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Governance and Policy

Centre Launches Saksham Niveshak Campaign for Dividend Claims and KYC Updates

What's New?

- The **Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA)**, under the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs**, launched a **100-day campaign** named **Saksham Niveshak** to empower shareholders by facilitating the recovery of **unclaimed dividends** and updating **KYC** and **nomination details**.
- The campaign encourages companies to proactively contact shareholders to reclaim dividends and ensure compliance with **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** regulations, preventing the transfer of unclaimed shares to the **IEPF**.
- The initiative aligns with recent amendments to the **Companies Act, 2013**, which mandate transferring unclaimed dividends and shares to the **IEPF** after **seven years**.
- As of 2024, the **IEPF** holds **Rs 7,500 crore** in unclaimed dividends and **4.5 crore shares**, impacting millions of investors, particularly those holding **physical share certificates**.

Saksham Niveshak Campaign

- **Overview:**
 - The **Saksham Niveshak** campaign, launched by the **IEPFA**, aims to enhance **investor protection** and **financial literacy** by resolving **unclaimed dividend** cases and ensuring **KYC compliance**.
 - It targets shareholders who have not updated their **PAN, Aadhaar, or bank details**, or who hold **physical shares**, risking transfer to the **IEPF**.
- **Key objectives:**
 - **Dividend recovery:** Facilitate direct dividend payouts by guiding shareholders to claim **unclaimed amounts** held by companies, with **Rs 1,534 crore** transferred to the **IEPF** by public sector banks alone in 2024.
 - **KYC and nomination updates:** Support investors in updating **KYC details** (e.g., **PAN, Aadhaar, bank accounts**) and adding nominees to prevent share transfers to the **IEPF**.
 - **Dematerialization:** Encourage conversion of **physical share certificates** to **demat accounts**, aligning with **SEBI's mandatory demat policy** for listed companies since 2018.
- **Significance:**
 - The campaign addresses the **9.7 million new investors** added in FY25, per **Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI)** data, ensuring they benefit from **financial inclusion**.
 - It builds on a recent **Department of Posts-AMFI collaboration** to streamline KYC for **24.13 crore mutual fund investors**.

Implications

- **Investor empowerment:** The campaign strengthens **shareholder rights**, reducing financial losses from unclaimed dividends and shares, especially for **small investors** and **senior citizens** unaware of transfer processes.
- **Financial literacy:** Through initiatives like **Niveshak Didi, Niveshak Panchayat, and Niveshak Shivir**, the **IEPFA** promotes awareness, targeting **rural and semi-urban areas** where **digital access** is limited.
- **Challenges:** Reaching **elderly investors**, overcoming **digital literacy barriers**, and ensuring **company compliance** in contacting shareholders, particularly for **defunct firms**.

Additional Info

- **IEPFA:**
 - Established under the **Companies Act, 2013**, the **IEPF Authority** manages unclaimed dividends, shares, and matured debentures, with a **2024 corpus** of **Rs 7,500 crore** and **4.5 crore shares**.
 - It operates under the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs**, with **3,000+ claims** processed annually, per **MCA data**.
- **Campaign specifics:**
 - The **Saksham Niveshak** campaign includes **outreach programs** like investor camps and **online portals** (e.g., **IEPF website**) for **KYC updates**.
 - Companies must notify shareholders at their last known address, with **SEBI** mandating **SMS/email alerts** for unclaimed dividends.
 - Over **1.2 lakh investors** reclaimed dividends in FY24 via similar drives.
- **DoP-AMFI collaboration:** A recent agreement streamlines KYC for **19.04 crore folios** in **Equity, Hybrid, and Solution-Oriented Schemes**, per **AMFI June 2025 data**, benefiting **Asset Management Companies (AMCs)** and reducing compliance costs by **20%**.
- **Investor trends:** India's investor base grew from **4 million** in FY23 to **9.7 million** in FY25, driven by **mutual funds** (Rs 60 lakh crore AUM) and **stock market participation**, per **NSE data**. **Rural investors** account for **30% of new additions**, necessitating campaigns like **Saksham Niveshak**.
- **Policy context:** The **Banking Laws (Amendment) Act, 2025**, aligns PSB unclaimed fund transfers to the **IEPF**, complementing this campaign. The **MCA** aims to reduce unclaimed assets by **50%** by 2030, per its **Vision 2030 plan**.

Government Launches 'Apna Ghar' Resting Facilities for Truck Drivers

What's New?

- The Indian government has introduced the '**Apna Ghar**' initiative, establishing resting facilities for truck drivers along national highways.
- These facilities are increasingly popular among truckers, offering safe and comfortable rest stops during their long hauls.

Apna Ghar Initiative

- **Overview:**
 - The '**Apna Ghar**' initiative seeks to tackle the lack of proper rest areas for truck drivers, a factor contributing to fatigue and road accidents.
- **Key Details:**
 - Located along national highways, these rest stops provide easy access for drivers.
 - The initiative is seeing growing uptake, reflecting its acceptance within the trucking community.
 - Amenities include beds, toilets, and food options, ensuring drivers can recharge effectively.

Election Commission Notifies Schedule for Vice Presidential Election 2025

What's the News?

- The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** has issued the notification for conducting the **Vice Presidential Election 2025** as the current Vice President's term nears completion.
- The election process will be conducted by the **Returning Officer** appointed by the ECI and overseen by the **Rajya Sabha Secretariat**.
- Nomination forms, scrutiny, withdrawals, polling, and counting will be conducted as per the timeline in the notification.

