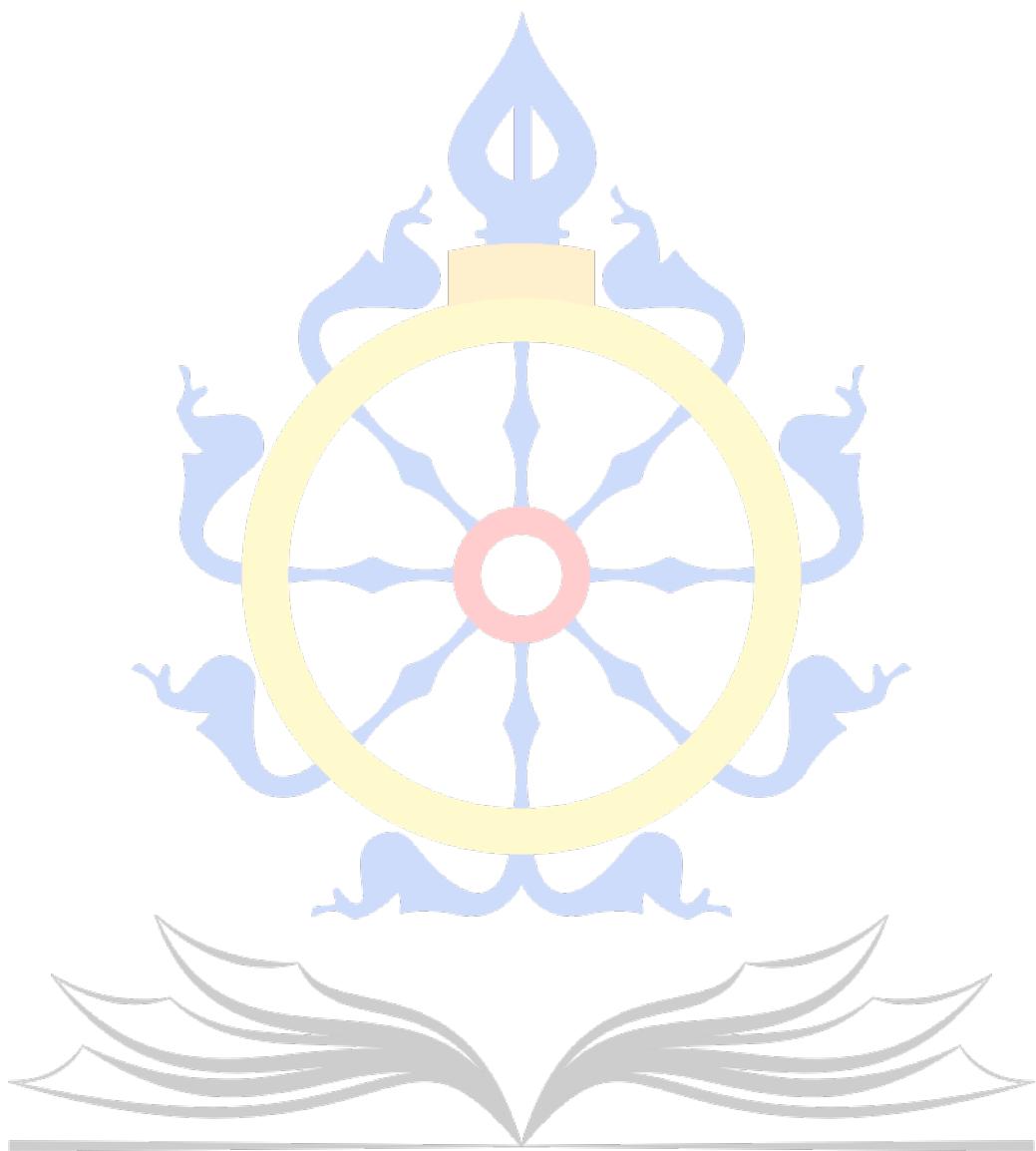
Education

UPSC to Establish Centre of Excellence

What's the News?

- The **Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)** has proposed to establish a **Centre of Excellence (CoE)** as a repository of best practices from UPSC and State Public Service Commissions (PSCs).
- The initiative was announced by UPSC Chairman Dr. Ajay Kumar during a virtual meeting with chairpersons and members of **27 State PSCs**, including UPSC Members Dr. Dinesh Dasa and Ms. Anuradha Prasad.
- The CoE aims to serve as a knowledge hub for **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**, innovations, and key takeaways from recruitment processes.
- This forms part of UPSC's **centenary celebrations** (October 2025–October 2026), reflecting on past achievements and envisioning future reforms in public service recruitment.

Centre of Excellence Initiative

- **Objectives**:
  - Act as a collaborative platform for documenting and sharing best practices, SOPs, and technological innovations in recruitment.
  - Enhance transparency, efficiency, and inclusivity in recruitment processes across UPSC and State PSCs.
  - Assist other national recruitment bodies in strengthening their examination and selection systems.
- **Key Features**:
  - **Knowledge Repository**: Centralized database of recruitment SOPs, innovations (e.g., AI-based surveillance, facial recognition), and strategies to prevent malpractices.
  - **Inclusivity Focus**: Address low participation from **aspirational districts** through awareness campaigns, mentoring, and outreach programs.
  - **Talent Utilization**: Expand initiatives like **Pratibha Setu**, a portal connecting near-successful candidates with opportunities in semi-government, quasi-judicial, and private sectors.
- **Collaboration**: UPSC will lead the initiative, but State PSCs are crucial contributors to knowledge-sharing and implementation.

IIT Madras and IISc Bengaluru Top NIRF India Rankings 2025

What's the News?

- The **National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) India Rankings 2025** have been released by the **Ministry of Education**.
- **IIT Madras** has been ranked as the best institution in the "Overall" category for the **seventh consecutive year**. It also secured the top position in the "Engineering" category.

- The **Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru** has been named the best "University" in the country.

Key Rankings & Highlights

- **Overall Top Institutions**:
  - **1st:** Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras
  - **2nd:** Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bengaluru
  - **3rd:** Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay
- **Top University**:
  - **1st:** Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bengaluru
  - **2nd:** Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi
  - **3rd:** Manipal Academy of Higher Education
- **Other Category Toppers**:
  - **Colleges**: Hindu College, Delhi
  - **Medical**: All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi
  - **Management**: Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Ahmedabad
  - **Law**: National Law School of India University (NLSIU), Bengaluru
  - **Research**: Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bengaluru
- The rankings for 2025 were conducted across **17 categories**, including new ones for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Open University, Skill University, and State Public University.

India Launches World's First Digital Tribal University 'Adi Sanskriti'

What's the News?

- The **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** launched the beta version of **Adi Sanskriti**, hailed as the world's first digital tribal university, at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi.
- The platform, unveiled by **Minister of State for Tribal Affairs Durgadas Uikey**, integrates education, cultural preservation, and economic empowerment for tribal communities through a digital ecosystem.
- It aims to safeguard tribal heritage, provide global access to tribal knowledge systems, and create sustainable livelihoods by connecting artisans directly with consumers.

Platform Structure and Offerings

- **Adi Vishwavidyalaya (Digital Tribal Art Academy)**:
  - Offers **45 immersive courses** on tribal dance, painting, crafts, music, and folklore.
  - Designed to teach and document tribal artforms, rituals, and traditions.
- **Adi Sampada (Socio-Cultural Repository)**:
  - Houses over **5,000 curated documents** across themes like paintings, textiles, artefacts, and livelihoods.
  - Serves as a digital archive for oral histories, music, and cultural expressions.
- **Adi Haat (Online Marketplace)**:

- o Linked with **TRIFED** (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India) to enable direct sales of tribal products.
- o Aims to eliminate middlemen and ensure better prices for artisans.

UPSC Pilots AI-Facial Recognition for Exam Verification

What's the News?

- UPSC ran a **pilot** for **AI-enabled facial authentication** during the NDA & NA II, and CDS II exams, in selected centres in Gurugram.
- Facial images of candidates were matched against registration photos.
- Verification time dropped to **8-10 seconds per candidate**.
- Around **2,700 successful scans** were done for **1,129 candidates** across multiple sessions.

AI-Based Facial Authentication System

- **Objective**:
  - o To strengthen the integrity of the examination process by adding an extra layer of security against impersonation and malpractices.
  - o To improve efficiency and reduce entry time at examination halls, ensuring a seamless experience for candidates.
- **Technology & Process**:
  - o The system digitally matches live facial images of candidates with photographs submitted during their registration.
  - o It uses artificial intelligence for rapid and accurate authentication, ensuring minimal manual intervention.
- **Outcomes**:
  - o Verification time reduced significantly to **8–10 seconds per candidate** (compared to traditional methods).
  - o Successful implementation at pilot centers with plans for further evaluation and potential scalability.

Nagaland University Faculty in World's Top 2% Scientists List

What's the News?

- Four professors of **Nagaland University** have been selected among the **World's Top 2% Scientists**, in a list compiled by **Stanford University** in collaboration with **Elsevier**.
- Two of them (Prof. Ambrish Singh and Prof. Pranav Kumar Prabhakar) have also been recognised in the **Career-Long Top 2%** category, which reflects sustained impact over their academic lifetime.
- Honoured faculty and their domains:
  - o Prof. Ambrish Singh — Chemistry
  - o Prof. Joginder Singh — Botany
  - o Prof. Prabhakar Sharma — Agricultural Engineering & Technology

- o Prof. Pranav Kumar Prabhakar — Biotechnology

The Stanford-Elsevier Scientists List

- The list is based on a comprehensive database created by experts at **Stanford University**, which provides standardized data on the global impact of scientists' research.
- **Methodology**:
  - o The ranking is based on citation metrics derived from the **Scopus** database, which is maintained by **Elsevier**.
  - o It evaluates scientists worldwide based on indicators such as the **h-index**, citations, and co-authorship adjusted metrics.
- **Scope**:
  - o The database encompasses approximately 200,000 top scientists across **22 scientific fields** and **174 sub-fields**.
- **Significance**:
  - o Inclusion in this list is a significant measure of a researcher's influence and sustained impact in their field, reflecting the high quality of their scientific contributions

Cabinet Approves Scheme to Add 10,023 MBBS and PG Seats by 2028-29

What's the News?

- The **Union Cabinet**, chaired by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi,** has approved the third phase of the centrally sponsored scheme to add **5,023 MBBS seats** and **5,000 PG seats** in existing government medical colleges and institutes.
- The initiative, costing **₹15,034 crore** over the next three years, aims to significantly augment undergraduate medical capacity and increase the availability of specialist doctors.
- The total financial implications are **₹15,034 crore** for the period from 2025-26 to 2028-29, with the central share being **₹10,303 crore** and the state share being **₹4,731 crore**.

Key Features of the Scheme

- **MBBS Seats**:
  - o Addition of **5,023 MBBS seats** in existing government medical colleges.
  - o This will enhance the quality of medical education and training to meet global standards.
- **PG Seats**:
  - o Creation of **5,000 PG seats** to increase the availability of specialist doctors.
  - o Introduction of new specialties across government medical institutions.
- **Financial Allocation**:
  - o Central share: **₹10,303 crore**
  - o State share: **₹4,731 crore**

Background

- **Previous Phases**:

- **First Phase**: Added **4,977 MBBS seats** in 83 colleges at a cost of **₹5,972 crore** and **4,058 PG seats** in 72 colleges for **₹1,498 crore**.
- **Second Phase**: Added **4,000 MBBS seats** across 65 colleges with the Centre allocating **₹4,478 crore** for the expansion.

- **Current Medical Seat Availability**:
  - India currently has around **1.2 lakh MBBS seats** and **74,306 PG medical seats**.
  - This marks a near doubling of capacity since 2014, when there were **51,328 MBBS seats** and **31,185 PG seats**.

- **Challenges Addressed**:
  - **Faculty Shortage**: The National Medical Commission (NMC) has taken steps to curb the problem of ghost faculty, including online Aadhaar-based biometric attendance and live video feeds from colleges.
  - **Regulation of Fees**: Efforts to regulate fees in private medical colleges to make medical education more affordable.
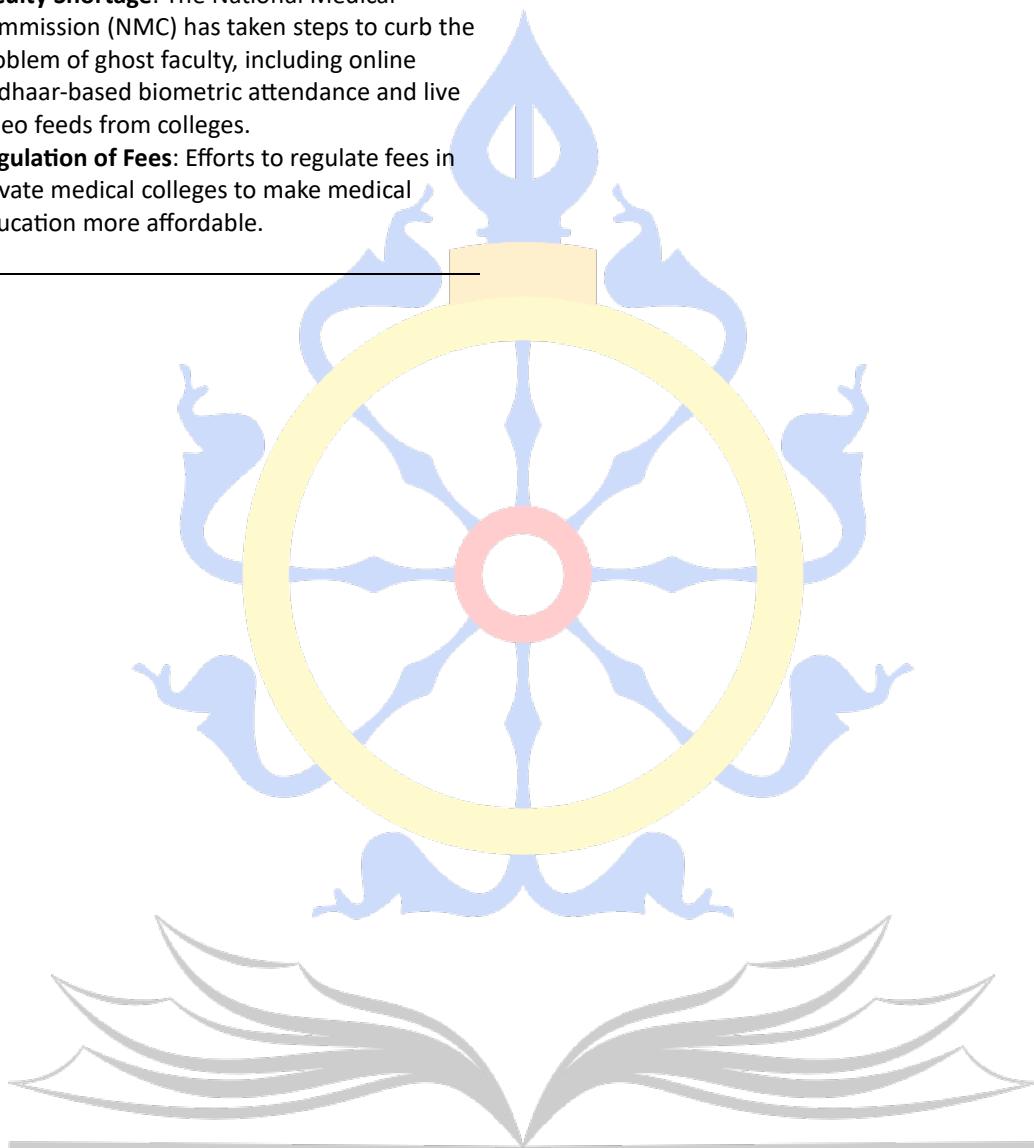
Economy and Finance

Indian Railways and SBI Enhance Insurance Benefits for Employees
What's the News?
- Indian Railways recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the State Bank of India (SBI) to provide significantly enhanced insurance benefits to railway employees.
- The agreement was formalized in the presence of Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and SBI Chairman C.S. Setty.
- This initiative aims to offer comprehensive financial security to railway personnel, particularly frontline workers, through improved insurance coverage linked to their salary accounts with SBI.

Enhanced Railway Salary Package (RSP)
- **Overview**: The MoU introduces a revised **Railway Salary Package (RSP)** for employees maintaining salary accounts with SBI. It replaces the earlier coverage under the **Central Government Employees Group Insurance Scheme (CGEGIS)** with substantially higher insurance benefits at no additional cost to employees.
- **Key Benefits**:
  - **Accidental Death Cover**: Increased to **₹1 crore** from previous coverage of ₹1.2 lakh (Group A), ₹60,000 (Group B), and ₹30,000 (Group C).
  - **Natural Death Cover**: **₹10 lakh** provided without premium payments or medical examinations.
  - **Additional Coverage**:
    - Air accident death cover: **₹1.6 crore** plus an additional **₹1 crore** through RuPay debit cards.
    - Permanent total disability cover: **₹1 crore**.
    - Permanent partial disability cover: Up to **₹80 lakh**.
- **Eligibility**: Approximately **7 lakh railway employees** with SBI salary accounts are eligible for these benefits.

GST Revenues Rise to ₹1.86 Lakh Crore; Growth Slows to 6.5%
What's the News?
- **GST** mop-up stood at **₹1.86 lakh crore**, a **6.5%** year-on-year increase.
- Collections remained **above ₹1.8 lakh crore** for the eighth consecutive month.
- Gross receipts were **lower than the preceding month's** mobilization of about **₹1.96 lakh crore**.

Revenue Composition & Indicators
- **Domestic GST** (net of imports) contributed **~₹1.37 lakh crore**, growth around **9.6%**.
- **GST on imports** was about **₹49,354 crore**, showing a marginal decline.

- **Refund Dynamics**: Refunds fell **20% year-on-year** to ₹19,359 crore, contributing to higher net revenue.
- **State-wise Performance**: States like **Sikkim (39% growth), Nagaland (33%), and Meghalaya (35%)** led in growth rates, while industrialized states (e.g., Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu) contributed significantly to overall collections.
- **Long-term Trends**:
  - GST collections have doubled from **₹11.37 lakh crore in FY21 to ₹22.08 lakh crore in FY25**.
  - The **average monthly collection** in FY25 stood at **₹1.84 lakh crore**, the highest since GST's implementation in 2017.

India's Manufacturing PMI Hits 17-Year High in August 2025
What's the News?
- India's manufacturing sector expanded at its fastest pace in over **17 years** in August 2025, with the **HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)** rising to **59.3**, up from 59.1 in July.
- This marks the strongest improvement in operating conditions since February 2008, driven by robust domestic demand, accelerated production, and sustained new order growth.
- Despite headwinds from new U.S. tariffs, the sector demonstrated resilience, with employment rising for the **18th consecutive month** and business confidence rebounding.

Sector Growth Drivers and Challenges
- **Overview**: The PMI surge reflects broad-based strength in production, new orders, and employment, though export growth softened due to recent U.S. trade policies.
- **Key Details**:
  - **Production Growth**: Output expanded at the fastest pace since late 2020, attributed to better alignment between supply and demand.
  - **New Orders**: Domestic orders grew at a pace matching July's 57-month high, while export orders saw the weakest growth in five months due to uncertainty from **U.S. tariffs**.
  - **Employment**: Job creation continued for the 18th straight month, though at the slowest pace since November 2024.
  - **Inflationary Pressures**: Input costs (e.g., steel, electronics, minerals) and output prices rose to a three-month high, with firms passing costs to consumers amid strong demand.
- **Sectoral Performance**: Intermediate goods led growth, followed by capital and consumer goods.

GST Council Rationalizes Tax Slabs

What's the News?

- The **GST Council** has approved a major rationalization of the GST structure, moving from a four-tiered system to a simplified **two-rate structure** of **5% and 18%**.
- A special **40% rate** has been introduced for a limited number of "sin" and luxury goods.
- This reform is expected to make many essential and consumer goods cheaper, boosting consumption and simplifying the tax regime. Experts believe states will remain net gainers due to increased revenue from higher consumption.

GST Rate Rationalization

The new structure aims to correct the **inverted duty structure** and streamline the tax burden. The key changes include:

- **From 28% to 18%**: Many white goods and consumer electronics like air conditioners, televisions (including all LEDs/LCDs), dishwashing machines, and small cars and motorcycles (up to 350cc) have been moved to the lower slab.
- **From 12%/18% to 5%**: A wide range of daily essentials and processed foods will now be taxed at 5%. This includes toiletries (e.g., soap, shampoo, hair oil), bicycles, tableware, and packaged foods like namkeens, bhujia, and some dairy products.
- **Nil GST**: Some items like UHT milk, pre-packaged paneer, and all Indian breads (roti, paratha) are now **tax-exempt**. Additionally, **individual health and life insurance** policies, as well as several life-saving medicines and medical devices, have been exempted from GST.
- **40% Special Rate**: A new highest slab has been created for certain demerit and luxury goods such as carbonated sugary drinks and high-end cars.

Maritime Sector Investment in India

What's the News?

- The Indian government has announced a massive investment of **₹80 lakh crore** (approximately $960 billion) to transform the country's maritime sector by **2047**.
- The investment aims to revolutionize port capacity, shipping, shipbuilding, and inland waterways.
- This is part of the broader **Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047** and aligns with flagship initiatives such as the **Sagarmala Programme**.