Vice President Election Process

- The **Vice President of India** is elected under **Article 66 of the Constitution** by an **electoral college** consisting of:
 - **Members of both Houses of Parliament** (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha), including nominated members.
 - **Total strength:** 788 MPs (543 Lok Sabha + 245 Rajya Sabha including nominated).
- **Voting is by secret ballot** using the **proportional representation system** via **single transferable vote (STV)**.
- **Tenure:** 5 years; eligible for re-election.
- The **Vice President** is also the **ex-officio Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha**.

Constitutional Significance

- The **Vice President** is the **second-highest constitutional office** in India.

- Functions as **acting President** in case of the President's death, resignation, removal, or absence, until a new President is elected.
- Plays a key role in maintaining **parliamentary decorum** and **legislative balance**, especially in the Rajya Sabha.

Additional Info

Recent Context

- The current Vice President, **Jagdeep Dhankhar**, took office in 2022, and his term is set to conclude in 2025.
- The new Vice President is expected to assume office shortly after the election and counting are concluded.

Legal Provisions

- **Article 63:** There shall be a Vice President of India.
- **Article 66:** Election method for Vice President.
- **Article 67:** Term and removal.
- **Representation of the People Act, 1951** governs the conduct of the election.

Parliament Passes Carriage of Goods by Sea Bill, 2025

What's the News?

- **Parliament has passed the Carriage of Goods by Sea Bill, 2025**, aiming to modernize and align India's maritime cargo laws with international standards.
- The Bill will replace the **Carriage of Goods by Sea Act, 1925**, which is nearly a century old.
- It was introduced by the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways** to enhance legal clarity and facilitate international trade logistics.

What Does the New Bill Address?

The **Carriage of Goods by Sea Bill, 2025** incorporates modern maritime practices and aligns with the **United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Carriage of Goods Wholly or Partly by Sea (Rotterdam Rules)**.

- **Applicability:** Covers contracts for the international carriage of goods wholly or partly by sea, including multimodal transport.
- **Digital Documentation:** Legally recognizes **electronic transport records**, improving transparency and efficiency.
- **Liabilities and Rights:**
 - Clearly defines rights, obligations, and liabilities of **shippers, carriers, and consignees**.
 - Specifies limits on liability and exemptions in case of **force majeure**, delay, or damage.
- **Dispute Resolution:** Introduces provisions for jurisdiction, arbitration, and legal claims, ensuring faster resolution of maritime disputes.
- **Multimodal Integration:** Addresses combined sea and land transport, crucial for improving **supply chain connectivity** and **port logistics**.

Economic & Trade Significance

- Boosts **ease of doing business** in maritime trade by streamlining dispute mechanisms and cargo liability norms.

- Aligns India's legal framework with global standards, enhancing the **credibility of Indian ports and shipping lines**.
- Supports **Sagarmala Programme** and **Maritime India Vision 2030**, which focus on port-led development and modernization.
- Facilitates India's goal of becoming a **global maritime hub** by improving logistics infrastructure and legal certainty.

Additional Info

Rotterdam Rules

- Adopted by the **UN in 2008**, the **Rotterdam Rules** aim to unify international laws governing cargo carriage by sea and other modes.
- India is among several countries seeking to adopt aligned frameworks, though the convention is yet to be widely ratified.

Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways

- Nodal ministry for implementing port modernization and maritime laws in India.
- Oversees flagship schemes like **Sagarmala**, **Major Port Authorities Act**, and **Harit Sagar** initiatives.

Lok Sabha Passes Merchant Shipping (Amendment) Bill, 2025

What's the News?

- The **Lok Sabha has passed the Merchant Shipping (Amendment) Bill, 2025**, seeking to update and streamline India's maritime regulatory framework.
- The passage occurred amid **opposition protests**, though the government emphasized the bill's importance for modernizing the shipping sector.

What Does the Amendment Address?

The **Merchant Shipping Act, 1958**, is the principal legislation governing merchant vessels in India. The 2025 amendment brings structural and regulatory reforms to align with evolving maritime practices.

- **Simplification of Processes:** Eases ship registration, licensing, and certification processes for Indian and foreign vessels operating in Indian waters.
- **Digital Modernization:** Enables **online documentation, electronic records, and e-governance** in shipping regulation and compliance.
- **Safety & Compliance:**
 - Enhances provisions for **maritime safety, seafarer welfare, and pollution control**.
 - Aligns with international safety standards and conventions, including **IMO regulations**.
- **Offshore Vessel Regulation:** Introduces specific norms for regulating **offshore support vessels**, including safety audits and crew certification.
- **Flag-State Control:** Strengthens India's authority over **Indian-flagged ships** operating in international waters.
- **Penalties and Enforcement:** Updates penalties for violations such as unsafe operations, unregistered vessels, and pollution incidents.

Economic & Strategic Significance

- Promotes the growth of **India's maritime economy** and the **blue economy** through investor-friendly norms and operational clarity.
- Supports goals under **Maritime India Vision 2030**, which aims to increase India's share in global shipping and port operations.
- Strengthens **India's compliance with international maritime conventions**, improving the reputation of Indian-registered vessels.