Maritime Vision 2047

- The **Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047**, a long-term roadmap for India's maritime sector, sets ambitious targets.
- **Key Targets**:
  - Increase port handling capacity to **10,000 million metric tons per annum** (MMTPA).
  - Position India among the **top five** shipbuilding nations globally.
  - Secure a **20% share** in the global ship recycling market.
  - Expand inland waterway cargo movement to **500 MMT**.
- The vision emphasizes port-led development, leveraging strategic trade routes, and adopting clean fuels like hydrogen and ammonia.

UPI Transaction Limits Increased for High-Value Payments

What's the News?

- The **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** has significantly increased the transaction limits for Unified Payments Interface (UPI) for several high-value categories, effective from **September 15, 2025**.
- While the standard daily limit for person-to-person (P2P) transfers remains **₹1 lakh**, the new per-transaction limit for specific merchant payments has been raised to **₹5 lakh**.
- This change, in response to growing market demand, is a key step in expanding UPI's role from a platform for small-value transfers to one that can handle larger financial transactions with verified merchants.

New Transaction Limits

The enhanced limits apply only to **Person-to-Merchant (P2M)** payments for specific categories of transactions, with cumulative 24-hour caps varying by category.

- **Per-Transaction Limit of ₹5 Lakh**:
  - Capital Markets (e.g., investments)
  - Insurance payments
  - Government e-Marketplace (GeM) and tax payments
  - Travel bookings
  - Collections (e.g., loan EMIs, B2B payments)
  - Credit Card bill payments (with a **₹6 lakh** cumulative 24-hour limit)
  - Term deposits made via digital accounts
  - FX-Retail use cases via the **Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS)**
- **Per-Transaction Limit of ₹2 Lakh**:
  - Jewellery purchases
  - Initial funding of new digital accounts

India Launches SAJEX 2025 in Jeddah to Strengthen Jewellery Trade

What's the News?

- India has inaugurated the **Saudi Arabia Jewellery Exposition (SAJEX 2025)** in Jeddah.
- The event is a B2B jewellery fair organised by the **Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC)** with backing from Saudi institutions.
- It aims to leverage Saudi Arabia's growing luxury and jewellery market and strengthen bilateral trade ties.

SAJEX 2025 Overview

- **Objective**: To position India as a key supplier to Saudi Arabia's jewellery market, projected to grow from **$4.56 billion (2024) to $8.34 billion by 2030** (CAGR 10.6%).

- **Key Offerings**: Exhibits include diamond and gemstone jewellery, bridal collections, gold jewellery (18K-22K), lab-grown diamonds, and jewellery technology.
- **Significance**: India exported **$32 billion** worth of gems and jewellery in FY 2024-25, accounting for **65% of global diamond value** and **92% by volume**. The sector saw a **315% surge in FDI** in FY 2024-25.
- **Bilateral Context**: Saudi Arabia is India's **5th largest trading partner** with bilateral trade at **$42.98 billion (2023-24)**. Gems and jewellery contribute **$890 million** to this trade.

SEBI Mutual Fund Reforms: Investor Protection & Inclusion Enhanced

What's the News?

- SEBI approved three major reforms in its recent board meeting to boost **investor protection** and **financial inclusion** in mutual funds.
- Key changes:
  1. Maximum **exit load** for mutual funds reduced.
  2. Distributor incentives overhauled, especially for smaller cities (B-30) and new investors.
  3. Special measures introduced to increase participation by **women investors**.

Details of the Reforms

- **Exit Load Reduction**
  - Cap brought down from **5% to 3%**.
  - Seeks to align regulation with typical industry practice (many schemes charge ~1-2%).
- **Distributor Incentives (B-30 & New Investor Focus)**
  - Only inflows from **new individual investors** (with new PAN) in B-30 cities will earn distributor incentives.
  - The incentive will be **1%** of the amount invested (lumpsum) or total investments in first year (in case of SIP), up to a maximum of **₹2,000**.
- **Gender Inclusion Measures**
  - Additional commission for distributors who bring in new women investors (with new PAN).
  - Payment of commission structured similarly to B-30 incentive.
- **REITs Classification Change**
  - **Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs)** reclassified as **equity instruments** for mutual fund investment rules.
  - **Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs)** retain a **hybrid** classification.
  - Consequences: REITs now count within equity allocation limits. Eligible for inclusion in equity indices.

CSC Crosses ₹3,000 Crore in Loan Disbursals

What's the News?

- **CSC e-Governance Services India Ltd (CSC SPV)** has disbursed over **₹3,000 crore** in loans since July 2023 under its partnership with **Piramal Finance**.

- Beneficiaries so far: nearly **70,000 people**, many first-time borrowers from **unbanked or underserved** rural segments.

Key Data & Significance

Financial Year	Loan Disbursals (through CSC SPV)	Comments
FY 2023-24	~ ₹86 crore	Inception phase of the loan push.
FY 2024-25	~ ₹1,631 crore	Major ramp up in disbursal volumes.
FY 2025-26 (till August)	~ ₹1,300 crore	Continuing strong growth.

- CSC uses a network of **over 5.8 lakh Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs)** to reach remote/rural communities.
- Loans are lower cost than many local informal credit sources. Designed to reduce exploitative practices.

RBI Microsite on Indian Banknotes

What's the News?

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has launched a **microsite** dedicated to Indian banknotes. It provides information on design, security features, and exchange rules.
- The site includes a **360-degree view** of banknotes, interactive tools, multimedia content, and a section on how to exchange old, damaged or withdrawn notes.

Microsite Features & Objectives

- **Interactive Learning**:
  - **360-degree view** for detailed examination of banknote design and security elements.
  - **Multimedia tools** (videos, animations, audio) to explain security features like watermarks, security threads, and color-shifting inks.
  - **Games and quizzes** to engage students and the public in learning about currency authenticity.
- **Exchange Guidelines**:
  - Dedicated section on procedures for exchanging old, damaged, or withdrawn notes at banks and RBI counters.
- **Accessibility**:
  - User-friendly navigation catering to all age groups, including students, educators, and businesses.

RBI Tightens Guidelines for Payment Aggregators

What's the News?

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has issued the **Payment Aggregators Directions, 2025**.
- The rules apply **immediately**, especially for **non-bank payment aggregators**.
- The aim is to improve **consumer protection**, reduce fraud, tighten governance, ensure data security, and regulate cross-border and offline/online transactions better.

Key Provisions & Impacts

- **Classification of Aggregators**
  - PA-O: Online aggregators.
  - PA-P: Physical/offline aggregators.
  - PA-CB: Cross-border aggregators.
- **Net Worth & Authorisation**
  - Non-bank aggregators must have **₹15 crore** net worth at application time.
  - This must rise to **₹25 crore** by the end of third financial year after authorisation.
  - Banks are exempt from seeking separate authorisation to operate as PAs.
- **Governance, Risk & Fraud Prevention**
  - Mandatory **board-approved dispute resolution policy** with defined refund timelines.
  - Strong data security, fraud detection/prevention systems.
  - Merchant background checks, KYC requirements.
- **Escrow & Fund Management**
  - Funds collected by PAs must go into **escrow accounts** with scheduled commercial banks
  - Separation of aggregator's own funds from merchant funds.
- **Cross-Border and Transaction Limits**
  - PA-CBs (cross-border) have specific rules on transaction flows and fund segregation.
  - No PA can impose transaction-amount limits on specific modes; issuing bank will decide based on customer credit/spending.
- **Other Operational Norms**
  - Authentication standards tightened: e.g. ATM PIN cannot be used as authentication factor for **card-not-present** transactions.
  - Continuous maintenance of net worth and compliance obligations.

  - **Assured Payout**: Guarantees 50% of the average basic pay of the last 12 months before retirement for employees with at least 25 years of service. For those with 10-25 years of service, a proportionate payout is provided.
  - **Minimum Pension**: ₹10,000 per month after 10 years of service.
  - **Contributions**: Employee contributes 10% of basic pay + DA, while the government contributes 10% (matching) and an additional 8.5% to a pool corpus.
  - **Family Benefits**: Spouses receive 60% of the pension after the employee's death.
- **Eligibility**: Existing and newly joined Central Government employees, as well as past retirees under NPS with at least 10 years of service.
- **Current Adoption**: As of July 20, 2025, only about 40,000 of the 23.94 lakh eligible employees had opted for UPS.

Global Innovation Index 2025: India's Position & Trends
What's the News?
- India ranks **38th among 139 economies** in the **Global Innovation Index (GII) 2025**.
- India is **first among lower-middle-income economies**, and top in the **Central & Southern Asia** region.

India's Performance: Strengths & Weaknesses
- **Strengths**:
  - Knowledge & Technology Outputs (#22 globally)
  - Market Sophistication (#38 globally)
  - Four Indian cities/clusters feature among the **top 100 innovation clusters**, with **Bengaluru** being the most innovative cluster in India.
- **Weaknesses / Areas for Improvement**:
  - Business Sophistication ranked low (~ #64)
  - Infrastructure (#61) and Institutions (#58) are lagging.

Comparative Insights (China, USA, etc.)
- Top 10 most innovative countries are led by **Switzerland (#1)**, followed by **Sweden**, **USA (#3)**, **Republic of Korea**, **Singapore**, **UK**, **Finland**, **Netherlands**, **Denmark**, **China (#10)**.
- China has entered the top 10 for the first time. It leads in several metrics such as patent filings, creative goods exports, trademarks.

Ministry of Finance Sets Deadline for Unified Pension Scheme
What's the News?
- The Ministry of Finance has fixed **30 September 2025** as the final date for eligible Central Government employees and past retirees to opt into the **Unified Pension Scheme (UPS)**, moving from the National Pension System (NPS).
- Employees who cannot access the online option due to technical glitches are allowed to submit **physical forms** through their nodal offices, provided these are submitted by the deadline.
- Under the UPS rules, once an employee opts for UPS, they get a **one-time switch back to the NPS**, but only under certain conditions and timelines.

Unified Pension Scheme (UPS)
- **Overview**: UPS is an optional pension scheme launched as an alternative to NPS, providing assured post-retirement benefits. It was notified in January 2025 and implemented from April 1, 2025.
- **Key Features**:

EPFO Launches 'Passbook Lite' to Streamline Services
What's the News?
- The **Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)** has launched a new feature called **'Passbook Lite'** to enhance user experience and expedite service delivery.

- This feature integrates the EPF passbook directly into the main **EPFO member e-Sewa portal**, eliminating the need for members to log in to a separate website to view their account details.
- Members can now access their contributions, withdrawals, and balance information seamlessly within the main portal.

Key Features of 'Passbook Lite'

- **Integrated Access**: The passbook is now embedded within the member e-Sewa portal, accessible under the 'View' tab. This single-point access simplifies navigation for members.
- **Faster Claim Settlement**: By integrating data access, the system is expected to reduce the processing time for online claims, as data retrieval for verification will be quicker.
- **Enhanced Convenience**: The new system removes the hassle of managing and logging into two different portals, providing a more streamlined and user-friendly experience.
- **Consolidated View**: It offers a real-time, consolidated statement of the member's PF account, ensuring all transaction details are readily available in one place.

SEBI Launches 'SWAGAT-FI' to Fast-Track Foreign Investment

What's the News?

- The **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** has introduced a new fast-track registration mechanism named **SWAGAT-FI** to attract long-term foreign investment.
- The acronym stands for **S**pecial **W**indow for **A**ccelerated **G**lobal **A**ccess to **T**rading - **F**oreign **I**nvestors.
- This initiative aims to provide a single-window, time-bound clearance for **Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs)** from well-regulated and trusted jurisdictions, thereby simplifying their entry into Indian capital markets.

The SWAGAT-FI Mechanism

- **Objective**: To attract stable, high-quality, and long-term foreign capital by reducing procedural delays and complexities.
- **Key Features**:
  - **Single-Window System**: A unified digital platform for all registration and compliance requirements, streamlining the approval process.
  - **Expedited Processing**: Aims to significantly reduce the registration timeline for eligible FPIs, potentially to as few as 10 days.
  - **Simplified KYC**: Eased **Know Your Customer (KYC)** and documentation norms for investors from jurisdictions with robust regulatory frameworks.
  - **Dedicated Support**: Provision for a relationship manager to assist investors through the entire process.
- **Significance**: The move is designed to enhance the ease of doing business in India and differentiate between

short-term speculative capital ("hot money") and long-term strategic investments, thereby fostering greater market stability.

Assessment of Logistics Cost in India Report

What's the News?

- The Government launched a report titled **"Assessment of Logistics Cost in India"** under the Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal.
- It provides a uniform, scientifically derived framework to measure logistics costs across transport modes, firm sizes, and product categories.
- The report estimates logistics costs at about **7.97% of India's GDP**, significantly lower than earlier figures of 13-14% drawn from partial or external studies.

Logistics Cost Assessment Report

- **Objective**: To establish a credible and scientific framework for measuring logistics costs, providing a baseline for monitoring progress and making data-driven policy decisions.
- **Key Findings**:
  - The aggregated logistics cost in India is estimated to be between **7.8% and 8.9%** of GDP.
  - The cost as a percentage of GDP has shown a declining trend over the last decade, indicating improved efficiency.
- **Methodology**:
  - The report was developed by the **National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER)** for the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (**DPIIT**).
  - It uses a robust modeling approach based on secondary data from the **Supply Use Tables** and **National Accounts Statistics**.
- **Significance**: Lower logistics costs are crucial for making Indian goods more competitive in both domestic and international markets, boosting exports, and improving the ease of doing business.

Bima Sugam: Unified Insurance Marketplace by IRDAI

What's the News?

- The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (**IRDAI**) unveiled **Bima Sugam**, a digital insurance marketplace intended to simplify buying, renewing, managing, and claiming insurance policies.
- The platform was launched via the **Bima Sugam India Federation (BSIF)** at IRDAI's Hyderabad office, with key stakeholders including insurers, agents, brokers, banks, aggregators involved.

Bima Sugam and its Significance

The Bima Sugam portal is designed to act as a single, comprehensive digital public infrastructure (DPI) for the insurance sector, bringing together all stakeholders—

customers, insurers, and intermediaries—onto a common platform.

- **Key Objectives**:
  - **Democratize Insurance**: Make insurance more accessible, affordable, and transparent for every Indian citizen, including those in rural areas.
  - **Streamline Processes**: Simplify policy buying, servicing, and claims by eliminating complex, paper-based procedures.
  - **Reduce Costs**: Lower operational costs for insurers and commissions for intermediaries, which may lead to more affordable premiums for consumers.
  - **Enhance Transparency**: Provide a centralized database for comparing products, ensuring consumers make informed decisions without the risk of mis-selling.
- **How it Works**:
  - Customers can create a single **e-Bima Account** to securely store all their policies in a dematerialized format, similar to a demat account for shares.
  - The platform allows for easy comparison of various **life, health, motor, travel, and general insurance** policies from all registered companies.
  - It facilitates a completely paperless process for buying policies, raising service requests, and settling claims.

'GST Bachat Utsav' and Next-Generation GST Reforms

What's the News?

- The Government of India has initiated a nationwide **'GST Bachat Utsav'** (GST Savings Festival) to mark the implementation of **next-generation GST reforms**.
- The reforms, which came into effect from September 22, aim to simplify the tax structure by moving from a four-slab system to a two-slab system of **5% and 18%**.
- This major tax overhaul is expected to result in savings of over **₹2.5 lakh crore** for citizens, particularly benefiting the poor and middle class.

The Next-Generation GST Reforms

The new GST reforms represent a significant step towards a simplified and more transparent tax regime.

- **Simplified Tax Structure**:
  - The previous four-rate structure (5%, 12%, 18%, and 28%) has been rationalized into a two-rate system: **5% for essential goods** and **18% for most other goods and services**.
  - A special **40% rate** with an additional compensation cess will continue to apply to a limited number of luxury and "sin" goods like tobacco and pan masala.
- **Key Beneficiaries**:
  - **Daily Essentials**: A wide range of products, including soaps, shampoos, packaged foods,

and household items, have been moved to the lower 5% slab.
  - **Healthcare**: Over 30 life-saving drugs and diagnostic kits are now fully exempt from GST, while other essential medicines attract a 5% tax. Life insurance premiums have also been made GST-free.
  - **Automobiles and Consumer Durables**: GST on small cars, two-wheelers, commercial vehicles, and consumer durables like ACs and large TVs has been reduced to 18%, making them more affordable.
  - **Farmers**: The GST on farm machinery, irrigation equipment, and bio-pesticides has been significantly reduced, which will lower input costs for the agricultural sector.
  - **Service Sector**: Services such as hotel stays, gym memberships, and salon services now fall under the 5% slab.

States' Public Debt Trebles to ₹59.6 Lakh Crore in a Decade: CAG Report

What's the News?

- A decadal analysis by the **Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)** of India has revealed that the combined public debt of 28 states more than trebled in ten years, from **₹17.57 lakh crore** in fiscal year (FY) 2013-14 to **₹59.60 lakh crore** in FY 2022-23.
- The report, the first of its kind to provide a consolidated decadal analysis of state finances, highlights concerns over fiscal discipline and debt sustainability.
- It notes that the **debt-to-GSDP ratio** (Gross State Domestic Product) for states has increased from 16.66% to 22.96% in the same period.

State Finances Overview

The report highlights several key trends and concerns regarding the fiscal health of Indian states.

- **Debt-to-GSDP Ratio**:
  - Eight states had a public debt-to-GSDP ratio of more than **30%**.
  - Six states maintained this ratio at less than **20%**.
  - The remaining 14 states were in the **20%-30%** range.
  - **Highest Debt-to-GSDP**: Punjab (40.35%), Nagaland (37.15%), West Bengal (33.70%).
  - **Lowest Debt-to-GSDP**: Odisha (8.45%), Maharashtra (14.64%), Gujarat (16.37%).
- **Committed Expenditure**:
  - The total committed expenditure on salaries, pensions, and interest payments for all states rose by **2.49 times** to **₹15.63 lakh crore** in FY 2022-23.
  - This constitutes a large and inflexible portion of their revenue expenditure.
- **Divergence from the 'Golden Rule'**:
  - The report notes that 11 states used borrowings to finance current expenditures (salaries, subsidies, pensions) instead of

capital creation, violating the **'golden rule of borrowing'**.

- o This practice is most pronounced in states like Punjab and Andhra Pradesh, where capital expenditure as a share of net borrowings was as low as **26%** and **17%**, respectively.

RBI Mandates Enhanced Authentication for Digital Payments from 2026

What's the News?

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has issued the **"Reserve Bank of India (Authentication Mechanisms for Digital Payment Transactions) Directions, 2025"**, which will come into effect from **April 1, 2026**.
- These directions mandate **stricter, risk-based authentication protocols** for all **domestic digital payment transactions**, going beyond the existing **two-factor authentication (2FA)** framework.
- The move aims to **enhance security**, **reduce fraud**, and **leverage technological advancements** such as **biometrics, tokenisation, and behavioural analytics** while ensuring **interoperability** and **customer protection**.

Key Provisions of the New Authentication Framework

- **Dynamic Authentication Requirement**:
  - o At least **one authentication factor** must be **dynamically generated or proven**, i.e., **unique to each transaction** (e.g., OTP, biometric token).
  - o Compromise of one factor **must not affect the reliability** of the other.
- **Risk-Based Additional Checks**:
  - o Payment system participants may deploy **contextual and behavioural parameters**—such as **transaction location, device fingerprint, user history**, and **spending patterns**—to assess fraud risk and trigger **extra verification layers**.
- **Cross-Border Transactions**:
  - o **Card issuers** must validate an **Additional Factor of Authentication (AFA)** for **non-recurring, card-not-present (CNP) international transactions** when requested by overseas merchants or acquirers.
- **Consumer Safeguards**:
  - o In case of losses due to **non-compliance** with these directions, **issuers must compensate customers in full without demur**.
  - o All systems must comply with the **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023**.
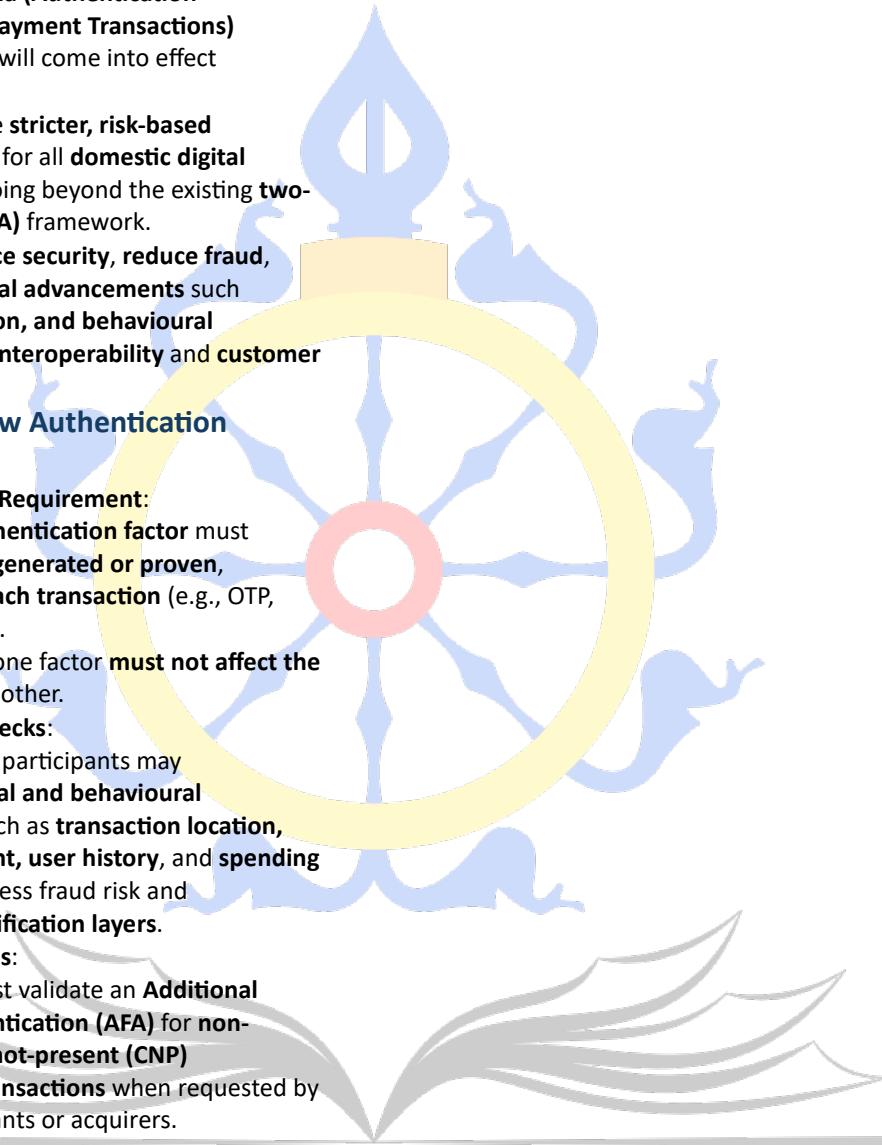
Science & Technology

Adi Vaani: AI Translator for Tribal Languages
What's the News?
- **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** rolled out the **beta** version of **Adi Vaani**, an **AI**-based translator to translate between **Hindi/English** and tribal languages and to digitise oral and written tribal content.

Adi Vaani — Purpose & Key Features
- **Objective**
  - Preserve endangered tribal languages, improve access to governance, education and services in native languages, and build datasets for future large language models.
- **Technical & operational details**
  - **Consortium lead: IIT-Delhi** with **BITS Pilani**, **IIIT Naya Raipur** and tribal research institutes.
  - **Initial languages supported: Bhili**, **Gondi**, **Santali**, **Mundari**; plans to add **Kui**, **Garo** and others.
  - **Corpus building:** contribution from **>250** native speakers, educators and community leaders to create dictionaries, translated primers and folklore texts.
  - **Pedagogic tools:** integrates language primers and OCR support to convert printed/handwritten material into digital text.

Tata Electronics and Merck Partner to Strengthen India's Semiconductor Ecosystem
What's the News?
- **Tata Electronics Private Limited** and **Merck**, a global science and technology company, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance India's semiconductor and electronics manufacturing capabilities.
- The partnership aims to boost the local semiconductor ecosystem by focusing on advanced materials, manufacturing excellence, and supply chain development for Tata's upcoming fabrication facility in Dholera, Gujarat.

Partnership Details & Significance
The collaboration is a crucial step towards building a resilient and self-reliant semiconductor industry in India. Under the agreement, Merck will provide a full suite of products and services, including:
- **High-purity electronic materials** and specialty chemicals.
- Advanced gas and chemical delivery systems.
- Turnkey fabrication (fab) infrastructure services.
- AI-powered **Material Intelligence solutions** for data analytics.

This strategic move is vital for the timely execution of Tata Electronics' **₹91,000 crore** (approximately $11 billion) semiconductor fabrication plant, which will produce chips for sectors like automotive, mobile, and AI.

ISRO's Vikram-32 Chip Presented to PM Modi at Semicon India 2025
What's the News?
- At the **Semicon India 2025** summit, Union IT Minister **Ashwini Vaishnaw** presented the first "Made-in-India" semiconductor chip, **Vikram-32**, to Prime Minister **Narendra Modi**.
- The Vikram-32 processor, developed by **ISRO's Semiconductor Laboratory (SCL)**, is the country's first fully indigenous 32-bit microprocessor.
- The presentation of the chip, along with test chips from four other approved projects, marks a significant milestone in India's journey towards semiconductor self-reliance.

Vikram-32 Processor
- The **Vikram-32** is an advanced version of ISRO's earlier 16-bit microprocessor and is specifically designed to withstand the extreme conditions of space launch vehicles and satellites.
- **Key Features**:
  - **Architecture**: It is a 32-bit microprocessor, which is a major upgrade from the previous 16-bit version.
  - **Indigenous Development**: It was designed and fabricated entirely in India at ISRO's Semiconductor Laboratory (SCL) in Mohali, Punjab, using a **180nm CMOS technology**.
  - **Space-Grade Qualification**: The chip has been successfully validated in space during the **PSLV-C60 mission**, proving its reliability for use in harsh space environments.
- **Design origin**: **Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC)**; successor to earlier indigenous VIKRAM1601.
- **Applications**: satellites, launch vehicles, defence and other high-reliability systems.

Indian Scientists Develop Credit Card-Sized Computer for Space Mission
What's the News?
- Scientists at the **Raman Research Institute (RRI)** have developed a compact, credit card-sized digital receiver system for a proposed space payload called **PRATUSH**.
- **PRATUSH** (Probing ReionizATion of the Universe using Signal from Hydrogen) is a conceptual mission to study the **"Cosmic Dawn"**, the period when the first stars and galaxies formed in the universe.
- The tiny computer will be the "master conductor" for a radiometer, designed to detect faint radio signals from hydrogen atoms from the early universe.

PRATUSH Mission and the Cosmic Dawn

- The **PRATUSH** mission aims to detect the **21-cm radio signal** emitted by hydrogen atoms, which carries imprints of the universe's earliest moments.
- **Why from the Moon?**:
  - On Earth, these faint signals are drowned out by strong radio noise and interference from sources like FM transmissions and ionospheric distortions.
  - PRATUSH is designed to be a future lunar orbiter, specifically targeting the far side of the Moon, which is considered the most radio-quiet place in the inner solar system.
- **Technology**:
  - The new system is built around a single-board computer (SBC) similar to a **Raspberry Pi**.
  - This compact design reduces the payload's size, weight, and power consumption (SWaP), which are critical for space missions.
  - The SBC will coordinate the antenna, receiver, and a powerful chip called a **Field Programmable Gate Array (FPGA)** that processes streams of cosmic data.
- Laboratory tests have shown the system's ability to reduce noise to extremely low levels, demonstrating its high sensitivity to detect the faint signals from the early universe.

India's Path to Electronics Self-Reliance with New Lithium-Ion Battery Plant

What's the News?

- **Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw** inaugurated **TDK Corporation**'s lithium-ion battery plant at Sohna, Haryana.
- The plant involves an **initial investment of ₹3,000 crore**, will make **~20 crore battery packs yearly** and is expected to create **~5,000 direct jobs**.
- Output will target batteries for **mobile phones, wearables, laptops and earbuds**, meeting about **40%** of India's current cell-pack requirement and opening for wider industry sourcing.

Plant Details & Strategic Significance

- **Production Capacity**:
  - Annual output: **20 crore battery packs** (focusing on mobile phones, laptops, wearables, and hearables).
  - Addresses **40% of India's annual demand** (50 crore packs), reducing import dependency.
- **Investment and Expansion**:
  - Initial investment: ₹**3,000 crore** with significant expansion potential.
  - Established under the **Electronics Manufacturing Cluster (EMC) Scheme**.
- **Employment**:
  - Creates **5,000 direct jobs**, with training provided at TDK's **AT Bawal plant**.
- **Global Partnerships**:
  - **TDK Corporation** (a Japanese global leader in electronic components) supplies batteries to **Apple** and other major tech firms,

enhancing India's integration into global value chains.

India's First Telecom System with Indigenous Chips Receives TEC Certification

What's the News?

- India has achieved a milestone: a telecom system powered entirely by **Made-in-India chips** received **TEC certification**.
- **Union IT Minister** Ashwini Vaishnaw called it a "big leap for India's semiconductor story."
- TEC approval confirms strict **quality and performance standards** are met.

Significance & Context

TEC Approval Validates Local Capability

- **Telecommunication Engineering Centre (TEC)** is the nodal body under DoT that standardises telecom products and issues certification.
- TEC certification places the telecom system on par with international equipment, enabling domestic deployment and potential exports.

Strategic Focus on Mature-Node Chips

- India is focusing on manufacturing chips in the **28 nm–65 nm** range, crucial for telecom, automotive, and industrial sectors.
- This aligns with the **Make in India** and **Atmanirbhar Bharat** missions, aiming to reduce reliance on imports.

Policy & Investment Underpinnings

- The **India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)**, launched in 2021, supports this push through a ₹**76,000 crore PLI scheme**.
- Approved investments include:
  - Tata Electronics dossier (~₹91,000 crore fab)
  - Micron's packaging unit (~₹22,516 crore)
  - CG Power's OSAT pilot line (recently operational)

Market Potential

- India's semiconductor market: approx. **$38 billion (2023)**, projected to reach **$45–50 billion (2024–25)**, and **$100–110 billion by 2030**.
- Focus on mature nodes positions India to fill critical global supply chain gaps exposed by recent chip shortages.

India Establishes Nine Global Records in Space Missions

What's the News?

- **India** has achieved **nine major world records** in space exploration, spanning missions such as the **Chandrayaan series (1, 2, 3)**, **Mars Orbiter Mission**, and **cryogenic engine technology**, dating back to 2008.
- According to ISRO Chairman **V. Narayanan**, the agency plans to add **8–10 more world records** in the coming years.

Key Space Records

- **Chandrayaan-1 (2008)**: First mission to discover **water molecules** on the lunar surface, sub-surface, and exosphere, later confirmed by NASA.
- **Mars Orbiter Mission (2014)**: First country to reach Mars on its **maiden attempt**, achieving orbit insertion successfully.
- **PSLV-C37 (2017)**: Launched **104 satellites** in a single mission, setting a global record for the most satellites deployed simultaneously.
- **Chandrayaan-2 (2019)**: Deployed the **highest-resolution orbiter camera** around the Moon, enhancing lunar mapping capabilities.
- **Chandrayaan-3 (2023)**: First country to soft-land near the lunar **South Pole** and conduct in-situ measurements of the lunar surface environment.
- **Cryogenic Technology (2014-2017)**: Achieved three records in cryogenic stage development, including the fastest maiden flight of **LVM3** (28 months vs. 37-108 months globally) and the shortest hot-stage test duration (34 days vs. 64 days–10 months).

CCMB Discovers SPIN90's Role in Cell Movement and Shape-Shifting

What's the News?

- Scientists at **CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad**, have identified how **SPIN90**, a protein, helps cells rapidly reshape themselves to move.
- The mechanism involves SPIN90 working with the **Arp2/3 complex** to initiate actin filament growth in two directions, forming protrusions that allow movement toward pathogens or sites of injury.
- These findings are published in *Nature Structural & Molecular Biology*. They provide near-atomic resolution insights into how cells build their internal scaffolding for movement.

Mechanism of Cell Movement

- **Role of SPIN90**:
  - SPIN90 functions as a **dimer** (pair of molecules) with the Arp2/3 complex, triggering the growth of new actin filaments in **two directions separated by 150 degrees**.
  - This bidirectional nucleation allows cells to rapidly assemble **branched actin networks**, forming protrusions that push against the cell membrane for movement.
- **Process Overview**:
  - Cells like white blood cells extend flat protrusions (**lamellipodia**) toward pathogens or injury sites within microseconds.
  - Actin monomers polymerize into filaments, creating a meshwork that reshapes the cell and directs motility.
  - SPIN90's regulation of this process ensures precise adaptation to external signals, such as infections.

ISRO Invites Private Firms for On-Orbit Servicing & Refuelling

What's the News?

- ISRO has announced that it will invite **private companies** specialising in **on-orbit servicing and refuelling (OOSR)** technologies to collaborate on upcoming missions.
- The announcement coincides with the inauguration of a new R&D facility by **OrbitAID Aerospace** in Bengaluru.

Key Details & Implications

- **OrbitAID facility**
  - Size: ~6,500 sq. ft.
  - Investment: Over **USD 2 million** (~₹18-20 crore)
  - Infrastructure: Includes a **Class-10,000 cleanroom**, a high-end control room, **fuel transfer systems**, and **Rendezvous Proximity Operations & Docking (RPOD)** capabilities.
- **Technology Edge**
  - OrbitAID has developed a docking/refuelling interface called **SIDRP**, currently at **Technology Readiness Level 7 (TRL-7)**.
  - The facility will support "life extension services" for satellites via refuelling and servicing, domestically and globally.
- **ISRO's Role**
  - Open to collaboration with private sector in OOSR-related work for upcoming missions.
  - This follows ISRO's efforts to engage private players more deeply in its space ecosystem.

India to Establish 500 Data Labs Under IndiaAI Mission

What's the News?

- The Indian government, under the **IndiaAI Mission**, will establish over **500 data labs** nationwide with a focus on developing an indigenous AI ecosystem.
- This initiative is part of a broader strategy to boost AI capabilities, including the development of sovereign **Large Language Models (LLMs)** and a national AI framework
- As part of the mission, **₹988.6 crore** has been allocated to an IIT Bombay-led consortium, **BharatGen**, to develop a foundational LLM with 1 trillion parameters.

IndiaAI Mission: Aims and Components

- The **IndiaAI Mission** is a comprehensive initiative with an initial outlay of **₹10,300 crore**, designed to position India as a global leader in artificial intelligence.
- The mission's core objective is to achieve **technological sovereignty** by building a robust AI infrastructure and reducing dependence on foreign AI models and hardware.
- The key components of the mission include:
  - **IndiaAI Compute Capacity**: Building a scalable AI computing infrastructure with over 10,000 Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) via public-private partnerships.

Download Our App

- IndiaAI Innovation Centre: Focusing on the development of indigenous Large Multimodal Models (LMMs) and domain-specific foundational models for critical sectors.
- IndiaAI Datasets Platform: Creating a unified platform to provide access to high-quality, non-personal datasets for AI innovation.
- IndiaAI FutureSkills: Launching AI education and training programs, including setting up data and AI labs in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities to cultivate talent.
- IndiaAI Startup Financing: Providing streamlined funding to deep-tech AI startups to accelerate innovation.
- Safe & Trusted AI: Developing indigenous tools and frameworks to ensure responsible and ethical AI development.

UK-India Pact to Map Quantum Value-Chain

What's the News?

- India Global Forum (IGF) and the Quantum Ecosystems Technology Council of India (QETCI) have signed an MoU to develop a UK-India quantum value-chain map.
- The partnership is catalysed by the UK-India Future Forum (UKIFF).
- An initial UK-India Quantum Value-Chain Overview is expected by next year.

Quantum Value Chain Mapping

- Objective: The primary goal is to create a detailed roadmap that outlines the entire quantum ecosystem in both India and the UK. This includes:
  - Identifying key stakeholders such as startups, academic institutions, government research labs, and large corporations.
  - Pinpointing strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for synergy in areas like quantum computing, communications, sensing, and materials.
- Significance:
  - The map will facilitate targeted collaborations, foster joint R&D projects, and attract cross-border investments.
  - It supports the goal of building a resilient and self-reliant supply chain for critical quantum components and technologies.
  - It aligns with the broader India-UK 2030 Roadmap, which emphasizes cooperation in science and technology.

ISRO to Send "Vyommitra" Half-Humanoid on Uncrewed Gaganyaan Test Flight

What's the News?

- ISRO will launch its first uncrewed Gaganyaan mission (G1) in December, with Vyommitra, a half-humanoid robot, on board instead of a human.

- Mission G1 is a precursor to the crewed flight planned for Q1 2027.

Vyommitra & Mission G1: Key Details

- Vyommitra is an AI-enabled half-humanoid: it has upper body functions; does not have legs. It will monitor life-support systems, environmental parameters (temperature, pressure, humidity, CO_2), issue alerts, simulate human presence.
- G1 Mission Objectives:
  - Validate crew module and service module performance in orbit without humans.
  - Test escape systems including parachute-based deceleration for crew safety.
- Supporting Infrastructure & Tests:
  - Over 7,700 ground tests have been completed; about 2,300 more needed before March 2026.
  - Facilities like the Orbital Module Preparation Facility, Crew Module & Service Module development, environmental control systems, launch pad modifications etc. are ready or under advanced development.

India Launches LDB 2.0 to Enhance Digital Logistics

What's the News?

- On the 8th anniversary of the Logistics Data Bank (LDB) project, the Union Minister of Commerce & Industry, Shri Piyush Goyal, launched LDB 2.0.
- This upgraded platform aims to significantly enhance the visibility and efficiency of India's container logistics and supply chain.
- The initiative is a key step towards creating a digitally empowered, transparent, and export-competitive economy by providing a unified tracking interface for all export-import (EXIM) containers.

LDB 2.0: An Overview

LDB 2.0 is an advanced version of the LDB project, designed to overcome the limitations of the previous system and offer more sophisticated features for the logistics industry.

- Objective: To provide a single-window, real-time tracking solution for all container traffic in India, improving transparency and predictability.
- Key Features:
  - Unified Tracking: Integrates data from various stakeholders like ports, terminals, Container Freight Stations (CFS), and Inland Container Depots (ICDs).
  - Predictive Analytics: Utilizes advanced analytics to forecast container transit times, identify potential delays, and help in better planning.
  - Enhanced User Interface: Features a more intuitive and user-friendly dashboard for stakeholders.
  - Mobile Application: A new mobile app has been launched for on-the-go tracking and notifications.

India to Deploy DBNet Stations Under Mission Mausam to Strengthen Weather Forecasting

What's the News?

- **NCMRWF** (National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting) signed an MoU with **NSIL** (New Space India Limited) to establish two **Direct Broadcast Network (DBNet)** stations — one in **Delhi/NCR** and one in **Chennai**.
- These stations will be part of the **Mission Mausam** initiative by the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- The DBNet stations will receive **real-time satellite data** from Low Earth Orbit satellites, process it within minutes, and feed it into India's numerical weather prediction models.

DBNet Stations and Their Significance

The DBNet stations represent a significant technological upgrade for India's meteorological infrastructure.

- **Technology and Function**: The stations will be capable of receiving direct broadcast data from various Indian and international Earth Observing System satellites in **Low Earth Orbit (LEO)**. This allows data to be acquired, processed, and fed into **Numerical Weather Prediction (NWP) models** almost instantly once a satellite passes overhead.
- **Key Benefits**: The primary advantage is the move from delayed data to **real-time data processing**. This leads to more precise forecasts for severe weather events like cyclones and heavy rainfall, which is crucial for disaster management, public safety, agriculture, and infrastructure planning.
- **Strategic Collaboration**: The partnership between NCMRWF (under the **Ministry of Earth Sciences**) and NSIL (under the **Department of Space**) highlights a strong inter-agency collaboration to bolster the country's space and climate infrastructure.

AI Designs First Functional Viral Genome

What's the News?

- Researchers from **Stanford University** and the **Arc Institute** have created the world's first functioning viral genome designed by artificial intelligence (AI).
- The AI-designed viruses, based on the bacteriophage ΦX174, are capable of infecting and killing specific strains of **Escherichia coli (E. coli)** bacteria.
- This breakthrough demonstrates the potential of AI in designing biotechnological tools and therapies for treating bacterial infections.

Key Features of the AI-Designed Viruses

- **Genome Design**:
  - The AI model, named **Evo**, was trained on over 2 million bacteriophage genomes.
  - The researchers used the ΦX174 virus as a template, which has a genome of 5,386 nucleotides and 11 genes.
  - The AI generated 302 candidate genomes, 16 of which were functional and capable of infecting and killing E. coli.

- **Functional Viruses**:
  - The functional viruses contained 392 mutations never seen in nature, including combinations that scientists had previously tried and failed to create.
  - One standout design even borrowed a DNA-packaging protein from a distant relative, something human engineers had struggled with.

- **Laboratory Testing**:
  - The AI-generated genomes were synthesized and inserted into E. coli bacteria to test their functionality.
  - The viruses were able to infect and kill three different strains of E. coli, outperforming the natural ΦX174 virus.

President Confers National Geoscience Awards 2024

What's the News?

- **President Droupadi Murmu** conferred the **National Geoscience Awards 2024** at **Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre, New Delhi**, honouring **20 geoscientists** across **12 awards**—including **9 individual** and **3 team awards**.
- The President underscored the **strategic importance of geosciences in** national development, calling for **sustainable mining practices**, **indigenous technology for rare earth element (REE) refining**, and **greater use of AI, drones, and machine learning** in mineral exploration.
- She stressed that **mining must balance economic growth with environmental and social responsibility**, urging strict adherence to regulations and proper mine closure protocols.

Award Categories & Key Recipients

- **National Geoscience Award for Lifetime Achievement**:
  - **Prof. Shyam Sundar Rai** (IISER Pune) – Recognized for pioneering work in **seismology and Earth structure**, especially in the **India-Himalayan-Tibet region**.
  - **Prize**: ₹5 lakh + Certificate.
- **National Young Geoscientist Award**:
  - **Susobhan Neogi** (GSI) – Honoured for outstanding research in geosciences.
  - **Prize**: ₹1 lakh + ₹5 lakh research grant over 5 years + Certificate.