Additional Info

Merchant Shipping Act, 1958

- Governs the registration of ships, the welfare of seafarers, maritime safety, ship mortgages, and liabilities.
- Regularly amended to remain aligned with **IMO guidelines**, such as the **SOLAS, MARPOL**, and **STCW** conventions.

Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways

- Implements national maritime policies and is responsible for merchant shipping, port infrastructure, and maritime safety.
- Leads initiatives such as **Harit Sagar Guidelines**, **Sagarmala**, and **Ship Building Financial Assistance Policy**.

Lok Sabha Clears Manipur GST Amendment Bill 2025

What's the News?

- The **Lok Sabha has passed the Manipur Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2025**, replacing the earlier Ordinance and enabling the state government to levy GST as approved by the **GST Council**. The bill was passed via **voice vote amid Opposition uproar**.

Key Amendments in the Bill

- **Constitutional Remedy:** Finance Minister described the amendment as a **constitutional necessity**, given Manipur was under President's Rule and could not legislate through its assembly.
- **Tax on Undenatured ENA:** Empowers Manipur to levy GST on **undenatured extra neutral alcohol (ENA)** or **rectified spirit** used in manufacturing alcoholic liquor—aligning with a 2023 GST Council recommendation to keep it outside GST's earlier scope.
- **Validation Clauses:** The Bill validates actions taken under lapsed Ordinances and includes retrospective amendments to align with the Central GST Act, including specific provisions such as new sections and exemptions.

Fiscal Significance

- Ensures **Manipur's ability to generate revenue** from previously untaxed ENA, preserving fiscal autonomy and GST alignment.
- Enables implementation of GST reforms approved by the **GST Council**, despite the state legislature being non-functional under President's Rule.

Additional Info

Legislative Background

- The **Manipur GST Amendment Bill, 2025** replaces Ordinances promulgated in **October 2024** and **June 2025** under Article 123, ensuring legal continuity for GST governance.

Constitutional Provisions

- The amendment addresses the state's inability to legislate under Article 356 (President's Rule), necessitating parliamentary intervention to uphold fiscal and legal alignment with national tax policy frameworks.

- Aligns with reform discourse on **democratic integrity, accountability, and systemic transparency.**

Additional Info

- Section 29A, Representation of the People Act, 1951:** Governs party registration and the loss of privileges due to inactivity.
- Process:** Show-cause notices → hearings by state CEOs → submission of reports → ECI final decision.
- Historical context:** Delisting exercises occurred previously three to four times since 2001.
- Policy initiative:** Part of ECI's broader electoral reform strategy to cleanse and modernize the political ecosystem.

ECI Begins Delisting 476 Inactive Political Parties

What's the News?

- The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** has launched the second phase of delisting **476 Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs)** that have failed to contest any election for six consecutive years, since 2019.
- This follows an earlier round where **334 RUPPs** were delisted, reducing the total number from **2,854 to 2,520**.
- Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs)** across states and Union Territories will issue **show-cause notices**, allowing the affected parties to respond before any final decision.

Details of the Delisting Exercise

- The initiative is part of a **systemic cleanup** under **Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951**, which mandates removal of parties that remain inactive for six years.
- Breakdown of RUPPs targeted in Phase 2:
 - Uttar Pradesh:** 121
 - Maharashtra:** 44
 - Tamil Nadu:** 42
 - Delhi:** 41
 - Bihar:** 15 (ahead of state assembly polls)

Legal and Electoral Impact

- RUPPs enjoy **privileges** like **election symbols, tax exemptions, and campaign support** under the Act.
- Delisting strips parties of these benefits. However, they can be reinstated by the ECI without fresh registration.
- Earlier clean-up efforts (since 2022) removed **over 500 inactive or untraceable parties** for issues like bogus addresses or non-response to notices.

Judiciary & Reforms Angle

- The ECI labels it **delisting**, not **derecognition**, to comply with a **Supreme Court** directive preventing unstructured deregistration of parties.
- The action serves to **enhance transparency, minimize misuse, and streamline the political registry.**

Significance: Institutional & Electoral Reform

- Reinforces the principle that **political legitimacy stems from electoral participation.**
- Ensures **efficient use of symbols**, avoids clutter in the party registry, and limits potential for proxy parties or misuse.

Rajya Sabha Clears Bills on Tribal Representation and Maritime Reform

What's the News?

- The **Rajya Sabha** approved two key bills via **voice vote** while the **Opposition staged a walkout**:
 - Readjustment of Representation of Scheduled Tribes in Assembly Constituencies of the State of Goa Bill, 2025**
 - Merchant Shipping Bill, 2025.**

Goa ST Representation Bill

- Seeks to reserve **four seats** out of **40** in the Goa Legislative Assembly for the **Scheduled Tribes (ST)** under **Article 332** of the Constitution.
- ST population in Goa rose from **566 (2001)** to over **1.5 lakh (2011)**. Despite this, no prior Assembly seats were reserved. The bill aims to correct this discrepancy.
- Experts caution:** actual implementation may be delayed until **2032 or later**, pending the next **delimitation exercise** (post-2026 census), likely around **2031**.

Merchant Shipping Bill, 2025

- Aims to **consolidate and amend** the legal framework regulating merchant shipping.
- Aligns India's **maritime laws** with its **obligations under international treaties**, promoting development and efficiency in the **Indian mercantile marine**.

Significance: Institutional and Policy Implications

- Democratic Inclusion:** The Goa ST Representation Bill addresses long-standing under-representation, ensuring tribal participation in state governance.
- Legal-Operational Hurdle:** Implementation lag until delimitation highlights structural constraints in translating legislation into practice.
- International Compliance & Industry Efficiency:** The Merchant Shipping Bill reinforces India's maritime governance, aligning domestic regulations with global norms—supporting trade facilitation and strategic autonomy.

Additional Info

- Opposition's Walkout:** Members demanded debate on revisions to Bihar's electoral rolls (SIR). The boycott allowed the bills to pass without contest.
- Constitutional Basis:**
 - Article 332:** Reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in state assemblies.

- **Delimitation:** Required before moderating or creating reserved constituencies.
- **Maritime Legal Framework:** Merchant Shipping legislation is central to regulating trade routes, shipping standards, and maritime safety protocols.

Revised Income Tax Bill 2025: Legislature Advances Modern Tax Framework

What's the News?

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman introduced a revised **Income-Tax (No. 2) Bill, 2025** after withdrawing the earlier February draft. The updated version integrates **285+ recommendations** from a Parliamentary Select Committee chaired by MP Baijayant Panda.
- The **Lok Sabha** passed this Bill, along with the **Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2025**, via voice votes, despite opposition protests over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of Bihar's electoral rolls.
- The **Rajya Sabha** subsequently approved the Income-Tax Bill by voice vote and returned it to the Lok Sabha. Finance Minister criticized the absence of debate, calling it a failure of democratic process.
- The new Income-Tax Bill will **replace** the outdated Income-Tax Act, 1961, marking a major legal overhaul.

What Is the New Tax Architecture?

- **Core reforms:**
 - Simplified language, reduced sections (from over 800 to 536), unified terminology (e.g., "Tax Year" replaces "Assessment Year"/"Previous Year").
 - Streamlined deductions: clarified standard deduction for house property and pre-construction interest, full deduction on commuted pension.
 - Introduced "trust first, scrutinise later" to reduce litigation.
- **Tax administration enhancements:**
 - Digital-first, faceless assessments.
 - Updated definitions: capital asset, micro and small enterprises, beneficial owner.
- **Provision of Taxation Laws Amendment Bill:**
 - Extends parity of exemptions to Unified Pension Scheme subscribers.
 - Clarifies tax treatment for foreign investment under Section 10(23FE).
 - Reforms related to block assessments during search operations.
- **Timeline:**
 - Tabled and passed by **Lok Sabha** on **August 11, 2025**.
 - Approved by **Rajya Sabha** on **August 12, 2025**.
 - Set to take effect from **April 1, 2026**.

Significance: Fiscal, Institutional, Governance Impact

- **Legal Modernization:** Replaces a six-decade-old tax act with a concise, transparent, and taxpayer-friendly law.

- **Administrative Efficiency:** Digital and faceless systems aim to reduce human interface, improve compliance, and curb litigation.
- **Broader Taxpayer Relief:**
 - Revised tax architecture simplifies filing and benefits middle-income groups and MSMEs.
- **Democratic Process Concerns:** Passage without debate undercuts legislative deliberation. FM Sitharaman publicly decried the absence of Opposition engagement.

Additional Info

- **Legislative Process:**
 - Original Bill introduced in February 2025.
 - Select Committee reported on July 21.
 - Withdrawn on August 8; replaced by revised draft on August 11.
- **Money Bill Status:**
 - As a Money Bill, it originated in Lok Sabha.
 - Rajya Sabha can only recommend amendments; final decision rests with Lok Sabha.

National Sports Governance and Anti-Doping Reforms Take Shape

What's the News?

The **Lok Sabha** passed the **National Sports Governance Bill, 2025** and the **National Anti-Doping (Amendment) Bill, 2025**, amidst intense opposition protests and slogan-shouting during sessions. Both laws were approved via **voice vote**. The **Rajya Sabha** followed suit, granting approval the next day, marking them as passed by Parliament.

What Is the National Sports Governance Bill?

- Establishes a **National Sports Board** to regulate and recognise **National Sports Federations (NSFs)**, including autonomous entities like **BCCI**.
- Enforces compliance with the **Olympic and Paralympic Charters** and international governance standards.
- Introduces a **National Sports Tribunal** (with powers akin to a civil court), for disputes over athlete selection and federation governance; decisions appealable only to the **Supreme Court**.
- Creates a **Sports Election Panel** to oversee fair elections in sports bodies.
- Includes executive committee guidelines: max **15 members**, with at least **two sportspersons** and **four women**; relaxes term limits for federation office-holders.

What Is the Anti-Doping (Amendment) Bill?

- Removes supervisory control of the **National Board for Anti-Doping in Sports** over **NADA**, ensuring **operational independence** in line with **WADA** standards.
- Empowers the **Central Government** to form the **Appeal Panel**, replacing the former board-controlled mechanism.
- Limits appeals to the **Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS)** for select entities only.

- Mandates use of **WADA-accredited labs** and adopts **WADA's definitions** into Indian law.

Significance: Sports as an Institutional Domain

Governance & Accountability

This is the **first time India has codified sports governance**. The reforms aim to dismantle opaque, ad-hoc systems by instituting a **legal, transparent, and athlete-centric framework**—a foundation for professionalisation and performance. PT Usha, in Rajya Sabha, described the Bill as ending decades of stagnation.

Clean Sports & Compliance

Aligning with global anti-doping norms enhances India's **credibility on the world stage**, crucial for international competitions and potential Olympics bid.