- **National Geoscience Awards (10 awards)**:
  - **Mineral Discovery & Exploration**: 3 awards (including critical minerals and coal/CBM exploration) – all team-based from **Geological Survey of India (GSI)**.
  - **Mining & Sustainable Development**:
    - **Dr. Jai Krishna Pandey** (CSIR-CIMFR) – for innovations in **mining technology and safety**.
    - **Dr. Ranjeet Kumar Singh** (CSIR-NML) – for work in **mineral beneficiation and sustainable development**.

- o **Basic Geosciences**: 2 individual awards (details not fully disclosed in public domain).
- o **Applied Geosciences**:
  - **Prof. Ghulam Jeelani** (University of Kashmir) – **groundwater and geo-environmental studies**.
  - **Prof. Sanjit Kumar Pal** (IIT ISM Dhanbad) – **applied geophysics and instrumentation**.
  - **Prof. Mukat Lal Sharma** (IIT Roorkee) – **natural hazard investigation (earthquakes, landslides)**.

BSNL Launches Indigenous 4G Network with 97,500 Towers

What's the News?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated **BSNL's fully indigenous 4G network**, commissioning **over 97,500 mobile towers** built using **Swadeshi (indigenous) technology**.
- The rollout, launched from **Jharsuguda, Odisha**, marks India's entry into an elite group of nations with a **100% homegrown 4G stack**.
- The project, valued at **₹37,000 crore**, is a major boost to **rural and remote-area connectivity** and strengthens India's **telecom self-reliance** under the **Atmanirbhar Bharat** initiative.

Indigenous 4G Stack & Network Expansion

- **BSNL's 4G technology stack** is entirely developed in India, eliminating dependence on foreign vendors for core network infrastructure.
- Key features of the rollout:
  - o **97,500+ new 4G towers**, including **92,600 4G-ready sites**.
  - o Designed to provide **pan-India 4G coverage**, with a focus on **underserved and rural regions**.
  - o Enables BSNL to offer **affordable and secure telecom services**, leveraging domestic R&D and manufacturing.
- The launch also coincides with broader infrastructure announcements in Odisha worth **₹60,000 crore**, including digital and industrial projects.

New Finless Snake Eel Species *Apterichtus kanniyakumari* Discovered Off Colachel Coast

What's the News?

- Researchers from the **National Bureau of Fish Genetic Resources (NBFGR), Kochi**, under the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**, have discovered a **new species of finless snake eel** off the **Colachel coast** in **Kanniyakumari district, Tamil Nadu**.
- The species has been named *Apterichtus kanniyakumari* to honour the **cultural, historical, and geographical significance** of the Kanniyakumari region.

- The discovery was published in the **international peer-reviewed journal** *Zootaxa* and marks the **16th new marine species** identified from Indian waters by the NBFGR team.

Key Features and Identification

- **Discovery Context**:
  - o Two specimens were collected at a depth of **100 metres** during **deep-sea trawling** by local fishermen.
  - o Confirmed through **morphological analysis**, **vertebral counts**, and **DNA-based molecular testing** using the **mitochondrial CO1 gene**.
- **Distinctive Characteristics**:
  - o **Golden-yellow body** with **pale white ventral head** and **yellow lines along the lower jaw**.
  - o **Three black blotches**: behind the eye, at the rictus (corner of the mouth), and behind the origin of rictus.
  - o **Head length**: 9.6-9.7% of total length (TL); **tail length**: 1.8-1.9% of TL.
  - o **Body depth at gill openings**: 42.1-54.8% of TL.
  - o **Teeth**: conical and uniserial on jaws and vomer.
  - o **Sensory pores**: 3 preopercular and 9 supratemporal pores.
  - o **Mean vertebral formula**: 52-131.
- **Genetic Distinction**:
  - o Forms a **distinct clade** with its sympatric relative *Apterichtus nanjilnaduensis* but is genetically and morphologically unique.

Agriculture

APEDA Launches BHARATI Initiative to Boost Agri-Food Exports

What's the News?

- **APEDA** has launched **BHARATI** — **Bharat's Hub for Agritech, Resilience, Advancement and Incubation for Export Enablement** — to support **100 agri-food startups** and accelerate export readiness.
- The initiative aims to raise India's **agri-food exports** to **$50 billion by 2030** and was announced with senior commerce and food-processing ministry representation.

Initiative Overview

BHARATI (Bharat's Hub for Agritech, Resilience, Advancement, and Incubation for Export Enablement) is structured as a **national startup-support and export-acceleration platform**.

- **Startup Cohort**: Selection of 100 startups via APEDA's website (from September 2025), focusing on high-value domains like **GI-tagged products, organic foods, superfoods, livestock, and AYUSH products**.
- **Acceleration Programme**: A **3-month training** covering product development, export readiness, regulatory compliance (e.g., **SPS-TBT standards**), and market access.
- **Technology Integration**: Promotion of **AI-based quality checks, blockchain traceability, IoT-enabled cold chains, and agri-fintech solutions** to reduce wastage and enhance supply chain resilience.
- **Collaborative Ecosystem**: Partnerships with **state agricultural boards, IITs, NITs, industry bodies, and existing accelerators** to leverage expertise and resources.

Kharif Sowing Area Rises Amid Favourable Monsoon

What's the News?

- Total **kharif season sowing area** in India has expanded by **about 26.9 lakh hectares**, reaching **1,105.42 lakh hectares**, up from **1,078.49 lakh hectares** in the previous year.
- Growth observed across key crops: **rice**, **pulses**, **coarse cereals**, and **sugarcane**.
- Contributory factors: **enhanced monsoon coverage** in unirrigated regions and **higher MSPs** for 14 kharif crops.

Kharif Progress Overview

- **Key Performers**:
    - **Rice**: Sown area rose by ~**19.6 lakh ha** to **438.28 lakh ha**, from **418.66 lakh ha**.
    - **Pulses** (e.g., urad and moong): Increased to **116.40 lakh ha** from **114.46 lakh ha**.
    - **Coarse cereals/millets** (jowar, bajra, ragi): Added ~**12.09 lakh ha**, totaling **191.71 lakh ha**.

- **Sugarcane**: Expanded by ~**1.64 lakh ha** to **57.31 lakh ha**.
- **Declining Crops**:
    - **Oilseeds**: Overall **3% decline**, with soybean acreage dropping by **4.77 lakh hectares** due to shifts to maize.
    - **Cotton**: Acreage fell by **3%** (108.47 lakh hectares) due to high input costs and pest challenges.
- **Regional Variations**: Central and western India led the sowing surge, while eastern states lagged due to rainfall deficits.

World Food India 2025: Boosting India's Global Food Processing Reach

What's the News?

- The Government of India will host the **4th edition of World Food India (WFI) 2025**, an international mega-event for food processing. Venue: Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.
- It is designed to project India as a **global hub for food innovation, investment, and sustainability**.
- Expected participation: **over 90 countries, 2,000+ exhibitors**, tens of thousands of stakeholders across the food value chain.

Significance of World Food India

- **Objectives**:
    - Attract foreign and domestic investment in food processing.
    - Encourage technology adoption, innovation, clean/sustainable practices.
    - Strengthen market linkages (buyer-seller meets, CEO round tables) for both producers and consumers.
- **Context & Significance**:
    - Builds on earlier editions.
    - Aligned with India's **Atmanirbhar Bharat** mission and the long-term **Vision 2047** goals.
    - MoFPI sees significant contribution of food processing to national **Gross Value Addition (GVA)**, especially in sectors like milk, millets, pulses.
- **Components / Features**:
    - Thematic technology showcases.
    - Dedicated country + state pavilions.
    - Exhibitions across value chain: post-harvest tech, packaging, cold chains, etc.
    - Buyer-seller meets & CEO round tables to promote collaborations.

Kharif Sowing in India: Progress and Trends

What's the News?

- The total area under **Kharif sowing** in India has surpassed **1,110 lakh hectares**, increasing by about **15 lakh hectares** compared to the same period last year.
- Growth is seen in **paddy**, **pulses**, and **coarse cereals** sowing. Oilseeds show a lag relative to last year.

Key Crop-wise Trends

- **Paddy**: ~438.5 lakh hectares sown (↑ ~2% over last year).
- **Pulses**: Slight increase to ~118 lakh hectares.
- **Coarse cereals**: ~192-193 lakh hectares. Moderate growth.
- **Oilseeds**: Decline to ~188-189 lakh hectares from ~194 lakh last year.
- **Cash crops (e.g. cotton)**: Lower sowing area compared to previous year.

National Agriculture Conference — Rabi Abhiyan 2025

What's the News?

- The Union Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare is holding a **two-day National Agriculture Conference – Rabi Abhiyan 2025** in New Delhi (15-16 September).
- Purpose is to plan strategy, set production targets, and chart action for the upcoming **Rabi sowing season 2025-26**.
- The event is the second phase of the **Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan**, following its earlier Kharif campaign.

Key Highlights of the Conference

- **Objective:** To formulate an agricultural roadmap for the Rabi season, addressing challenges and developing strategies to ensure national food security and boost farmers' income.
- **Leadership:** Chaired by Union Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister **Shivraj Singh Chouhan**.
- **New Initiative:** For the first time, scientists from **Krishi Vigyan Kendras** (agricultural science centers) were invited to provide regional insights and contribute to the planning process.
- **Focus Areas:** The discussions are centered on ensuring farmers have access to improved seed varieties, modern farming techniques, and new technologies. The conference also focuses on promoting climate-resilient farming, improving input efficiency, strengthening farmer advisory systems, and integrating technology.
- **Alignment with National Goals:** The conference is part of the second phase of the **Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan**, a mission aimed at modernizing Indian agriculture to support the vision of a **"Viksit Bharat"** (Developed India).

Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan

- First phase focused on **Kharif crops**.
- In first phase, ~2,170 teams of scientists visited villages.

Department of Food & Public Distribution and FCI Sign MoU for Foodgrain Management

What's the News?

- The **Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD)** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **Food Corporation of India (FCI)** for the financial year 2025-26.
- The MoU sets out measurable performance parameters and modernization goals to enhance the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of foodgrain management.
- It aims to optimize the management of food subsidies and improve the procurement and distribution of foodgrains, which are crucial for ensuring food security for over 80 crore beneficiaries under the **National Food Security Act (NFSA)**.

Key Objectives of the MoU

The agreement outlines several key areas of focus for the FCI:

- **Minimizing storage losses** and ensuring the optimal use of warehousing capacity.
- **Strengthening quality control** measures to maintain the integrity of foodgrain stocks.
- **Adopting the latest IT innovations** for digitizing processes and monitoring operations.
- **Enhancing logistics and supply chain** performance for efficient movement of foodgrains.
- **Capacity building** for FCI employees through dedicated training programs.
- **Effective subsidy management** to ensure public funds are utilized with maximum transparency and cost-effectiveness.

Over ₹1 Lakh Crore MoUs Signed in First Two Days at World Food India 2025

What's the News?

- During **World Food India 2025** held at **Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi**, MoUs with investment commitments exceeding **₹1 lakh crore** were signed within the first two days.
- On Day 2 alone, **21 companies** committed over **₹25,000 crore** in investments.
- Major corporates like **Reliance Consumer Products Ltd (RCPL)** and **Coca-Cola bottlers** pledged deals worth **₹65,000 crore** in aggregate.

Investment & Strategic Focus Areas

- **Investment Breakdown**:
  - **Day 1 & 2**: Over **₹1 lakh crore** in MoUs signed.
  - **Day 2 alone**: **21 companies** committed **₹25,000 crore**.
- **Key Sectors Covered**:
  - **Pet food**, **nutraceuticals**, **plant-based foods**, **alcoholic beverages**, and **specialty foods**.
  - Emphasis on **sustainability**, **food safety**, and **farmer-producer linkages**.

- **Participating Entities**:
    - **Focus States**: Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Punjab, Jharkhand, and Bihar hosted dedicated sessions.
    - **International Partners**: Delegations from **Russia, Portugal, Japan, Vietnam, and New Zealand** engaged in bilateral talks.
    - **Central Agencies**: **FSSAI**, **APEDA**, **Ministry of Agriculture**, **Ministry of AYUSH**, and **World Bank** contributed thematic sessions.
- **Parallel Events**:
    - **3rd Global Food Regulators Summit** (by FSSAI) to align India with international food safety standards.
    - **24th India International Seafood Show** to boost seafood exports.

Dedicated ICAR Team for Sugarcane Research Announced

What's the News?

- Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, **Shivraj Singh Chouhan**, announced the formation of a **dedicated research team within the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** to address critical challenges in **sugarcane cultivation**.
- The announcement was made during the **National Consultation on the Sustainable Sugarcane Economy**, held in New Delhi on **September 30, 2025**.
- The team will focus on **developing disease-resistant varieties**, **improving sugar recovery**, **promoting mechanization**, and **reducing input costs**, with direct inputs from **farmers, scientists, and industry stakeholders**.

Focus Areas of the ICAR Sugarcane Team

- **Varietal Development**:
    - Address vulnerability of high-sugar variety **Co 238** to **red rot disease** by developing **resilient alternatives**.
    - Enhance **sugar content** and **yield stability** under changing climatic conditions.
- **Sustainable Farming Practices**:
    - Discourage **mono-cropping**, which leads to **soil nutrient depletion** and **reduced nitrogen fixation**.
    - Promote **crop diversification** and **integrated farming systems**.
- **Policy & Technology Integration**:
    - Formulate **evidence-based sugarcane policies**.
    - Accelerate **mechanization** and **cost-efficient cultivation techniques**.
    - Improve **sugar recovery rates** in mills through better agronomic and post-harvest practices.
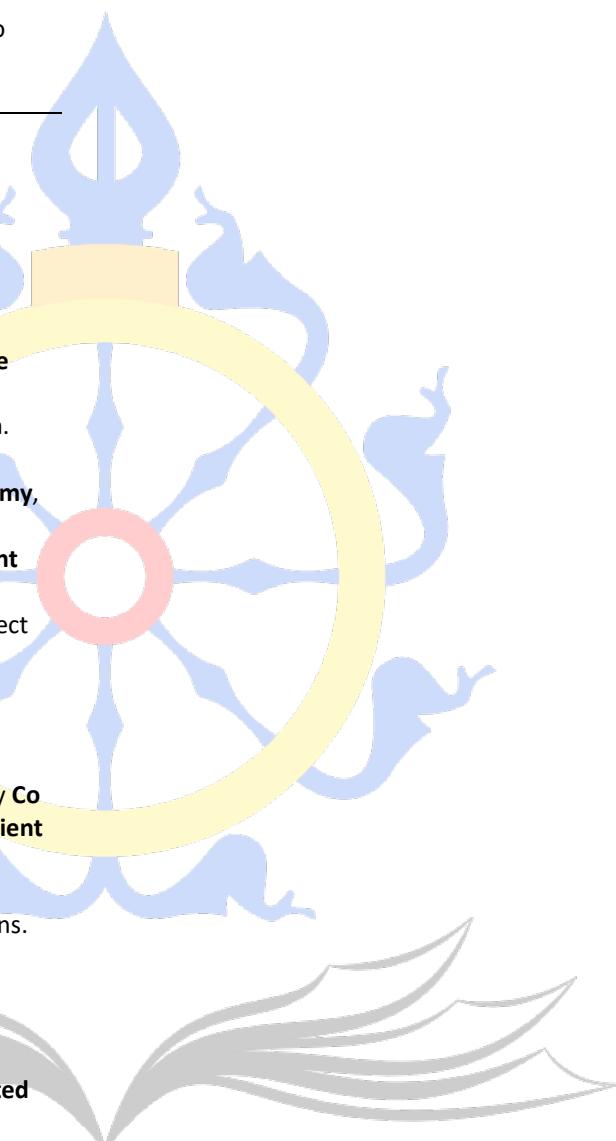
Important Days

National Nutrition Week 2025
What's the News?
- National Nutrition Week, observed annually in India, runs from **September 1 to 7**, with this year's theme: **"Eat Right for a Better Life"**.
- The campaign highlights the importance of balanced diets, mindful food choices, and prevention of malnutrition and lifestyle diseases.
- It is jointly coordinated by the **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare** and the **Ministry of Women & Child Development**, and aligns with flagship programmes such as **POSHAN Abhiyaan**.

Theme Overview
"Eat Right for a Better Life" aims to:
- Promote balanced diets rich in fresh, seasonal fruits and vegetables
- Discourage consumption of processed and junk foods
- Encourage portion control and mindful eating
- Support long-term health through nutritious cooking habits

Dietary Guidelines:
- **ICMR-NIN Recommendations** (2024):
  - Sugar: <5 tsp/day (20-25g).
  - Salt: <5g/day.
  - Oil: 6 tsp/day (25-30g).

Teachers' Day Celebrated Across India; National Awards Presented by President Murmu
What's the News?
- **Teachers' Day** was celebrated across India on **September 5, 2025**, marking the birth anniversary of **Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan**.
- President Droupadi Murmu conferred the **National Teachers' Awards 2025** on **45 educators** from across the country in a ceremony at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.
- The awards are a recognition of the invaluable contributions of teachers in improving the quality of education and enriching the lives of their students.

Significance of the day
- **Purpose of the Day**
  - Recognises the vital role of teachers in shaping learners and society. Reflects a tradition started when Dr Radhakrishnan asked his birthday be observed as Teachers' Day.
- **Role Models and Inspiration**
  - The day serves to honour outstanding educators whose efforts impact millions.
- **Contemporary Relevance**
  - Reinforces the value of education for national progress.
  - Highlights the need for **gender parity in education**, especially higher education access for girls.

- **Theme for 2025**
  - **"Inspiring the Next Generation of Learners"**, focusing on teachers as mentors who foster critical thinking, creativity, and resilience in students.

National Teachers' Awards 2025
- **Awardees**: A total of **45 teachers** were selected through a rigorous, transparent, and online three-stage process at the district, state, and national levels.
- **Criteria**: The awards recognize teachers who have not only demonstrated commitment and hard work but have also used innovative teaching methods and positively impacted their students' lives.
- **Components**: Each awardee received a **certificate of merit**, a **cash prize of ₹50,000**, and a **silver medal**.

International Literacy Day 2025: Fostering Digital and Multilingual Literacy
- **International Literacy Day** is observed annually on **September 8**. This year, the theme is **"Promoting literacy in the digital era"**, with a focus on **"Promoting multilingual education: Literacy for mutual understanding and peace"**.
- The theme highlights the importance of literacy as a foundational skill for navigating the digital world and fostering social cohesion.
- On this occasion, **Himachal Pradesh** was declared a fully literate state, with an effective literacy rate of over **90%**, as India celebrated the day.

Digital Literacy and Global Challenges
- **Theme Significance**:
  - Digital tools can bridge gaps for marginalized groups but risk **double marginalization** for the **739 million globally** lacking basic literacy skills.
  - Focus on fostering **critical thinking** and safe engagement with digital content.
- **Global Context**:
  - ILD, established by **UNESCO in 1966**, highlights literacy as a **human right** and foundation for peace and sustainability.
  - A global conference at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris discussed policies for inclusive digital literacy.

Himachal's Literacy Achievement
- **Progress**:
  - Literacy surged from **7% post-independence** to **99.3%**, driven by community efforts, government reforms, and programs like **ULLAS**.
  - The state leads India in **student-teacher ratio**, reducing dropout rates to nearly zero.
- **ULLAS Initiative**:
  - **Understanding of Lifelong Learning for All in Society (ULLAS)** has enrolled **3 crore learners** and **42 lakh volunteers** nationally,

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- with learning materials in **26 Indian languages**.
  - o **90% success rate** in foundational literacy assessments.

World Physiotherapy Day 2025: Focus on Healthy Ageing

- **World Physiotherapy Day** is celebrated annually on **September 8** to raise awareness about the vital role of physiotherapists in keeping people active, independent, and healthy.
- The theme for 2025 is **"Healthy ageing,"** with a specific focus on the prevention of **frailty and falls** in older adults.
- The campaign highlights how physiotherapy can improve strength, balance, and mobility, enabling individuals to maintain their quality of life as they age.

Theme Overview: Healthy Ageing and Fall Prevention

- **Global Ageing Trends**:
  - o The population aged **60+** will rise from **1 billion (2019)** to **2.1 billion (2050)**, while those **80+** will triple to **426 million by 2050**.
  - o Falls cause **684,000 annual deaths** globally, with older adults at highest risk.
- **Physiotherapy's Role**:
  - o **Fall Prevention**: Balance and strength training (e.g., Otago Program) reduce fall risk by **up to 35%**.
  - o **Frailty Reduction**: Active older adults are **41% less likely** to develop frailty.
  - o **Mobility and Independence**: Customized exercise programs improve functional capacity, bone health, and daily activity confidence.

World Suicide Prevention Day 2025

What's the News?

- **World Suicide Prevention Day** is observed globally on **10 September**, under the theme **"Changing the Narrative on Suicide"**.
- The theme (2024-2026) urges society to challenge harmful myths, reduce stigma, promote open conversations, and foster supportive systems for those in distress.
- Globally more than **720,000 deaths** by suicide occur annually. The observance calls on governments, institutions, and communities to make mental health and suicide prevention public policy priorities.