Institutional Oversight

The centralised setup has raised concerns over excessive control. Critics argue it could undermine **federation autonomy**—notably, the **BCCI** gets specific, preferential mention.

Additional Info

- **Implementation Pending:** Both bills await **presidential assent** and a gazette notification before becoming law.
- **2036 Olympic Bid:** Both reforms are aligned to strengthen India's sporting infrastructure ahead of hosting ambitions for the **2036 Olympics**.

Nation-wide Digital Life Certificate Campaign 4.0 Launched for Pensioners

What's the News?

- The Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare (DoPPW) is launching the **fourth National Digital Life Certificate (DLC) Campaign**, running **1–30 November 2025**.
- This is the **largest initiative to date**, aiming to issue **two crore DLCs** via camps in over **1,850 districts**, cities, and towns at around **2,500 locations**.
- The previous campaign in November 2024 covered 845 cities and achieved **1.62 crore submissions**.

Campaign Overview

- **Objective:** Ensure uninterrupted pension disbursement by enabling secure, digital submission of life certificates using **face-authentication technology**.
- **Scale & Reach:**
 - Over **1,850 districts**, cities, and towns
 - About **2,500 camp sites**
 - Target: **2 crore DLCs**
 - Comparable figures: 2024's 1.62 crore DLCs across 845 cities
- **Collaborating Entities:** Includes **Pension Disbursing Banks**, India Post Payments Bank (IPPB), Pensioners' Welfare Associations, CGDA, DoT, Railways, Department of Posts, EPFO, UIDAI, and MeitY.
- **Key Implementation Features:**
 - **IPPB:** Set up camps at **1,600 post offices** and provide doorstep services via a network of **1.8 lakh postmen and Gramin Dak Sewaks**.
 - **Banks:** 19 pension-disbursing banks will run camps in **315 cities** across **over 900 locations**.

- **Pensioners' Welfare Associations (57)** will mobilize participation.
- Other departments hosting DLC camps include **Railways, Defence (CGDA), DoT, DoP, and EPFO**.

Geographical Distribution:

- Highest number of locations in **Uttar Pradesh (170)**, followed by **Madhya Pradesh (127)**, **Bihar (114)**, **Odisha (110)**, **Maharashtra (106)**. Featured states also include West Bengal, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Assam, Telangana, and more.

Implementation Blueprint:

- Detailed guidelines issued via an **Office Memorandum dated 30 July 2025**.
- Includes campaign coordination, nodal officer nominations, technical infrastructure via a dedicated **DLC portal**, training requirements, and a multimedia awareness strategy.

Policy Significance

Administrative Efficiency & Social Security:

- Streamlines **pensioners' access to benefits** and strengthens timely pension disbursement through secure digital verification.
- Aligns with government's larger push for **digital inclusion and public service delivery** under schemes like **Digital India**.

Inclusivity & Outreach:

- Focus on **remote and underserved regions** ensures equitable access.
- **Doorstep delivery** and large-scale camp infrastructure reduce mobility barriers for elderly pensioners.

Interagency Coordination:

- Collaboration across sectors (banks, defence, telecom, posts) demonstrates unified governance.
- Use of **face-authentication** and central tracking of progress through **MeitY** and **UIDAI** enables transparency and real-time monitoring.

Additional Info

- **Pre-campaign Phase (Aug–Oct 2025):** Nodal officer training, stakeholder coordination, and pre-launch media/public awareness.
- **Super-senior Pensioners (80+):** Special provision allows DLC submission in **October 2025** to ensure uninterrupted pensions.
- **Communication Strategy:** Involves **PIB, DD, AIR, print ads**, field outreach, SMS reminders, and local media for awareness.

NPG Clears Seven Infrastructure Projects Under PM Gati Shakti

What's the News?

- The **Network Planning Group (NPG)** under the **PM Gati Shakti** framework reviewed and cleared **seven infrastructure projects** across **railways, road transport, logistics, and textiles**. The action ensures alignment with integrated planning principles and last-mile connectivity.

Projects Overview

Railways: Capacity Augmentation

- **Bakhtiyarpur–Fatuha (Bihar):** Construction of a third and fourth line (24.156 km) as part of multitracking along the Kiul–Patna–Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Junction corridor. Aids freight, agriculture, industry (cement, power, textiles), and tourism hubs.
- **Tambaram–Chengalpattu (Tamil Nadu):** Fourth line (30.021 km) to manage rising passenger and freight demand, supporting sectors like cement, steel, thermal power, and agriculture.
- **Dongargarh–Gondia (Chhattisgarh–Maharashtra):** Fourth line (84.10 km) along the “Energy Corridor” to decongest Gondia Junction and streamline bulk freight movement.
- **Enhancements:** All expansions include station upgrades and accessibility improvements.

Road: Highway Improvement

- **NH-39 Widening (Madhya Pradesh):** Upgrade of 54.2 km stretch between Rewa, Churhat Tunnel, and Sidhi. Strengthens freight corridor for cement and coal industries in Singrauli and integration with national highway network.

Logistics: Multi-Modal Facility

- **MMLP, Hyderabad (Telangana):** Development of a multi-modal logistics park over 315 acres in Parkibanda village. Handling capacity: 1.47 MMT/year by 2028; upgradable to ~19.98 MMT by 2070. Strategically linked to NH-44, Manoharabad Railway Station, and future ring-road corridors.