Global and Indian Context

- The WHO reports that over **720,000 people** die by suicide each year, making it the third leading cause of death among 15-29-year-olds globally.
- In India, National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data indicates a concerning rise in suicide rates, from 9.9 per lakh population in 2017 to 12.4 per lakh in 2022.
- The country accounts for a significant portion of global suicides, with **one-third of all female suicides** and nearly **a quarter of male suicides** worldwide.

Engineers' Day 2025: Honouring the Legacy of Sir M. Visvesvaraya

What's the News?

- India celebrates **National Engineers' Day** annually on **September 15** to commemorate the birth anniversary of **Sir Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya**, a distinguished civil engineer, statesman, and Bharat Ratna awardee.
- The day recognizes the vital role of engineers in nation-building, innovation, and infrastructure development.
- The theme for Engineers' Day 2025 is **"Deep Tech & Engineering Excellence: Driving India's Techade,"** emphasizing the role of cutting-edge technologies in India's progress.

Sir M. Visvesvaraya: The Architect of Modern India

Sir M. Visvesvaraya, born in 1861, is widely regarded as one of India's most visionary engineers. His contributions were pivotal in the fields of water management, industrialization, and education. A few of his notable contributions include:

- **Krishna Raja Sagara (KRS) Dam:** As Chief Engineer of Mysore, he was instrumental in building this dam on the Kaveri River, which was a marvel of engineering for its time and transformed the agricultural landscape of Mandya.
- **Automatic Weir Floodgates:** He designed and patented a system of automatic sluice gates to control the flow of water in dams, first installed at the Khadakwasla Dam near Pune. This innovation helped in efficient water management and flood control.
- **Hyderabad Flood Protection System:** Following the devastating 1908 Musi River floods, he was a key figure in designing a comprehensive flood protection system for the city.
- **Dewan of Mysore:** He served as the Dewan (Chief Minister) of the princely state of Mysore from 1912 to 1918, where he pioneered industrial and educational reforms. He was instrumental in establishing institutions like the Mysore Soap Factory, the **Bhadravati Iron and Steel Works**, and the **University Visvesvaraya College of Engineering** (UVCE) in Bengaluru.
- **Honours and Awards:**
  - o Knighted as a Knight Commander of the British Indian Empire (KCIE) by King George V in 1915.
  - o Awarded India's highest civilian honour, the **Bharat Ratna**, in 1955.

Key Engineers & Their Contributions

Engineer	Contribution
Sir M. Visvesvaraya	Major civil engineering works; modern methodology in infrastructure.
Dr A. P. J. Abdul Kalam	Indigenous satellite launch vehicles; missile technology; served as President.
Satish Dhawan	Led ISRO; advanced space research and fluid dynamics.

Verghese Kurien	Launched and scaled the "White Revolution"; cooperatives; rural technology intervention.
Dr Homi Jehangir Bhabha	Founder of nuclear research infrastructure and policymaking in atomic energy.
E. Sreedharan	Known as "Metro Man"; enhanced public transit via Delhi Metro etc.

Hindi Diwas: Celebrating India's Official Language

What's the News?

- India observed **National Hindi Diwas** on **September 14**, a day dedicated to celebrating the Hindi language and its significance as a unifying force in the country.
- The day commemorates the historic decision by the **Constituent Assembly of India** to adopt Hindi, written in the Devanagari script, as the official language of the Union on this date in 1949.

The Constitutional and Cultural Significance

The celebration of Hindi Diwas is rooted in both constitutional provisions and the language's cultural role in binding a multilingual nation.

- **Constitutional Adoption:** On September 14, 1949, Hindi was adopted as the official language, a decision later enshrined in **Part XVII of the Constitution of India** in **Article 343**. This decision was part of a compromise known as the **Munshi-Ayyangar formula**, which also allowed English to continue as an associate official language for a period of 15 years.
- **National Pride:** Hindi is the third most spoken language globally, with over **615 million speakers**. The celebration fosters a sense of linguistic pride and encourages citizens to use Hindi in their daily lives, as well as in official and technical domains. It is a reminder that while India celebrates its linguistic diversity, Hindi serves as a bridge between different states and communities.
- **Global Recognition:** Hindi is gaining recognition on the world stage, with events like the **World Hindi Conference** and the establishment of the **World Hindi Secretariat** in Mauritius aimed at promoting it globally.

International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer 2025

What's the News?

- The **United Nations** and its agencies observe *International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer* each year. This year's theme is **"From Science to Global Action"**.
- The observance underscores 40 years since the **Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer**, which laid the groundwork for global cooperation on ozone protection.
- It highlights progress made under the **Montreal Protocol**, including phasing out many ozone-depleting substances (ODS), and calls for accelerated action especially in reducing **hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs)** under the **Kigali Amendment**.

Ozone Layer Recovery & Global Impact

- **Progress Achieved**:
  - The **Montreal Protocol** (adopted in 1987) is hailed as one of the most successful environmental treaties, with nearly 100 ozone-depleting chemicals phased out globally.
  - Scientific assessments project the ozone layer will return to 1980 levels by **~2040 globally**, ~2045 in the Arctic, and ~2066 in the Antarctic.
- **Climate Benefits**:
  - The phase-out of ODS has simultaneously averted an estimated **0.5–1°C of global warming** by mid-century, as many ODS are also potent greenhouse gases.
  - The **Kigali Amendment** (2016) aims to phase down HFCs, potentially avoiding **up to 0.5°C additional warming** by 2100, especially when paired with energy-efficient cooling.
- **Universal Ratification**:
  - The Vienna Convention and Montreal Protocol are the first UN treaties to achieve **universal ratification** (2009), involving all 198 UN member states.

2025 International Day of Democracy

What's the News?

- The **United Nations** marks *International Day of Democracy* annually to underline democracy's value as "government of the people, by the people, for the people."
- The 2025 theme is **"Achieving Gender Equality, Action by Action"**. Emphasis is on concrete steps to ensure equal participation of all genders in democratic life.

UN and Democracy

- The United Nations supports efforts to promote and consolidate democracy through various initiatives, including election monitoring and assistance to civil society.
- The **UN Democracy Fund (UNDEF)**, established in 2005, supports projects that strengthen civil society, human rights, and democratic processes globally.
- UNDEF, which celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2025, has played a key role in empowering marginalized communities and promoting transparent governance.

Swachhata Hi Seva 2025

What's the News?

- The **9th edition** of **Swachhata Hi Seva (SHS) 2025** has begun nationwide, running from **17 September to 2 October**, culminating on **Gandhi Jayanti**.
- It is being conducted jointly by the **Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA)** and the **Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS), Ministry of Jal Shakti**.

- The theme this year is **"Swachhotsav"**, aiming to merge the festive spirit with cleanliness, community participation and waste reduction.

Key Components & Details

- **Five Key Pillars**
  1. **Transformation of Cleanliness Target Units (CTUs)**: Identify and clean up dark, dirty, neglected spots.
  2. **Clean Public Spaces**: Activities in high-footfall public areas like railway stations, tourist spots, drains etc.
  3. **SafaiMitra Suraksha Shivir**: Welfare camps for sanitation workers—health check-ups, PPE, etc.
  4. **Clean Green Festivities**: Encouraging zero-waste and eco-friendly celebrations during festivals.
  5. **Advocacy for Swachhata**: Community mobilisation, awareness, Gram Sabhas, use of Swachhata App, maintaining gains beyond the campaign.
- **Special Event: "Ek Din, Ek Ghanta, Ek Saath"**
  - A nationwide voluntary cleanup event will be organized on **25 September**, coinciding with Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay's birth anniversary. Citizens, youth groups, NGOs and others will participate.

World Bamboo Day 2025

What's the News?

- **World Bamboo Day** is observed globally on **18 September** to highlight bamboo's environmental, economic, and cultural significance.
- The 2025 theme is **"Next Generation Bamboo: Solution, Innovation, and Design"**, emphasizing bamboo's role in sustainable design, modern architecture, eco-packaging, green energy, and livelihoods.
- In **Nagaland**, celebrations at the Nagaland Bamboo Resource Centre included a display of bamboo-based crafts, announcement of a **Cane and Bamboo Technology Park**, artisan training, and release of a report in collaboration with the Confederation of Indian Industry on easing compliance for the bamboo sector.

India's Role and Potential

- India is the **third-largest producer** of bamboo in the world, with over **125 species** and about **8.96 million hectares** of bamboo-bearing area.
- The **National Bamboo Mission (NBM)**, a centrally sponsored scheme, aims to promote the holistic growth of the bamboo sector by linking farmers and consumers. Key objectives include:
  - Increasing bamboo plantations in non-forest areas.
  - Improving post-harvest management and developing market infrastructure.
  - Promoting skill development and entrepreneurship in the sector.
- India's bamboo economy is valued at around **₹1,300 crore**, with significant potential for growth. The government is working to reduce import dependence and boost domestic manufacturing and exports.

Yatri Sewa Diwas 2025: A Passenger-First Initiative

What's the News?

- The **Ministry of Civil Aviation** launched the first-ever **Yatri Sewa Diwas** on **September 17, 2025**, a nationwide initiative aimed at prioritizing passenger satisfaction and enhancing the travel experience at airports across India.
- Union Civil Aviation Minister **Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu** launched the event from Hindon Airport, Ghaziabad, emphasizing the government's commitment to a "Passenger First" approach.
- The day's events focused on improving passenger services and fostering community engagement, with various activities held at different airports.

Objectives and Key Initiatives

The Yatri Sewa Diwas is a step towards the government's goal of making Indian airports more inclusive, efficient, and passenger-friendly. It is a part of the broader vision for a **'Viksit Bharat'** built on the principles of **'Atmanirbhar Bharat'**.

- **Improving Passenger Experience**: The initiative focused on tangible improvements in service quality. Many airports implemented real-time passenger feedback systems to address issues like cleanliness, staff behavior, and waiting times.
- **Health and Wellness**: Free medical check-ups and health awareness campaigns were conducted at several airports, with a special focus on women travelers under the **'Swastha Nari, Sashakt Parivar Abhiyan'**. Eye check-ups were also provided for taxi and cab drivers.
- **Community Engagement**: Airports organized various community-driven activities, including blood donation camps, tree plantation drives under the **'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam'** campaign, and interactive sessions for students to provide them with career guidance in the aviation sector.
- **Infrastructure Upgrades**: The event served as a platform to announce future plans, such as the implementation of **universal Wi-Fi** at all airports under the **Digital India Mission**.

World Rhino Day

What's the News?

- World Rhino Day is observed annually on **September 22** to raise awareness about the critical threats facing all five rhinoceros species and to celebrate conservation efforts.
- The day highlights the urgent need to protect rhinos from poaching, illegal wildlife trade, and habitat loss.
- India, home to the largest population of the **Greater One-Horned Rhino** (or Indian Rhino), plays a significant role in this global conservation movement, with notable success stories in parks like **Kaziranga National Park**.

The Five Rhino Species and India's Conservation Efforts

- The five rhino species are: **Black Rhino, White Rhino, Greater One-Horned Rhino, Javan Rhino, and Sumatran Rhino**.
- According to the **IUCN Red List**, the Javan, Sumatran, and Black rhinos are classified as **Critically Endangered**, while the Greater One-Horned Rhino is listed as **Vulnerable**, a significant conservation success.
- Kaziranga National Park in Assam is a global stronghold for the Greater One-Horned Rhino, hosting nearly two-thirds of the world's population.
- **Global Status of Rhino Species**
  - **Black Rhino**: Population increasing but still threatened.
  - **White Rhino**: Population declined from 16,772 (2022) to 15,752 (2024).
  - **Greater One-Horned Rhino**: Approximately 4,075 individuals.
  - **Javan Rhino**: Approximately 50 individuals.
  - **Sumatran Rhino**: Between 34-47 individuals.

World Alzheimer's Day / Month 2025

What's the News?

- **World Alzheimer's Day** is observed on **21 September** as part of **World Alzheimer's Month** in September.
- The global theme for 2025 is **"Ask About Dementia. Ask About Alzheimer's"**.

Additional Info

- **Historical Context**
  - ADI founded in 1984; first Alzheimer's Day in 1994 to mark its 10th anniversary.
  - Alzheimer's disease is named **after Alois Alzheimer**, a German psychiatrist who first described the condition.
- **Related Policies / Health Systems**
  - Dementia is recognised as a public health priority by WHO and member countries.
  - India faces challenges in dementia care: limited awareness, scarce diagnostic facilities, burden on caregivers.
- **Scientific / Medical Points**
  - Alzheimer's is a progressive neurodegenerative disease; not a normal part of aging.
  - No cure exists yet; management involves symptomatic treatment, lifestyle interventions, support systems.

International Day of Peace 2025

What's the News?

- The **International Day of Peace** is observed annually on **September 21**.
- The theme for 2025 is **"Actions for Peace: Our Ambition for the #GlobalGoals"**.

- Established by the **United Nations**, the day is dedicated to strengthening the ideals of peace by observing 24 hours of non-violence and cease-fire across the globe.

Theme: "Actions for Peace: Our Ambition for the #GlobalGoals"

- This year's theme highlights the critical relationship between peace and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.
- It underscores that achieving the SDGs is fundamental to creating peaceful and just societies. Conversely, conflict and instability hinder progress toward these goals.
- The theme serves as a call to action for individuals, communities, and governments to contribute to the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, recognizing it as a roadmap for fostering lasting peace.
- It emphasizes that peace is not merely the absence of war but the presence of equitable development, justice, and human rights for all.

National Ayurveda Day 2025

What's the News?

- **National Ayurveda Day** is being celebrated on **September 23**, with this year's theme being **"Ayurveda for People & Planet"**.
- This marks the **10th edition** of the celebration, which has been given a fixed date for the first time by the Government of India, departing from the previous practice of observing it on Dhanvantari Jayanti.
- The theme highlights Ayurveda's contribution to holistic health and environmental sustainability, connecting individual well-being with ecological balance. The main event will be celebrated at the All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA) in Goa.

"Ayurveda for People & Planet"

- The theme underscores that Ayurveda is not just a medical system but a life science rooted in the harmony between individuals and the environment.
- It aims to position Ayurveda as a sustainable, integrative global healthcare solution for modern challenges like lifestyle disorders and climate-related illnesses.

Major Launches & Campaigns

Initiative	Purpose / Function
DRAVYA portal	Digital database of Ayurvedic ingredients, formulations, and resources.
APTA portal	Records contributions of eminent Ayurveda practitioners.
Desh ka Swasthya Parikshan	Community health assessment campaign using Ayurvedic parameters.
Integrative Oncology Unit (AIIA-Goa + Tata, etc.)	Combine Ayurvedic and modern oncology practices.

Infrastructure upgrades (Sterile supply, Linen unit, Blood storage, etc.)	Enhance hospital capabilities at AIIA Goa.

International Day of Sign Languages 2025

What's the News?

- The **International Day of Sign Languages** is observed annually on **September 23**, coinciding with the founding date of the **World Federation of the Deaf (WFD)** in 1951.
- In 2017, the **United Nations General Assembly** declared this day to raise awareness about the importance of sign languages in realizing the human rights of Deaf individuals.
- The **2025 theme** is **"No Human Rights Without Sign Language Rights"**, emphasizing the necessity of sign language for full participation and dignity of the Deaf community.

Theme Overview

- **"No Human Rights Without Sign Language Rights"** underscores that:
  - Sign language is a fundamental human right.
  - Without access to sign language, Deaf individuals are denied opportunities in education, employment, healthcare, and social participation.
  - Recognizing sign language rights ensures equality, dignity, and inclusion for all.

World Pharmacists Day 2025

What's the News?

- The **International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP)** announced the theme for World Pharmacists Day 2025, observed on September 25, as **"Think Health, Think Pharmacist"**.
- The campaign aims to celebrate the pharmacy profession and advocate for its full integration into global health strategies, emphasizing pharmacists' role in improving health literacy, delivering vaccinations, and ensuring safe medicine use.

World Pharmacists Day Overview

- **Establishment**: Adopted by the FIP Council in 2009, with the date marking the federation's founding in 1912.
- **Objective**: To encourage activities that promote the role of the pharmacist in improving health worldwide and to close the World Pharmacy Week (19-25 September).
- **Significance**: Highlights the indispensable role of pharmacists in strengthening health systems, particularly amid rising healthcare demands and workforce shortages.

World Contraception Day 2025

What's the News?

- **World Contraception Day** was observed globally on **September 26, 2025**, under the theme **"A choice for all. Freedom to plan, power to choose."**
- Spearheaded by the **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)** and global health partners, the day reaffirmed **contraception as a fundamental human right** and a cornerstone of **gender equality, maternal health, and sustainable development**.
- The campaign highlighted that **257 million women worldwide**, mostly in low- and middle-income countries, still face an **unmet need for modern contraception**, leading to higher risks of unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and maternal mortality.

Key Focus Areas & Health Benefits

- **Beyond Pregnancy Prevention**:
  - **Cycle regulation**: Hormonal contraceptives help manage heavy or painful periods.
  - **Cancer risk reduction**: Long-term use of combined oral contraceptives lowers risks of **endometrial and ovarian cancers**.
  - **Treatment of gynaecological conditions**: Used to manage **acne, endometriosis, ovarian cysts**, and **menstrual migraines**.
- **Safe Sex and STI Prevention**:
  - Only **barrier methods (e.g., condoms)** offer dual protection against both **pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs)** like HIV.
  - Additional strategies include **HPV vaccination, regular testing, mutual monogamy**, and **open communication**.
- **Public Health Impact**:
  - Meeting unmet contraceptive needs could **prevent over 50% of maternal deaths** by reducing high-risk pregnancies and unsafe abortions.
  - Supports **SDG 3 (Good Health)** and **SDG 5 (Gender Equality)** by empowering women to control their reproductive futures.

World Environmental Health Day 2025: Focus on "Clean Air, Healthy People"

What's the News?

- **World Environmental Health Day** was observed globally on **September 26, 2025**, under the theme **"Clean Air, Healthy People"**, highlighting the critical link between air quality and public health.
- The day, coordinated by the **International Federation of Environmental Health (IFEH)**, aims to raise awareness about environmental threats—especially **indoor and outdoor air pollution**—and promote sustainable solutions to protect human health.
- In India, the focus centered on **household air pollution**, with experts noting that **over 60% of Indian households** still rely on solid fuels like wood, dung, or

kerosene for cooking, exposing women and children to hazardous levels of indoor pollutants.

Key Concerns and Public Health Impacts

- **Indoor Air Pollution in India**:
  - **PM2.5 levels** inside homes using solid fuels can exceed **300 μg/m³—12 times** the WHO safe limit of **25 μg/m³**.
  - Linked to **respiratory infections, cardiovascular diseases, low birth weight**, and **premature deaths**, especially among women and children.
- **Outdoor Air Pollution**:
  - India is home to **39 of the world's 50 most polluted cities** (IQAir 2024).
  - Air pollution contributes to **1.67 million premature deaths annually** in India (Lancet 2023).
- **Policy Gaps**:
  - Despite the **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)**, which has distributed **over 10 crore LPG connections**, **sustained usage remains low** due to refill affordability and supply chain issues.

World Tourism Day 2025: "Tourism and Sustainable Transformation"

What's the News?

- **World Tourism Day 2025** was observed globally on **September 27**, with the theme **"Tourism and Sustainable Transformation"**.
- Spearheaded by the **United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)**, the day highlights tourism's role in driving **sustainable development, cultural exchange, peace-building, and inclusive economic growth**.
- The theme emphasizes the need to transform tourism into a **resilient, eco-friendly, and socially inclusive sector** aligned with the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

Focus on Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism

- The 2025 theme calls for a **paradigm shift** beyond post-pandemic recovery toward **long-term sustainability**, addressing:
  - **Environmental degradation** through emission reduction and biodiversity conservation.
  - **Social inequality** by empowering local communities and promoting **community-based tourism**.
  - **Cultural preservation** by safeguarding heritage and promoting intercultural dialogue.
- Key strategies promoted include:
  - Adoption of **green infrastructure** (e.g., renewable energy in hotels, eco-certification).
  - Support for **local entrepreneurship**, especially among **women and youth**.
  - Integration of **digital tools and education** to build a skilled, sustainable tourism workforce.

World Heart Day 2025

What's the News?

- **World Heart Day 2025** is observed globally on **September 29** with the theme **"Don't Miss a Beat"**, emphasizing continuous vigilance in cardiovascular health and the importance of early detection and prevention of heart diseases.
- The campaign, led by the **World Heart Federation (WHF)** in collaboration with the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, aims to raise awareness about **cardiovascular diseases (CVDs)**—the leading cause of death worldwide—and encourages individuals to prioritize heart health through timely action and lifestyle changes.

Theme & Significance

The **"Don't Miss a Beat"** theme underscores:
- The critical need to **not ignore warning signs** of heart conditions.
- The importance of **regular health check-ups** and early diagnosis to prevent avoidable deaths.
- A call to action for individuals, families, and health systems to ensure **no heartbeat is lost prematurely** due to preventable causes.