Textiles: PM MITRA Parks

- **Madhya Pradesh PM MITRA Park:** Located within the Delhi–Mumbai Industrial Corridor zone. Offers integrated textile value chain infrastructure, promotes employment and regional development.
- **Virudhunagar PM MITRA Park (Tamil Nadu):** Spread across 1,052 acres. Features plug-and-play units, CETP, STP, training centres and social infrastructure. Aims to boost export competitiveness and local employment.

Additional Info

- **NPG Role:** A multi-modal overseer under PM Gati Shakti ensuring projects meet blueprint for integration, last-mile connectivity, and synchronized development.
- **Broader Context:** PM Gati Shakti aims to create a geospatial planning platform, unify ministries, and support India’s infrastructure vision. Over 293 projects worth ₹13.59 lakh crore have been evaluated to date.

to enhance affordability for women, farmers, students and lower-income groups.

- The proposal retains special rates for a few select items but aims to eliminate many inverted duty structures (cases where input tax > output tax) to encourage domestic manufacturing.
- **Fiscal context:** With the compensation cess ended, GST collections in 2024-25 reached a record ₹22.08 lakh crore (up 9.4%). Simplifying GST is expected to maintain revenue while supporting economic growth.

GST Reform Details

- **Tax Slabs:** Under the plan, the **standard slab** would cover most goods and services, while the **merit slab** applies to essentials and socially important items. This dual-slab approach seeks to eliminate most special rates and confusion over classification.
- **Affordability & Demand:** Lower taxes on everyday items aim to boost consumption and lower costs for households. The reform targets inclusivity by reducing the tax burden on essentials, which could stimulate demand and support sectors like agriculture and basic manufacturing.
- **Inverted Duty Correction:** By aligning input and output tax rates, the reform would reduce the buildup of input tax credits. Manufacturers currently burdened with excess input taxes would benefit, improving cash flow and encouraging ‘Make in India’ initiatives.
- **Compliance and Tech:** The plan envisions tech-driven GST processes – simplified registration, pre-filled returns, faster automated refunds (especially for exporters and those affected by inverted duties). Clear, stable rates and policies are expected to cut litigation and build business confidence.
- **Long-Term Outlook:** The government aims to provide stable, predictable tax rates and reduce frequent rate changes. This stability, along with the broader formal economy growth, should help sustain or even increase revenue post-simplification.

Economic Significance

- Simplifying GST to two slabs will likely make compliance easier for businesses and reduce tax disputes, addressing a long-standing demand of industry. Predictable rates enhance the ease of doing business.
- The shift towards a merit slab for essentials can lower the cost of living for many citizens, aiding those on lower incomes. This could have a stimulative effect on the economy.
- Eliminating inverted duty structures supports domestic manufacturing by reducing the tax burden on inputs. This aligns with India’s push for **Atmanirbhar Bharat** (self-reliant economy).
- **Fiscal impact:** With higher tax buoyancy from formalisation, the government can afford lower rates on essentials without major revenue loss. The reform may complement other fiscal policies to sustain growth.

Additional Info:

- GST in India was introduced in 2017 (Article 279A mandates a Council).

Two-Slab GST Reform Proposed

What’s the News?

- The Centre has proposed a **two-tier Goods and Services Tax (GST)** system, replacing the current four tax slabs (5%, 12%, 18%, 28%) with just two: a **standard slab** and a **merit slab**.
- A Group of Ministers (GoM) is reviewing this recommendation as part of “next-generation GST reforms” promised before Diwali 2025.
- Objectives include reducing complexity, giving tax relief to the common man, and boosting small businesses. Essential goods would fall under the lower “merit” slab

- The original four-slab structure was criticized for complexity. Frequent updates and exceptions have led to many cases of tax credits piling up.
- A two-slab system has been recommended by various committees and is a key reform promised in the 2024 Budget.
- The GoM includes Union and state finance ministers who must agree to change GST law and rates.

Parliament Passes Amendment to Boost Critical Mineral Production

What's the News?

- Parliament passed the **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2025**, in both Houses via voice vote. Lok Sabha cleared it earlier; Rajya Sabha followed.
- The Bill aims to modernise the 1957 Act, focusing on **critical and strategic minerals**, including lithium, cobalt, graphite, nickel, gold, and silver.
- Key provisions include:
 - Leaseholders may add critical minerals to existing leases **without extra payment**.
 - The **National Mineral Exploration Trust** is renamed **National Mineral Exploration and Development Trust**, expanded to fund exploration and development **within India and overseas**. Contribution raised from 2% to **3% of royalty**.
 - The **50% sales cap** on minerals produced from **captive mines** is removed. Leaseholders can sell **full production** once end-use needs are met.
 - Allows **one-time extension** of leased area for **deep-seated minerals** (defined as >200 m deep): up to **30%** for composite licences; **10%** for mining leases.
 - Introduces provisions for a **mineral exchange**—a regulated electronic trading platform for minerals and metals.

Economic Significance

- Enhances **domestic production** of critical minerals, reducing import dependence across high-tech and strategic sectors.
- Expanded trust mandate and increased royalties bolster **funding for exploration** and capacity development, including overseas operations.
- Removing sales restrictions on captive mines improves **commercial viability** and encourages private investment.
- Mineral exchange lays foundation for **transparent price discovery** and regulated trade.
- State revenues from mining have surged—from ₹68,000 crore to ₹6.85 lakh crore—indicating growing fiscal significance.

Additional Info

- The Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha on **11 August 2025** and passed on **12 August 2025**.
- Includes minerals essential to **renewable energy, electric vehicles, energy storage, and defence**

technologies; aligned with the **National Critical Mineral Mission**.

- Government plans exploration in **Zambia, Australia, Argentina**, with **production of lithium** expected from Argentina starting next year.
- Bill includes provisions for auditing of **District Mineral Foundation** funds to improve utilisation.

Union Cabinet Approves ₹8,307-Crore Bhubaneswar Ring Road Project

What's the News?

- Union Cabinet (CCEA) cleared the construction of a **6-lane access-controlled Capital Region Ring Road** (Bhubaneswar Bypass) in Odisha.
- Project cost: **₹8,307.74 crore**.
- Route length: **110.875 km** between Rameshwar and Tangi.
- Developed under **Hybrid Annuity Mode (HAM)**.

Project Details & Context

- Objective: Bypass congested stretch of **NH-16**, part of the Golden Quadrilateral, passing through **Khordha, Bhubaneswar, and Cuttack**. Improves freight movement efficiency and trims logistics cost.
- HAM model: Government funds **40% during construction**; **60% is repaid over 15–20 years** as annuity; tolls remain government's responsibility.
- Connectivity: Integrates with **NH-55, NH-57, NH-655, and SH-65**. Links 10 economic nodes, 4 social nodes, 5 logistics nodes, **Bhubaneswar Airport, Khurda Road railway station, proposed Multi-Modal Logistics Park (MMLP, Paradip)**, and ports like **Puri and Astarang**.
- Employment: Estimated **74.43 lakh person-days of direct** and **93.04 lakh indirect** employment.
- Completion timeline: Approximately **2.5 years**.

Additional Info

- Cost break-up (where available): Civil works approx. ₹4,686.74 cr; land acquisition approx. ₹1,029.43 cr.
- NH-16 connects Kolkata and Chennai; heavy congestion on this coastal corridor necessitated the bypass.

Supreme Court Counsels Judicial Restraint in Invalidating Elections

What's the News?

- The Supreme Court ruled that minor omissions—such as non-disclosure of income or assets by a candidate—should not automatically nullify election results unless the omissions are **material and substantial**.
- The Court rejected a “highly pedantic” or “fastidious” approach to invalidating elections, urging courts to respect the **popular mandate**.
- The ruling reaffirmed that only defects capable of influencing the result warrant judicial intervention.

Substantiality in Disclosure?

- **Context:** Election petition challenging the election of Kova Laxmi in Telangana Assembly polls, citing nondisclosure of income in Form 26 for multiple financial years.

- **Key details:**
 - Bench of Justices Surya Kant and N. Kotiswar Singh upheld the Telangana HC's earlier dismissal of the petition.
 - Clarification: Disclosure obligations are meant for transparency, not automatic disqualification.
 - Materiality is case-specific. Only omissions with potential to affect the election's outcome justify invalidation.

Legal Significance

- **Electoral Integrity vs. Popular Mandate:** Establishes that procedural lapses should not override voters' choice.
- **Clarity on Affidavit Standards:** Distinguishes between core issues (e.g., criminal antecedents, corrupt practices) and ancillary omissions (e.g., minor asset details), applying stricter scrutiny only to the former.

Additional Info

- **Relevant law:** Affidavit requirements under the **Representation of the People Act, 1951**; Form 26 obligations.
- **Judicial doctrine:** Avoids misuse of technical violations to overturn legitimate mandates.
- **Historical context:** Affirms judicial deference to democratic principles, promoting stability in electoral outcomes.
- **Related:** Contrasts with precedents where substantial electoral offences (e.g., corrupt practices, criminal concealment) did lead to invalidation.

eliminated **duplicate EPIC numbers**; fast-tracked EPIC delivery to **15 days with SMS alerts**.

- **Ease of Voting:** Capped voters per polling station at **1,200**; introduced **mobile deposit facilities**; improved clarity on voter slips; adjusted candidate booth positioning beyond **100 meters**.
- **Capacity Building:** Issued photo ID cards to **Booth Level Officers (BLOs)**; implemented **EVM microcontroller verification SOP**; increased BLO remuneration; trained over **7,000 officials** via **IIIDEM**, including special sessions for police and party agents.

Additional Info

- **Legal alignment:** Stakeholder role mapping aligns with the **Constitution of India, Representation of the People Acts (1950 & 1951)**, and related laws and rules.
- **Continuity:** Builds on earlier ECI reforms—e.g., 18 initiatives for Bihar polls—and now expanded nationwide.
- **Constitutional purpose:** Moves reflect ECI's mandate under **Article 324** to conduct free and fair elections.

Lok Sabha Clears Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025

What's the News?

- **Lok Sabha** passed the **Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025**, to promote e-sports and online social games while prohibiting online money games.
- The law targets service providers, advertisers, promoters and financial facilitators rather than individual players.
- The Bill prescribes criminal and financial penalties for offences and empowers authorised officers with investigatory and seizure powers.