Key Facts on CVDs in India:

- CVDs account for **over 30% of all deaths** in India (ICMR-INDIAB study).
- India faces a **double burden**: rising CVDs in urban areas due to sedentary lifestyles, and persistent risk in rural regions due to limited healthcare access.
- Risk factors include **hypertension, diabetes, tobacco use, unhealthy diets, and physical inactivity**.

International Translation Day 2025

What's the News?

- **International Translation Day** is observed globally on **September 30** each year to recognize the vital contributions of **translators, interpreters, and terminologists** in connecting nations and fostering mutual understanding.
- The **2025 theme** is **"Celebrating Translation, Peace and Trust"**, which underscores the critical role of human expertise in ensuring **trustworthy communication**, especially in diplomatic, humanitarian, and multilingual contexts.
- The theme also emphasizes the need for **human oversight of AI-generated translations** and reaffirms the importance of **ethical, accurate, and culturally sensitive translation practices** in an era of rapid technological advancement.

Theme Focus: Translation, Peace and Trust

- The 2025 observance highlights how professional translators contribute to:
  - **Building dialogue** between conflicting parties.
  - **Strengthening trust** in international relations and global institutions.
  - **Safeguarding linguistic diversity**, particularly for **Indigenous languages**.
- It aligns with the **United Nations General Assembly's Resolution** declaring 2025 as the **"Year of Peace and**

Trust", reinforcing translation as a tool for **conflict prevention and diplomacy**.

- A key sub-theme, **"Translation, shaping a future you can trust"**, reflects concerns about the reliability of machine translation and the irreplaceable value of **human judgment and cultural fluency**.
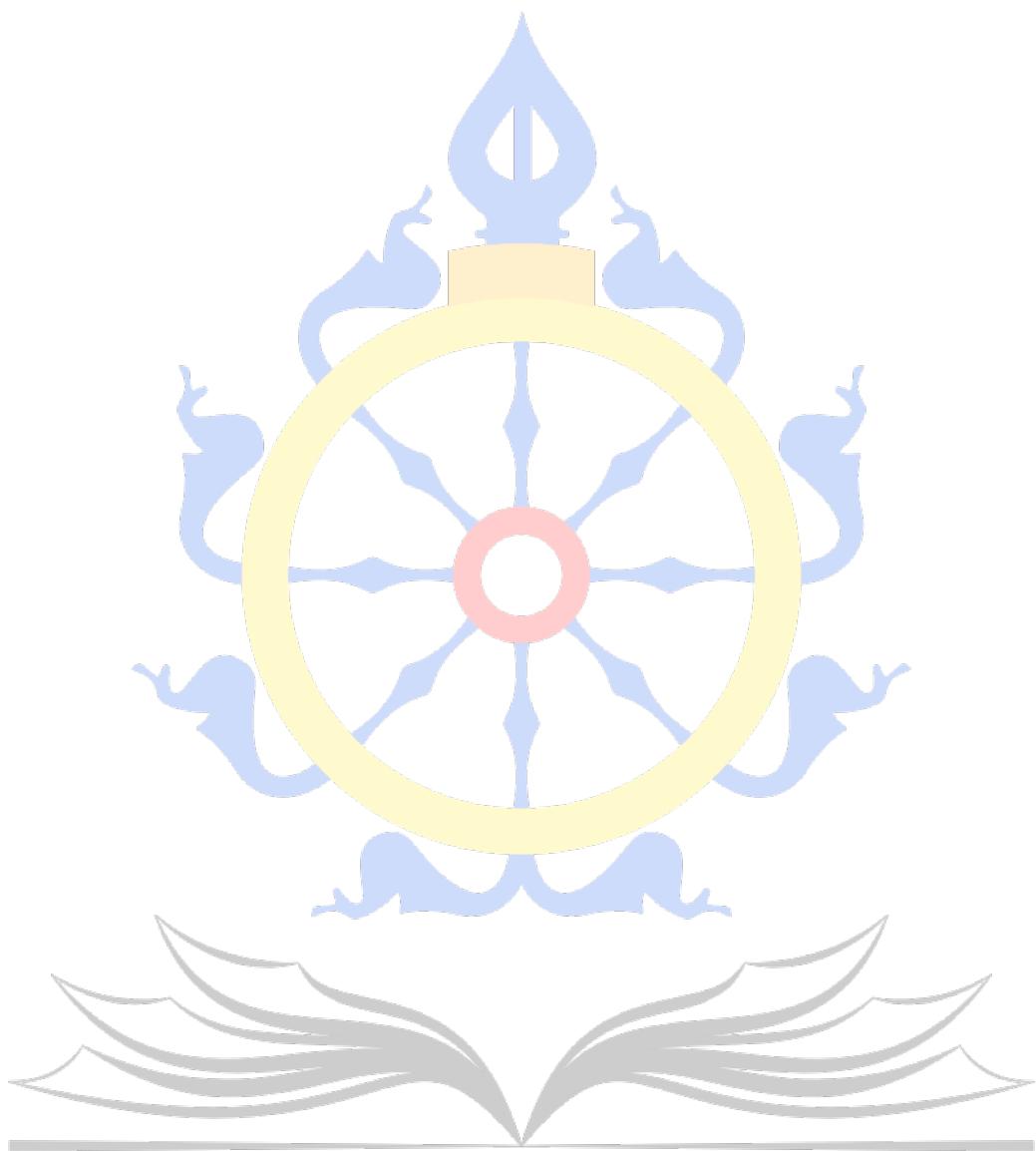
State Affairs

Devastating Floods in Punjab
What's the News?
- Severe floods have affected over **1,900 villages** across more than **23 districts** in Punjab, following heavy monsoon rainfall and the release of excess water from major dams.
- The crisis, the worst in nearly four decades, has led to the loss of **43 lives** and widespread destruction of crops and infrastructure.
- The state government has declared Punjab a **disaster-affected state** and has deployed the **National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)** and the Army for rescue and relief operations.

Flood Impact & Response
- **Agricultural Damage**:
  - Over **3 lakh hectares** (≈ 3.5 lakh acres) of farmland are underwater. Gurdaspur faces the worst crop damage—over **40,169 hectares**.
- **Geographical Spread**:
  - Gurdaspur: 329 villages, ~1.45 lakh people impacted.
  - Amritsar: ~1.36 lakh people; Ferozepur: ~38,000; Fazilka: ~24,000 affected.
- **Relief Infrastructure**:
  - **196 relief camps** set up (74 currently active), sheltering **1,701 people**.
  - Rescue units deployed: **24 NDRF teams**, **24 military units**, **142 boats**.

Financial Aid for Flood-Affected States: Punjab and Himachal Pradesh
What's the News?
- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** has announced a **₹1,600 crore** relief package for **Punjab**, supplementing the **₹12,000 crore** already available under disaster funds. The gesture followed an aerial survey and damage review.
- Simultaneously, **Himachal Pradesh** received an immediate assistance of **₹1,500 crore**.

Relief Components & Recovery Plan
- **Punjab:**
  - Includes **advance release** of the second instalment under the **State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF)** and support via **PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi**.
  - **Ex-gratia payments**: ₹2 lakh for next-of-kin of deceased; ₹50,000 for seriously injured.
  - Focus on rebuilding:
    - Houses via **PM Awas Yojana – Gramin**
    - Restoring **roads, schools, borewells**
    - **Livestock mini-kits**, conversion of bore pumps from diesel to **solar power**

- **Micro-irrigation** following "Per Drop More Crop"
- Relief via **PM National Relief Fund (PMNRF)**
- **Himachal Pradesh:**
  - Advance release of SDRF and PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi.
  - Ex-gratia: ₹2 lakh to family of deceased; ₹50,000 to injured.
  - Multi-pronged restoration:
    - Rebuilding under **PM Awas Yojana**
    - Repairing **national highways and schools**
    - Relief via **PMNRF**
    - Mini-kits for livestock; assistance to farmers without power access

Uttarakhand Flood Relief Package
What's the News?
- Prime Minister announced an **₹1,200 crore** aid package for Uttarakhand following floods, cloudbursts and landslides.
- He met affected families in Dehradun, reviewed damage and relief operations with state and central teams.
- Ex-gratia payments to be given: **₹2 lakh** to next of kin of deceased; **₹50,000** to those severely injured.

Relief and Rehabilitation Measures
- **Housing and Infrastructure**:
  - Rebuilding homes under **PM Awas Yojana-Gramin** through a "special project" for eligible households in rural areas.
  - Restoration of national highways, reconstruction of schools, and distribution of mini-kits for livestock.
- **Financial Support**:
  - **₹1,200 crore** as interim assistance under the **Disaster Management Act**, with further assessment pending reports from inter-ministerial central teams.
  - Advance disbursements to the state for immediate needs, with additional support likely based on the state's memorandum (which seeks **₹5,702 crore** for overall losses).
- **Humanitarian Aid**:
  - Ex-gratia payments and long-term care for orphaned children via **PM CARES**.
  - Praise for **NDRF, SDRF, Army, and Aapda Mitra volunteers** for rescue efforts.

India and ADB Partner for Urban Infrastructure in Assam
What's the News?
- The **Government of India** and **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** have signed a **US$ 125 million** loan

agreement to improve urban livability and climate resilience in Assam.

- The project will cover **six district headquarters** (Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Dhubri, Goalpara, Golaghat, Nalbari) plus **Guwahati**, and will benefit about **360,000** residents.

Project Details & Significance

The project adopts a multi-pronged approach to transform urban infrastructure and governance in a climate-vulnerable region.

- **Key Infrastructure Components**: The project focuses on two critical areas—water supply and flood management.
  - **Water Supply**: Construction of six water treatment plants with a combined capacity of **72 million litres per day** and laying of **800 km of distribution pipelines** to provide continuous metered water supply.
  - **Flood Management**: In Guwahati's Bahini Basin, the project will build flood diversion channels, upgrade drainage systems, and create a **nature-based retention pond** to reduce flooding and improve groundwater recharge.
- **Governance & Inclusion Focus**: Beyond physical infrastructure, the project emphasizes strengthening institutions and promoting social equity.
  - **Digital Governance**: Introduction of a **GIS-based property tax database,** digital water billing systems, and a volumetric water tariff structure to improve financial sustainability.
  - **Social Inclusion**: Specific activities include training for women's self-help groups in water operations, internships for college-age women, and school outreach programs on water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH).
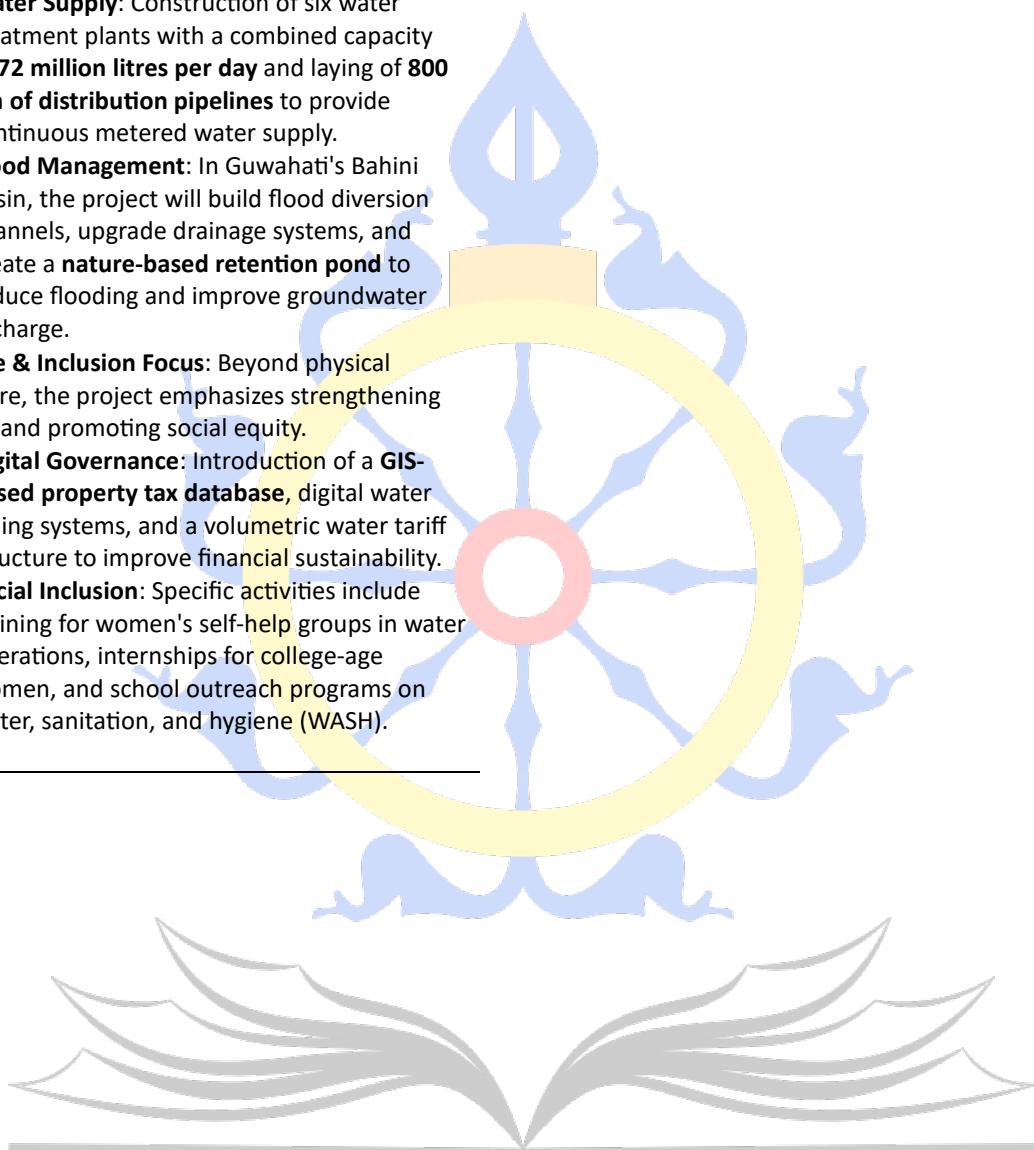
Defence

Army, ITBP Conduct 'Achook Prahar' Firepower Drills in Arunachal

What's the News?

- **Indian Army** and **Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)** conducted a joint **firepower exercise** in central **Arunachal Pradesh** under simulated battlefield conditions.
- The exercise validated **interoperability**, coordinated use of indirect and direct fire, and force responsiveness in high-altitude terrain.
- The drills coincided with senior leadership engagements and a concurrent high-level diplomatic visit abroad, signalling simultaneous diplomatic and defence messaging.

Operational Readiness & Significance

- **Objective**
  - Validate **combined firepower** response and tactical coordination between Army formations and a frontline border CAPF.
- **Key details**
  - **Exercise name: Exercise Achook Prahar.**
  - **Duration:** multi-day validation under simulated combat conditions.
  - **Units & tools:** involvement of Army Spear Corps elements and **ITBP units** using **mortars, machine-guns, rockets and grenades** to test accuracy and timing.
- **Significance**
  - Reinforces **high-altitude combat readiness** and joint operating procedures along the eastern frontier.
  - Signals deterrence while diplomatic channels remain active.

India Raises 'Bhairav' Light Commando Battalions to Strengthen Border Strike Capability

What's the News?

- The Indian Army has begun raising five new **"Bhairav" light commando battalions**, each comprising **250 specially trained and equipped soldiers**, to enhance rapid strike operations along its borders with Pakistan and China.
- The first batch is expected by **October 31, 2025**. These units serve as an intermediate force between regular infantry and elite Para-Special Forces.

Agile Strike Units

- **Purpose & Role**
  - Fill operational gaps between infantry and Para-Special Forces.
  - Released to perform swift tactical missions, freeing elite forces for high-risk clandestine tasks.
- **Units & Deployment**

- **Total planned**: 23 battalions, drawn from existing infantry under a **"save and raise"** model (no new troop intake).
- **First batch**:
  - Three units under Northern Command: **Leh (14 Corps)**, **Srinagar (15 Corps)**, **Nagrota (16 Corps)**
  - One in the **western desert sector**
  - One in the **eastern hilly sector**
- **Training & Structure**
  - Training phases: **2–3 months at regimental centres**, followed by **1 month with Special Forces** for advanced training.
  - Each battalion includes **7–8 officers**.
- **Equipment & Capability**
  - Smaller, more mobile, equipped with **advanced weapons, surveillance systems, tactical gadgets, drones**.

iDEX-DIO & EdCIL Unite to Advance Dual-Use Technology Under ASPIRE

What's the News?

- **iDEX-DIO**, the innovation arm of the **Ministry of Defence**, and **EdCIL (India) Limited**, a **Mini-Ratna CPSE** under the **Ministry of Education**, have signed an **MoU**.
- The collaboration is part of the new **ASPIRE (Accelerating Strategic Progress in Research and Education) program**, aimed at bridging defence expertise with emerging ed-tech solutions to address critical civilian challenges.
- The MoU was signed on **September 9, 2025**, by **Amit Satija** (Joint Secretary, Defence Production) and **Govind Jaiswal** (CMD, EdCIL), marking a strategic step towards leveraging India's start-up ecosystem for scalable innovations.

ASPIRE Program Objectives

- **Dual-Use Technology Development**: Focus on technologies that serve both defence and civilian sectors, such as AI-based learning tools, simulation platforms, and secure communication systems.
- **Start-Up Ecosystem Integration**: iDEX's existing network of **650+ start-ups and MSMEs** will be leveraged to develop solutions for education and defence, enhancing indigenous capabilities.
- **Cross-Sectoral Expertise**: EdCIL's ed-tech experience (e.g., digital classrooms, teacher training) will combine with iDEX's defence innovation model to create impactful solutions.
- **Economic Growth**: Aims to boost India's self-reliance (**Aatmanirbhar Bharat**) by reducing import dependency and fostering homegrown technologies.

India Participates in Russia's Multilateral Military Exercise Zapad 2025

What's the News?

- An Indian Armed Forces contingent has arrived in Russia to participate in the multilateral joint military exercise **Zapad 2025**.
- The exercise, hosted by Russia, is scheduled to be held at the **Mulino Training Ground, Nizhniy, Russia**.
- The Indian contingent comprises 65 personnel, including **57 from the Indian Army**, 7 from the Indian Air Force, and 1 from the Indian Navy. The Army contingent is led by a battalion of the **KUMAON Regiment**.

Zapad 2025 Objectives

- The "Zapad" (meaning "West" in Russian) exercises are biennial military drills held by Russia and Belarus. While traditionally focused on the Union State's military readiness, they have expanded to include other nations.
- The key objectives of Zapad 2025 are:
  - Enhancing **military cooperation** and **interoperability** among participating nations.
  - Providing a platform for exchanging tactics and procedures in **conventional warfare** and **counter-terrorism** operations.
  - Practicing joint company-level operations in open and plain terrain.
- The exercise will focus on missions ranging from joint planning and tactical drills to the use of special arms skills and integrating emerging technologies.

Defence Procurement Manual (DPM) 2025

What's the News?

- Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh** approved the **Defence Procurement Manual (DPM) 2025**, to govern **revenue procurement** for the Armed Forces.
- It replaces a manual last updated in 2009.
- Purpose is to make procurement for spares, ammunition and sustainment — under "Operations & Sustenance" — faster, more responsive, and more indigenous.

DPM 2025: Key Reforms & Objectives

- **Streamlined Procurement**:
  - Covers revenue procurements valued at **₹1 lakh crore** annually for operations, sustenance, and maintenance.
  - Introduces **collegiate decision-making** and empowers **Competent Financial Authorities (CFAs)** at lower levels to approve extensions and bids without higher-level referrals.
- **Industry-Friendly Measures**:
  - **Relaxed Penalties**: No **liquidity damages (LD)** during development phase; post-prototype LD reduced to **0.1%** (capped at **5–10%** for extreme delays).

- **Assured Orders**: Guaranteed quantity orders for **up to 5 years** (extendable to 10 years in special cases) to ensure stability for suppliers.
  - **Handholding Support**: Technical know-how and equipment sharing by armed forces for prototype development .
- **Self-Reliance Focus**:
  - New chapter on **innovation and indigenization** to foster collaboration with **private industry, MSMEs, startups, academia (e.g., IITs, IISc)**.
  - **No Objection Certificate (NOC)** requirement from **Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs)** removed for open bidding, ensuring a level playing field.
- **Operational Efficiency**:
  - **15% upfront growth provision** for repair/maintenance of aerial and naval platforms to reduce downtime.
  - **Limited tendering** allowed for procurements up to **₹50 lakh** (and beyond in exceptional cases) for specialized goods.

Indian Navy Inducts ASW Ship *Androth*

What's the News?

- The Indian Navy has received *Androth*, the **second** indigenously built Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (**ASW-SWC**) under the eight-ship series.
- Built by **Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata,** this ship enhances naval capabilities in shallow littoral zones—especially anti-submarine surveillance, coastal monitoring, and mine-laying.

ASW-SWC Fleet: Design and Capabilities

- **Primary Roles**:
  - Detect and engage enemy submarines in **littoral (shallow) waters**.
  - Conduct **mine-laying operations**, **search-and-rescue (SAR)**, and **low-intensity maritime operations (LIMO)**.
- **Key Features**:
  - **Dimensions**: Length of 77.6 meters, displacement of 900–1,490 tons, and endurance of 1,800 nautical miles.
  - **Propulsion: Diesel engine-waterjet combination** (first in Indian Navy warships), enabling speeds up to 25 knots and enhanced agility in shallow waters.
  - **Stealth Technology**: Reduced radar cross-section, low acoustic signature, and infrared suppression for covert operations.
- **Armament and Sensors**:
  - **Anti-submarine weapons**: RBU-6000 rocket launchers, lightweight torpedo tubes (e.g., **Advanced Light Weight Torpedo**), and mine-laying rails.
  - **Guns**: 30mm naval surface gun and 12.7mm stabilized remote-controlled guns for surface threats.

- o **Sensors**: **Hull-mounted sonar** and **low-frequency variable-depth sonar (LFVDS)** for submarine detection.
- **Indigenization**: Over **80% indigenous content**, with contributions from **Bharat Electronics (BEL)**, **Larsen & Toubro**, **Mahindra Defence**, and **55+ MSMEs**.

India-U.S. Joint Military Exercise 'Yudh Abhyas 2025' Concludes in Alaska

What's the News?

- The 21st edition of **Exercise Yudh Abhyas** between India and the United States concluded in Alaska after two weeks of joint military training.
- Training took place in **sub-arctic terrain**, focusing on interoperability, counter-drone systems, high-altitude physiology, and medical readiness among other areas.

Details & Significance

- **Objectives & Focus Areas**
  - o Enhance joint planning, command & control at battalion and brigade levels.
  - o Field training in patrols, small-unit manoeuvres, live-fire drills, and operations in cold weather conditions.
  - o Medical preparedness covering casualty evacuation, frostbite prevention, force health protection.
- **Participants & Scale**
  - o Indian Army contingent from the **Madras Regiment** led the Indian side.
  - o U.S. side included the **1st Battalion, 5th Infantry Regiment ("Bobcats")** of the 11th Airborne Division.
  - o Around **450 Indian personnel** involved.

INS Nistar Joins Multinational Exercise 'Pacific Reach 2025'

What's the News?

- The Indian Navy's indigenously built Diving Support Vessel (DSV), **INS Nistar**, has made its maiden port call in Singapore to participate in the multinational exercise **'Pacific Reach 2025'**.
- The biennial exercise, which focuses on submarine rescue operations, is hosted by Singapore and involves over **40 nations** as participants or observers.
- The participation of INS Nistar, which serves as the "mothership" for India's **Deep Submergence Rescue Vehicle (DSRV)**, demonstrates India's advanced capabilities in deep-sea rescue and maritime security.

Exercise Pacific Reach & INS Nistar

- **Exercise Pacific Reach** is a major international exercise aimed at enhancing cooperation and interoperability in submarine rescue operations.
- The exercise has two phases:
  - o **Harbour Phase**: Involves expert discussions, seminars, and cross-deck visits to share best practices on submarine rescue systems.

- o **Sea Phase**: Features live rescue drills and intervention operations in the South China Sea.
- **INS Nistar** was commissioned in July 2025 and is a key asset for the Indian Navy's submarine rescue fleet.
- Built with over **80% indigenous content**, the vessel is equipped with advanced systems, including a side-scan sonar, Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs), and extensive deep-sea diving facilities.

India's First Overseas Defence Facility Established in Morocco

What's the News?

- India's Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh** and Morocco's Defence Minister **Abdelatif Loudyi** inaugurated a **defence manufacturing plant** in **Berrechid, Morocco**.
- The plant is operated by **Tata Advanced Systems (TASL)**.
- It will manufacture the **WhAP 8×8 (Wheeled Armoured Platform)**, a modular armoured vehicle jointly developed by TASL and **DRDO**.
- The facility covers ~20,000 sqm and is Morocco's largest defence plant to date.
- Production began ahead of schedule, and initial deliveries to the Royal Moroccan Army are expected soon.

Significance of the Partnership

- The inauguration marks a historic milestone in India's defence diplomacy and export strategy, aligning with the vision of **'Make in India'** and **'Make for the World'**.
- The facility is the first by an Indian private company in Africa and is also the largest defence manufacturing site in Morocco.
- It will initially supply the **Royal Moroccan Army** and plans to expand exports to other friendly nations, particularly in Africa and Europe, leveraging Morocco's strategic location.
- The project is expected to create local jobs and foster a domestic supplier ecosystem in Morocco.
- This collaboration is a testament to the growing strategic partnership between India and Morocco, which recently signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** on defence cooperation.

Defence Ministry Boosts Aatmanirbharta with Major LCA Deal

What's the News?

- The **Ministry of Defence** has signed a contract with **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)** for the procurement of 97 **Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Mark-1A** for the **Indian Air Force (IAF)**.
- The deal is worth over **₹62,370 crore** and includes 68 single-seat fighter jets and 29 twin-seat aircraft, along with associated equipment.
- Deliveries will begin in 2027-28 and be completed over a period of six years.

Key Features of the Tejas Mark-1A

- **Indigenous Content**: Over 64% of the aircraft's components are indigenously manufactured, with 67 additional items incorporated compared to the 2021 contract.
- **Advanced Systems**: The aircraft will feature advanced systems such as:
    - **UTTAM Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) Radar**
    - **Swayam Raksha Kavach** (Self-Protection Suite)
    - **Indigenous Control Surface Actuators**

India Tests Agni-Prime Missile from Rail Mobile Launcher

What's the News?

- India has successfully conducted the first flight test of the new-generation ballistic missile, **Agni-Prime (Agni-P)**, from a **rail-based mobile launcher system**.
- The test was carried out by the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** from **Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Island** off the coast of Odisha.
- This successful launch places India among a select group of nations possessing the advanced technological capability of launching missiles from rail-based platforms.

Key Features & Strategic Significance

- **Agni-Prime** is a two-stage, canisterized, solid-propellant missile with a strike range between **1,000 and 2,000 kilometers**.
- **Technological Advancements**:
    - **Canister Launch**: Being canisterized allows the missile to be stored for extended periods, transported easily via road or rail, and launched quickly, significantly reducing reaction time.
    - **Rail Mobile Launcher**: This system provides greater operational flexibility and survivability. The ability to move the missile launch system along the country's extensive rail network makes it harder for adversaries to track and target.
    - **Guidance System**: It is equipped with a dual redundant navigation and guidance system, ensuring high accuracy.
- This capability enhances India's strategic deterrence by adding a new layer of mobility and stealth to its missile arsenal.

IAF and IIT Ropar Forge Alliance for Indigenous Defence Innovation

What's the News?

- The **Indian Air Force (IAF) Maintenance Command** and **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Ropar** have signed an **MoU** to collaborate on technology development and indigenisation of defence systems.

- The agreement was signed by **Air Marshal Vijay Kumar Garg** (AOC-in-C, Maintenance Command) and **Rajeev Ahuja** (Director, IIT Ropar).
- IIT Ropar will support through **consultancy**, **feasibility studies**, and development of **technology demonstrators** in niche areas.
- The partnership is intended to deepen **academia–military synergy** and boost **self-reliance in defence tech**.

Focus Areas & Implementation Strategy

- **Priority Technology Domains**:
    - Development of **indigenous solutions for weapon system sustainment**.
    - Creation of **technology demonstrators** based on IAF-identified operational needs.
    - Conduct of **feasibility studies** and **advanced research** to support IAF's maintenance and modernization goals.
- **Capacity Building & Knowledge Exchange**:
    - Joint **training programs**, **workshops**, and **knowledge-sharing sessions** to nurture defence innovation and skill development.
    - Consultancy support from IIT Ropar in **critical technology areas**, leveraging its research infrastructure.
- **Strategic Objective**:
    - Accelerate **indigenisation** of critical defence components and systems.
    - Foster a **robust defence-academia ecosystem** to support long-term self-reliance in air power capabilities.

Indian Army Celebrates 199th Gunners' Day

What's the News?

- The **Regiment of Artillery** of the Indian Army celebrated its **199th Gunners' Day** on **September 28**.
- The day commemorates the raising of the first Indian artillery unit in 1827.
- A solemn wreath-laying ceremony was held at the **National War Memorial** in New Delhi, led by the **Director General of Artillery**, to pay tribute to the gunners who have made the supreme sacrifice for the nation.

History and Significance

Gunners' Day holds deep historical importance for the Indian Army, marking the foundation and evolution of its formidable artillery arm.

- **Historical Origin**: The day is celebrated on **September 28** to mark the date in **1827** when the first Indian artillery unit, the **5 (Bombay) Mountain Battery**, was raised.
- **Significance**:
    - It honours the immense contribution, valour, and professionalism of the gunners in all major military operations.
    - The Regiment's motto is **"Sarvatra Izzat-O-Iqbal"**, which translates to **"Everywhere with Honour and Glory"**

International Relations

Putin Criticises Western Sanctions on India and China
What's the News?
- Russian President **Vladimir Putin** has sharply criticised European plans to impose sanctions on India and China for their continued economic ties with Russia.
- Speaking after a visit to China, Putin asserted that such punitive measures reflect an outdated "colonial mindset" and that the "colonial era is now over."
- The statement comes amid growing tensions, with the United States imposing tariffs on India for its purchase of Russian crude oil.

The Colonial Mindset Argument
- Putin's remarks are a direct response to Western nations, particularly the EU and the US, which are exploring the use of secondary sanctions against countries that continue to trade with Russia.
- He argued that powerful economies like India and China, with their own domestic political systems and laws, cannot be spoken to in a tone of command.
- According to Putin, the Ukraine conflict is merely a pretext for the West to impose broader punitive measures against countries that are seen as a growing economic challenge.
- He warned that leaders of nations with histories of colonialism and attacks on their sovereignty are unlikely to show weakness, as it could have significant domestic political consequences.

UPI-UPU Integration Launched at Universal Postal Congress in Dubai
What's the News?
- **Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia** unveiled the **UPI-UPU Integration Project** at the 28th **Universal Postal Congress in Dubai**, merging India's **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** with the **Universal Postal Union's Interconnection Platform (UPU-IP)**.
- The integration enables **faster, safer, and more affordable cross-border remittances** by leveraging the postal network's global reach and UPI's real-time digital infrastructure.
- India committed **USD 10 million** to support digital payment innovation under this initiative.

Project Overview & Significance
- **Developed by**: Department of Posts (DoP), NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL), and UPU.
- **Key Benefits**:
  - **Reduced Costs**: Aims to lower cross-border remittance costs to **<3%** (aligned with UN SDGs), benefiting millions of migrants and families.
  - **Speed & Security**: Enables instant, secure transfers using postal networks and UPI's real-time infrastructure (UPI processed **185 billion transactions** worth **USD 2.83 trillion** in 2024–25).
  - **Financial Inclusion**: Expands affordable digital financial services to remote areas via post offices, strengthening India's **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** model.
- **India's Four-Pillar Vision**:
  - **Connect**: Data-driven logistics for seamless global commerce.
  - **Include**: Affordable services for migrants and small enterprises.
  - **Modernize**: Adoption of AI, DigiPIN, and machine learning.
  - **Cooperate**: South-South partnerships via UPU technical cell.

India, Iran, and Armenia Trilateral Talks
What's the News?
- India, Iran and Armenia held their **third trilateral consultations in Tehran**.
- Discussions focused on boosting regional trade, enhancing **connectivity infrastructure**, and leveraging strategic assets like the **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** and **Chabahar Port**.

Connectivity & Strategic Significance
The trilateral format is a crucial component of India's broader foreign policy objectives, aiming to secure its economic and strategic interests in Eurasia and the South Caucasus region. Key points of the discussions include:
- **INSTC**: The trilateral partners reiterated their commitment to the **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)**, a 7,200 km multi-modal network of sea, rail, and road routes. The corridor aims to reduce the transit time and cost of moving freight between India, Iran, Russia, and Europe.
- **Chabahar Port**: The role of India's investment in the **Chabahar Port** in Iran was highlighted as a central hub for the INSTC. This port provides India with a strategic gateway to landlocked Afghanistan and Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan.
- **Armenia's "Crossroads of Peace"**: The talks also focused on Armenia's initiative to develop transit routes through its territory, which would complement the INSTC by providing additional connectivity to the Black Sea and Europe.

India Pledges USD 680 Million Economic Package to Mauritius
What's the News?
- India unveiled a **USD 680 million** special economic package for Mauritius.
- Leaders of both countries signed **seven MoUs** in sectors including education, hydrography, space, maritime security and infrastructure.

- India and Mauritius agreed to begin trading in their **local currencies**.

Package Details & Strategic Significance

- **Components**:
    - **Grant-based projects** ($215 million): Include a new **Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital**, an **AYUSH Centre of Excellence**, a veterinary school, and provision of helicopters.
    - **Grant-cum-line of credit projects** ($440 million): Focus on infrastructure, such as completing a new air traffic control tower at SSR International Airport, developing Motorway M4 and Ring Road Phase II, and acquiring port equipment.
    - **Budgetary support**: $25 million for the current financial year.
- **Strategic Initiatives**:
    - **Maritime security**: Renewed agreement on hydrography for joint surveys of Mauritius' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), including the **Chagos Archipelago**.
    - **Space and technology cooperation**: Agreement to establish a telemetry, tracking, and telecommunications station for satellites.
    - **Trade facilitation**: Plans to enable bilateral trade in local currencies, building on the successful launch of **UPI and RuPay** in Mauritius.

India Wins Presidency of Coast Guard Global Summit 2027

What's the News?

- India participated in the **4th Coast Guard Global Summit (CGGS)** in Rome, engaging with global coast guard forces on maritime safety, pollution response, and transnational crimes.
- India has been unanimously selected to **host the 5th CGGS in 2027**, which it will hold in **Chennai**.

India's Role and Contribution at the Summit

- **Expert Lecture**: The Indian delegation delivered a lecture titled "**Guardians Against the Blaze: ICG's Tactical Response to Fire Emergencies**," highlighting India's expertise in handling maritime fire incidents.
- **Key Themes**: The summit focused on critical issues of maritime safety, marine environment protection, emergency response, and countering transnational maritime crimes such as smuggling and piracy.
- **Maritime Diplomacy**: Hosting the next summit is a significant step in India's maritime diplomacy, aligning with the country's "**blue economy**" strategies and its vision of being a responsible security partner in the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**.

India Secures Strategic Entry in Chagos Near Diego Garcia

What's the News?

- India and **Mauritius** have agreed to establish a **Satellite Telemetry, Tracking & Telecommunications Station** in Mauritius, close to the US-UK base at **Diego Garcia** in the Chagos Archipelago.
- This agreement was made during the visit of Mauritius PM Navinchandra Ramgoolam to India. It enhances cooperation in **space research**, satellite tracking, communications and telecommunications.
- India has announced a **US$680 million** package for Mauritius that includes infrastructure, security, and development initiatives tied to this strategic entry.

India-Mauritius Strategic Cooperation

- India has pledged a special economic package of **$680 million** to Mauritius. This is a mix of grants and lines of credit to support projects in infrastructure, healthcare, and maritime security.
- Key elements of the cooperation include:
    - **Maritime Surveillance and Capacity Building**: India will assist Mauritius in monitoring and developing its vast EEZ, particularly the **Chagos Marine Protected Area**.
    - **Hydrography Agreement**: The two nations will conduct joint surveys and share hydrographic data, a crucial step for navigation and maritime domain awareness.
    - **Infrastructure Development**: Projects such as the redevelopment of Port Louis harbor and the construction of an Air Traffic Control (ATC) tower at the international airport are included in the package.
- This partnership strengthens India's role as a **"first responder"** and **"net security provider"** in the Indian Ocean, countering the rising presence of other nations in the region.

India Re-elected to UPU Councils for 2025-28 Term

What's the News?

- India has been re-elected to the **Council of Administration (CA)** and the **Postal Operations Council (POC)** of the **Universal Postal Union (UPU)** for the 2025-28 term.
- The re-election took place at the **28th Universal Postal Congress** in **Dubai**.

India's Role in UPU Governance

- **Council of Administration (CA)**:
    - This council is the primary governing body of the UPU between Congresses and consists of **41 member countries**.
    - It supervises UPU's activities and examines regulatory, administrative, and legal issues, ensuring the Union's policies are implemented effectively.
- **Postal Operations Council (POC)**:
    - Comprising **48 member countries**, the POC is the UPU's technical and operational arm.

- It focuses on modernizing postal products and services, dealing with the economic and commercial aspects of the international postal system.
- **Significance for India**:
  - Membership in these councils allows India to actively participate in shaping the rules and standards for the international postal network.
  - It provides a platform to contribute to the modernization and digitalization of postal services worldwide, leveraging the experience of **India Post**.

US H-1B Visa Fee Hike: India's Response & Implications

What's the News?
- The US government has imposed a **$100,000 fee** on new H-1B visa applications.
- India has raised concerns about **humanitarian consequences**, especially for families of H-1B holders.
- The Indian government is studying the implications of this change across sectors including IT.

H-1B Visa Fee Hike: Overview and Impact
- **Objective**:
  - The US aims to curb alleged abuses of the H-1B system, where companies reportedly undercut American wages by hiring lower-cost foreign labor. The fee seeks to ensure only "extraordinary" talent is sponsored, with revenues intended to cut US taxes and debt.
- **Key Changes**:
  - Fee increased from **$2,000–5,000** to **$100,000** per new application, payable by employers.
  - Applies solely to new petitions filed after September 21, 2025, for beneficiaries outside the US. Current holders and in-country status changes/extensions are exempt.
- **Immediate Reactions**:
  - **Tech companies** (e.g., Microsoft, Amazon, JPMorgan) advised employees to avoid international travel or return to the US before the deadline, though clarifications later alleviated concerns for existing holders.
  - **NASSCOM** criticized the abrupt implementation, warning of business disruptions and reduced innovation due to limited talent mobility.

India Reiterates Zero-Tolerance Policy Towards Terrorism at Global Platforms

What's the News?
- India reaffirmed its **zero-tolerance stance against terrorism** at the **G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Rio de Janeiro** and at a **UN Ministerial Meeting in New York**.

- External Affairs Minister **S. Jaishankar** criticized selective approaches to terrorism and the misuse of sanctions for political purposes.
- He stressed the need for global unity, accountability of perpetrators, and dismantling of cross-border terror networks to ensure lasting peace and security.

Counter-Terrorism Approach
- India's position emphasizes that terrorism is one of the **gravest threats to international peace**, requiring:
  - **Collective international cooperation** against terror financing, safe havens, and radicalization.
  - **Rejection of double standards**—no distinction between "good" and "bad" terrorists.
  - **Effective multilateralism** through bodies like the UN, G20, and FATF.
- India highlighted that unilateral sanctions and politically motivated restrictions weaken collective action.

Türkiye-US Sign Strategic Civil Nuclear Cooperation MoU

What's the News?
- On **September 25, 2025**, **Türkiye and the United States** signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Strategic Civil Nuclear Cooperation** during a high-level meeting between President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and U.S. leadership at the White House.
- The agreement, inked by **Turkish Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar** and **U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio**, aims to deepen bilateral collaboration in **civilian nuclear energy**, covering **technology transfer, investment, and energy security**.
- This marks a strategic shift in Türkiye's nuclear energy partnerships, complementing its existing **Russian-led Akkuyu project** and signaling interest in **U.S.-backed large-scale reactors and small modular reactors (SMRs)**.

Scope of the Nuclear Partnership
- The MoU is **broad in scope**, encompassing:
  - **Construction of nuclear power plants**, including potential new sites beyond Akkuyu.
  - Joint development of **small modular reactors (SMRs)** for flexible, localized energy generation.
  - **Civil nuclear technology cooperation**, safety standards, workforce training, and regulatory alignment.
- While specific project details or financial commitments were **not disclosed**, Turkish officials confirmed ongoing talks with the U.S. on both **greenfield nuclear sites** (e.g., Sinop, Thrace) and **SMR deployment near industrial zones**.
- The deal supports Türkiye's goal to **diversify its energy mix**, reduce dependence on imported natural gas, and meet rising electricity demand through **low-carbon, baseload power**.

India Re-elected to ICAO Council for 2025–2028 Term

What's the News?

- India has been **re-elected to Part II of the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)** for the **2025–2028 term** during the **42nd ICAO Assembly Session** held in **Montreal, Canada** on **September 27, 2025**.
- This re-election reflects **growing global confidence** in India's leadership in civil aviation and its **increasing contributions to international air navigation infrastructure**.
- India secured its seat with a **stronger mandate compared to the 2022 elections**, underscoring its role as one of the **fastest-growing aviation markets** globally.

RITES Signs MoU with Etihad Rail to Boost Mobility Collaboration

What's the News?

- **RITES Limited**, a leading Indian transport infrastructure consultancy under the **Ministry of Railways**, has signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Etihad Rail**, the national railway company of the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**.
- The agreement was signed during the **Global Rail Transport Infrastructure Exhibition & Conference** in **Abu Dhabi** in the presence of **H.E. Sheikh Theyab bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan**, Chairman of Etihad Rail, and **India's Ambassador to the UAE, H.E. Sunjay Sudhir**.
- The MoU aims to **enhance collaboration in mobility and infrastructure projects** across the **UAE and other international geographies**, leveraging RITES' consultancy expertise and Etihad Rail's execution capabilities through its subsidiary, **National Infrastructure Construction Company (NICC) LLC**.

Strategic Collaboration Focus

- **Key Objectives**:
  - Combine **RITES' five decades of experience** in railway and transport infrastructure consultancy with **NICC's construction and project execution strengths**.
  - Jointly pursue opportunities in **rail, urban transit, and integrated mobility solutions** in the UAE and beyond.
  - Support **India–UAE strategic infrastructure partnerships**, aligning with broader bilateral initiatives like the **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)**.
- **RITES Videsh Initiative**:
  - This MoU marks a significant step under **RITES Videsh**, the company's strategy to expand its **global footprint** and export India's railway engineering and planning expertise.
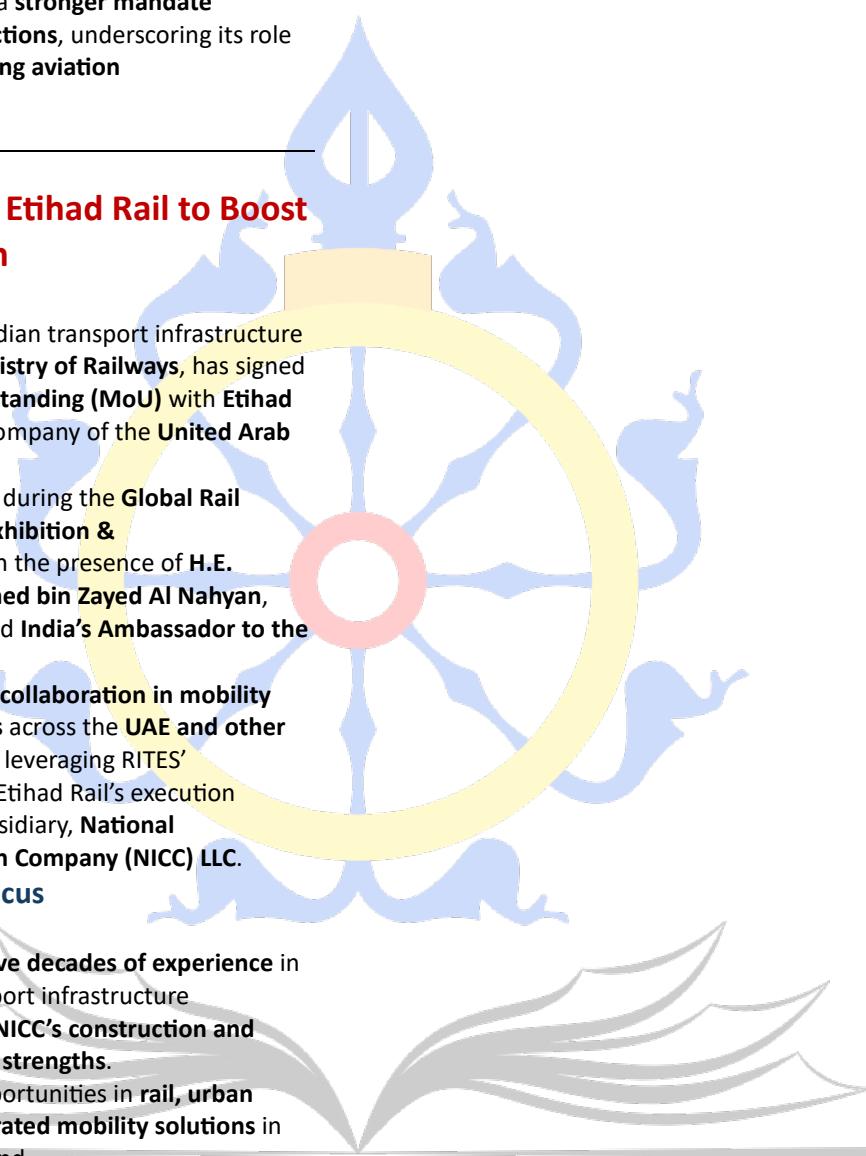
International

Singapore Tops Asia as Safest Country in 2025; India Trails at 115th Globally

What's the News?

- The **Global Peace Index (GPI) 2025**, now in its 19th edition, identifies **Singapore** as the safest country in Asia and sixth globally.
- The index, assessing **163 countries** on metrics like safety, conflict, and militarisation, highlights Singapore's high stability, low crime, and strong governance. In contrast, **India ranks 115th** globally, indicating ongoing challenges in domestic security and peace.

Safest in Asia

- **Singapore** leads Asia's safety rankings with a GPI score of **1.357**, securing **6th place globally**. Its improved score from the previous year underscores effective public safety systems, low crime, and political stability.
- Other top Asian countries in GPI 2025:
  - **Japan** (2nd in Asia) – score **1.440**
  - **Malaysia** – score **1.469**
  - **Bhutan** – score **1.536**
  - **Mongolia**, **Vietnam**, **Taiwan**, **South Korea**, **Timor-Leste**, **Laos** also feature within the top ten safest in Asia.

Tariffs Disrupt Global Trade Norms, WTO Warns

What's the News?

- The **World Trade Organization (WTO)** has flagged an "unprecedented" disruption in global trade norms. The share of global trade executed under the **Most Favoured Nation (MFN)** framework has slipped from roughly 80 % to 72 %, marking the most severe disruption in eight decades. The slowdown may intensify into 2026 as pre-stockpiled inventories deplete.
- The WTO has modestly raised its global trade growth forecast from 0.2 % to 0.9 %, but cautions on future uncertainty. The head of the WTO underlined that predictability—a core principle of the global trade regime—is under threat.

Global Trade Shock

- **Disrupted MFN usage**: Drop to 72 %, breach in equality of treatment among WTO members.
- **Growth forecast revised**: From 0.2 % to 0.9 %.
- **Delayed tariff impact**: Front-loaded demand may mask true effects until 2026.

White House reverses WTO funding cut after backlash

What's the News?

- **White House** removed the **World Trade Organization (WTO)** from a publicly posted list of proposed foreign-aid cuts worth **$4.9 billion** after strong pushback from lawmakers and trade groups.
- The initial list cited **$29 million** in WTO funding as an example of programs inconsistent with the administration's priorities. The WTO reference was later deleted from the White House webpage.

Why the Reversal?

- The initial announcement of funding cuts for the WTO drew criticism from various parties:
  - **Legal Challenge**: Democratic lawmakers argued that the unilateral cuts were illegal, as the funding had been authorized by **Congress**. A federal judge had already ruled that the administration's attempt to cut other foreign aid was unlawful.
  - **Geopolitical Concerns**: US trade groups, such as the National Foreign Trade Council, warned that withdrawing US funding from the WTO would create a vacuum, allowing other countries, particularly **China**, to increase their influence and set global trade rules.
  - **Diplomatic Engagement**: The Director-General of the WTO, **Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala**, was working with the US Trade Representative's office to resolve the issue.

Nepal Blocks Major Social Media Platforms Citing Non-Compliance

What's the News?

- The Government of Nepal has **blocked access to 26 major social media platforms**—including **Facebook**, **Instagram**, **WhatsApp**, **YouTube**, **X (formerly Twitter)**, and **LinkedIn**—for failing to register with the **Ministry of Communications and Information Technology**, as mandated by a Supreme Court directive.
- Platforms that complied—**TikTok, Viber**, **WeTalk**, **Nimbuzz**, and **Poppo Live**—remain operational.
- The government cited non-compliance with requirements such as establishing a local liaison office, a grievance redressal mechanism, and self-regulation frameworks.
- Critics warn the move may undermine **freedom of expression**, while authorities frame it as necessary to curb **misinformation, cybercrime**, and protect **social harmony**.

Justice Directive & Regulatory Trigger

- The action follows a **Supreme Court order (Case No. 080-8-0012)** requiring online platforms to register and comply with Nepal's **Directive on Regulating the Use of Social Media, 2080**.
- The directive demands that platforms:
  - **Register with the Ministry**
  - Appoint a **local contact/compliance officer**
  - Set up a mechanism for **grievance redressal**

- Platforms refusing compliance were instructed to be **deactivated immediately** by the **Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA)**.

Undersea Cable Cuts in Red Sea Disrupt Global Internet

- Several major **undersea internet cables** in the **Red Sea** have been cut, causing significant internet disruptions and increased latency in parts of Asia and the Middle East, including **India** and **Pakistan**.
- The affected cables include the **South East Asia–Middle East–Western Europe 4 (SMW4)**, which is run by **Tata Communications**, and the **India-Middle East-Western Europe (IMEWE)**.
- While the exact cause remains unconfirmed, initial analysis suggests the damage was likely caused by commercial shipping activity, specifically a dragged ship anchor. Repairs could take weeks to complete.

Impact and Response

- **Affected Regions**:
  - **India and Pakistan**: Experienced degraded internet connectivity, particularly during peak hours.
  - **Saudi Arabia and UAE**: Users on state-owned networks (e.g., Etisalat and Du) reported slower speeds and intermittent access.
  - **Kuwait**: Confirmed disruptions due to cuts in the FALCON GCX cable.
- **Technical Impact**:
  - **Increased Latency**: Microsoft Azure users faced higher latency due to rerouted traffic through longer paths.
  - **Economic Costs**: Enterprises reliant on cloud services (e.g., e-commerce, logistics) experienced slower applications, potential revenue losses, and higher operational costs.
- **Repair Challenges**:
  - Repairs could take **weeks** due to the geopolitical sensitivity of the Red Sea region and the scarcity of specialized repair ships.
  - The **Bab el-Mandeb Strait**, a critical chokepoint, hosts **15 submarine cables** carrying ~17% of global internet traffic, making it highly vulnerable.

Nepal PM Oli Resigns Amid Gen Z-Led Anti-Corruption Protests

What's the News?

- Nepal's Prime Minister **K. P. Sharma Oli** resigned amid violent, youth-driven protests against political corruption and a controversial social media ban. Demonstrators, especially from Generation Z, mobilized via platforms like TikTok and Viber after Facebook and others were blocked, leading to at least **19 fatalities**.
- Protests escalated rapidly, resulting in **arson attacks** on buildings including the **parliament**, **Supreme Court**, and homes of top leaders; the **army** took control of security, and the **airport** was shut down.

The 'Gen Z' Protests and Political Instability

- The protests, dubbed the "**Gen Z protests**," highlight a deep-seated frustration among Nepali youth with the political elite.
- Demonstrators defied curfews and torched government buildings, including the Parliament, and the private residences of several high-ranking politicians, including Oli's.
- The protests were fueled by a perception of widespread corruption and the luxurious lifestyles of politicians' families in a nation where a large portion of the population lives in poverty.
- The political crisis has left Nepal's future uncertain, with calls for the dissolution of the Parliament and the formation of a new government.
- The situation marks the most significant political upheaval in Nepal since the end of its monarchy in 2008.

Posthumous Honour for U.S. Activist Charlie Kirk

What's the News?

- U.S. President Donald Trump has announced that he will posthumously award the **Presidential Medal of Freedom to Charlie Kirk**, a prominent American conservative activist and author who was killed while speaking at a college event in Utah.
- Leaders worldwide, including India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, have condemned the killing and expressed condolences.
- The incident has drawn attention to the escalating issue of political violence in the United States.

The Presidential Medal of Freedom

- The **Presidential Medal of Freedom** is the highest civilian honour in the United States.
- It is awarded by the President to individuals who have made "an especially meritorious contribution to the security or national interests of the United States, world peace, cultural or other significant public or private endeavours."
- The medal was established by President **John F. Kennedy** in **1963**, superseding the Medal of Freedom which was created by President Harry S. Truman in 1945 to honor meritorious service during World War II.

Poland Bans Drone Flights Amid Russian Airspace Violations

What's the News?

- The United Nations Security Council is scheduled to hold an emergency meeting at Poland's request to address multiple violations of its airspace by Russian drones.
- The incidents, which occurred in the wake of Russia's recent attacks on western Ukraine, prompted Poland to restrict drone and small aircraft flights along its eastern border with Ukraine and Belarus.

- The Polish government considers the incursion a deliberate provocation and has also invoked **Article 4** of the **NATO** treaty to consult with allies.

The Drone Incursion

- Polish authorities reported at least **19 Russian drone violations** of its airspace, with some being shot down by Polish and Dutch fighter jets.
- The drones were reportedly a mix of kamikaze and decoy models, with some fragments found deep inside Polish territory, raising concerns about the security of NATO's eastern flank.
- While Russia has denied targeting Polish territory, claiming the drones were aimed at military-industrial sites in Ukraine, Poland and several other NATO members believe the incident was a deliberate test of NATO's air defenses.

Russia-China Energy Deal: Power of Siberia 2 & Supply Expansion

What's the News?

- Russia and China have signed a binding memorandum to build the **Power of Siberia 2** pipeline, sending Russian natural gas through Mongolia to China.
- They also agreed to **increase gas supply volumes** via existing pipelines: Power of Siberia capacity rising from 38 to 44 billion cubic metres/year; Far Eastern route from 10 to 12 bcm/year.

Power of Siberia 2: Strategic Implications

- **Geopolitical Significance**:
  - PoS2 is viewed as a **strategic response to Western sanctions** and a signal of Russia's "pivot to Asia." It aligns with efforts by Russia, China, and India to challenge the Western-dominated global order.
  - The timing coincides with **U.S. efforts to broker peace in Ukraine** and ongoing U.S.-China trade tensions, highlighting its role as a geopolitical tool.
- **Economic and Market Impact**:
  - If completed, PoS2 could reduce China's reliance on **liquefied natural gas (LNG)** imports, particularly from the U.S. and Australia, potentially destabilizing global LNG markets.
  - However, **China's leverage** in negotiations may force Russia to accept steep discounts and unfavorable terms, limiting Russia's financial gains.

Nepal Appoints First Woman Interim PM, Prepares for Elections

What's the News?

- Nepal's President **Ram Chandra Poudel** dissolved parliament. Fresh elections are scheduled for **March 5, 2026**.

- **Sushila Karki**, former Chief Justice of Nepal, has been appointed as **interim Prime Minister**. She is the country's **first woman** to hold this office.
- The move follows week-long protests led by younger generations ("Gen Z"), triggered by a social media ban and wider discontent over corruption and elite dominance. At least **51 deaths** and over **1,300 injuries** were reported.

The Interim Government and Political Turmoil

- **Background**: The political crisis erupted after a government-imposed social media ban triggered a wave of nationwide protests. The unrest quickly evolved into a broader anti-graft and anti-establishment movement, culminating in the resignation of the incumbent government.
- **Interim Leadership**: **Sushila Karki**, a respected anti-corruption figure, was chosen to lead the caretaker government. Her primary mandate is to restore law and order and conduct free and fair elections.
- **Challenges**: The new interim government faces the dual challenge of stabilizing the country after widespread violence and preparing for elections. The dissolution of Parliament has drawn criticism from major political parties who have termed the move "unconstitutional."

UN Endorses Two-State Solution for Palestine, Condemns Hamas

- The **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** adopted a resolution endorsing the **New York Declaration**, which calls for concrete, time-bound, irreversible steps toward a **two-state solution** between Israel and Palestine.
- The declaration explicitly **condemns** the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack on Israeli civilians, and also condemns Israeli attacks in Gaza that have led to a major humanitarian crisis.
- Voting outcome: **142** in favour, **10** against, **12** abstentions. India voted in favour.

Implications & Key Details

- **Diplomacy & Governance**
  - The resolution is non-binding but represents strong international consensus.
  - Declares support for a **temporary international stabilization mission** in Gaza and demands an immediate end to war.
- **India's Role & Positioning**
  - By voting in favour, India reiterated its support for a peaceful resolution through diplomacy and endorsed the idea of a sovereign Palestinian state alongside Israel.
  - India's votes on Palestine-related resolutions have alternated in recent years between support and abstention; this marks another instance of active support.
- **Key Provisions of the Resolution**:
  - The declaration condemns the attacks perpetrated by Hamas against civilians.
  - It calls for Hamas to release all hostages and cease its control over the Gaza Strip, urging it

to hand over its weapons to the Palestinian Authority.
- o The resolution also condemns Israel's actions that have led to a humanitarian crisis in Gaza and calls for a unified Palestinian state encompassing both the West Bank and Gaza.
- o It urges countries to formally recognize the state of Palestine as an "essential and indispensable component" of achieving a two-state solution.
- **Significance of the Vote**:
  - o The resolution is seen as a significant diplomatic event, as it marks one of the sharpest condemnations of Hamas ever endorsed by the UN.
  - o The support from a large number of nations, including some Arab countries, is seen as a move to isolate both Hamas and Israel in their opposition to a two-state solution.

Pakistan-Saudi Strategic Defence Pact
What's the News?
- Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed a **Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement (SMDA)** pledging that **any aggression against one country will be treated as aggression against both**.
- The pact describes the arrangement as defensive. Neither country has named a specific adversary or conflict requiring immediate military response.
- Pakistan's Defence Minister **Khawaja Asif** has said that the agreement could be extended to include other Arab nations.

Key Aspects of the Agreement
- **Formalising Cooperation**: The pact institutionalizes the historically close but often informal defence relationship between the two countries.
- **Scope of Collaboration**: Key areas of focus include:
  - o Joint military exercises and training programs.
  - o Enhanced intelligence sharing mechanisms.
  - o Cooperation in the field of defence-industrial production.
- **Mutual Defence Clause**: The agreement includes a provision for joint action in the event of aggression against either state, elevating their security commitments.
- **Strategic Significance**: The move is seen as a response to the shifting geopolitical landscape in West Asia, reinforcing the alliance between the Sunni-majority nations.

UK, Canada, and Australia Formally Recognise State of Palestine
What's the News?
- The **United Kingdom, Canada,** and **Australia** have formally announced their recognition of the **State of Palestine**, marking a significant diplomatic development.

- This coordinated decision comes ahead of a key session at the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** focused on reviving the peace process.
- The move aligns these nations with a growing number of Western countries, including Spain, Ireland, and Norway, who have recently taken similar steps to support a **two-state solution**.

A Shift in Western Policy
This recognition represents a major policy shift for these key allies of the United States, who historically argued that statehood should be the outcome of a negotiated peace settlement with Israel.
- **Significance**:
  - o It aims to grant the **Palestinian Authority** greater international standing and legitimacy.
  - o It increases diplomatic momentum for a **two-state solution**, which has been stalled for years.
  - o The move is seen as a response to growing international frustration with the ongoing conflict and the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

NATO Warns Russia After Estonian Airspace Violation
What's the News?
- On September 19, 2025, three Russian MiG-31 fighter jets violated Estonian airspace over the Gulf of Finland for approximately 12 minutes.
- The aircraft lacked flight plans, had deactivated transponders, and were unresponsive to air traffic control.
- NATO's Italian F-35s, stationed in Estonia as part of the Baltic Air Policing mission, intercepted and escorted the Russian jets out of Estonian airspace.
- Estonia invoked NATO's Article 4, requesting consultations due to perceived security threats.
- In response, NATO condemned the violation, stating it risked miscalculation and endangered lives.
- The alliance emphasized its commitment to collective defense and warned Russia against further escalatory actions.

NATO's Response & Strategic Implications
- **Article 4 Invocation**: Estonia's request marks only the ninth invocation of Article 4 in NATO's 76-year history, highlighting the severity of the incident.
- **Collective Defense Commitment**: NATO reaffirmed its Article 5 commitment, asserting that an attack on one member is an attack on all.
- **Defense Measures**: The alliance pledged to use all necessary military and non-military means to defend against any further breaches of its airspace.
- **Political Reactions**: European leaders, including UK Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper, stated that NATO would confront Russian planes in allied airspace, warning of potential armed clashes.
- **Security Concerns**: The incident follows a series of provocations, including drone incursions in Poland and

airspace violations in Norway and Denmark, raising concerns about NATO's deterrence capacity.

Gallup Global Safety Report 2025

What's the News?

- According to the **Gallup Global Safety Report 2025**, **73% of adults globally** report feeling safe walking alone at night in their communities—the **highest level since tracking began in 2006**.
- Despite ongoing global conflicts and geopolitical tensions, perceived safety has improved notably in **Asia-Pacific, Western Europe, Latin America & the Caribbean, and sub-Saharan Africa**.
- **Singapore** ranks as the safest country for the **12th time**, with **98%** of residents feeling secure, while **South Africa** ranks lowest at **33%**.

Key Findings & Regional Insights

Global Trends

- **Latin America & the Caribbean**: For the first time, **50%** of residents feel safe at night—a significant milestone for a historically high-crime region.
- **Gender Safety Gap**: Globally, **78% of men** vs. **67% of women** feel safe walking alone at night. In over **100 countries**, this gap exceeds **10 percentage points**.
  - **Widest gaps** observed in high-income nations: **USA (84% men vs. 58% women)**, Australia, and several EU countries.

Top and Bottom Performers

- **Top 10 Safest**: Dominated by **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** nations—**Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE**—all reporting **>90%** safety perception.
- **Least Safe**: **South Africa (33%)**, **Lesotho (34%)**, and **Botswana (34%)** remain at the bottom.

Policy Implications

- The report, co-published with **New York University's Center on International Cooperation (CIC)**, emphasizes that **safety is not just absence of violence but presence of trust, strong institutions, and community resilience**.
- Highlights successful local models:
  - **Pelotas & Niterói (Brazil)**: Use **data-driven, cross-sectoral strategies** under the *Peace in Our Cities* network.
  - **South Africa**: Engages **private sector** in national violence prevention initiatives.