Regulatory Design

- **Objective**
 - Promote legitimate e-sports, educational and social gaming ecosystems.
 - Prevent harms from **online money gaming** including addiction, fraud, money-laundering and threats to public order.
- **Key provisions**
 - **Prohibition:** Offering, operating, facilitating or promoting **online money games** is forbidden.
 - **Penalties:** Offences may attract imprisonment up to **3 years** and/or fines up to **₹1 crore**; advertising violations carry separate penalties and enhanced sanctions for repeats.
 - **Liability focus:** Legal action targets platforms, advertisers, promoters and financial intermediaries; players are not criminalised for participation.
 - **Financial interdiction:** Banks and payment service providers are barred from facilitating transactions for prohibited games.
 - **Enforcement powers:** Authorised officers may search, seize digital and physical assets and take coercive action in specified cases.

Election Commission Rolls Out 28 Initiatives to Strengthen Electoral System

What's the News?

- The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** launched **28 major initiatives** in the past six months to enhance transparency, efficiency, and inclusivity in elections.
- The reforms span six key areas: **stakeholder engagement, electoral system cleanup, technology adoption, electoral roll integrity, voter convenience, and capacity building**.

Key Refined Initiatives

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Held **4,719 all-party meetings** engaging over **28,000 political representatives**, plus **20 high-level party leadership interactions**.
- **Electoral System Cleanup:** Delisted **334 inactive RUPPs**; identified **476 more** for delisting.
- **Technology Adoption:**
 - Launched **ECINET**, a unified digital platform integrating **over 40 apps** for voters, officials, and parties.
 - Introduced **100% polling station webcasting, real-time turnout updates, and mandatory VVPAT counts** when mismatches occur.
- **Electoral Roll Integrity:** Conducted special revisions, including **SIR in Bihar** and by-election roll updates in four states; **linked death registration data**;

- **Regulatory body:** Centre may constitute an **Authority** to coordinate policy, oversight and sectoral development.

Additional Info

- **Legal and constitutional context**
 - **Legislative domain:** **Betting and gambling** appear in **Entry 34, State List** of the **Seventh Schedule**. This makes traditional gambling a **State subject**; the Bill asserts Centre's interest by framing online money games as a national problem requiring a uniform legal framework.
 - **Centre-State tension:** Central legislation on matters touching State List invites questions on **parliamentary competence, public order, financial system integrity**, and potential judicial review.
- **Policy and institutional links**
 - **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology** is the nodal Ministry for the Bill's introduction and framing.
 - **Authority** under the Bill will handle policy coordination, regulation, promotion of e-sports and oversight of compliance.
- **Enforcement and safeguards**
 - **Players:** explicitly not criminalised; emphasis on protecting **youth** and vulnerable groups.
 - **Financial safeguards:** restrictions on financial intermediaries aim to cut off payment rails used by prohibited platforms.

- **Scope of amendment:** proposed changes to **Articles 75, 164, and 239AA** to operationalise removal across Centre, States, and Union Territories.

Significance

- **Instrumental** attempt to tie constitutional morality to criminal accountability while keeping removal a political-constitutional act rather than a judicial conviction trigger.

Additional Info

- **Legal text and procedure**
 - **Amendment target:** **Articles 75, 164, 239AA** to create vacancy rules for Prime Minister, Chief Ministers, and ministers of Union Territories.
 - **Reference:** bills referred to a **Joint Parliamentary Committee** for examination prior to further debate.
- **Institutional roles**
 - **President:** formal removal of the **Prime Minister** on prescribed advice or lapse.
 - **Governor / Lieutenant Governor:** formal removal of **Chief Ministers** under the amended scheme.
- **Practical and governance points**
 - **Enforcement trade-offs:** balancing swift accountability against risks of political misuse and administrative instability.
 - **Reappointment safeguard:** allows restoration on release, moderating permanence of the removal trigger.
 - **Political contestation:** Opposition protests and floor debate expected during committee scrutiny.

Bills to Remove PM/CMs/Ministers Arrested on Serious Charges

What's the News?

- **Union Home Minister Amit Shah** introduced three bills in **Lok Sabha**, including the **Constitution (One Hundred and Thirtieth Amendment) Bill, 2025**, proposing automatic vacancy of office if a sitting **Prime Minister, Chief Minister, or Union Minister** is arrested and detained for **30 consecutive days** on an offence punishable with **5 years or more**.
- The bills were referred to a **Joint Parliamentary Committee** after introduction.
- The amendment allows **reappointment** after release and places removal powers with the **President, Governors, or Lieutenant Governors** acting on prescribed advice or lapse rules.

Constitutional Mechanism & Rationale

- **Objective**
 - **Restore public trust** in executive office by creating a statutory trigger for vacancy when ministers are detained on serious charges.
- **Key design features**
 - **Trigger:** detention for **30 consecutive days** for offences with imprisonment ceiling ≥ 5 years.
 - **Automatic vacancy:** office ceases if removal advice is not tendered by the relevant authority within the prescribed window.
 - **Reappointment:** permitted on release from custody.

Press Sewa Portal Launched to Simplify Newspaper & Periodical Registration

What's the News?

- **Press Registrar General** launched the **Press Sewa** portal as a single-window digital system to simplify registration and compliance for newspapers and periodicals.
- The portal moves core processes online to speed approvals, increase transparency and reduce intermediaries for publishers.

Portal Design & Purpose

- **Objective**
 - **Ease of doing business** for publishers and faster clearance of registration and intimation filings.
- **Key features**
 - **Online applications** for periodical registration with **Aadhaar-based e-KYC** and credentialed logins.
 - **Dashboard for Specified Authorities** to record comments and no-objection responses.
 - **IT helpdesk** and onboarding training for state authorities and publishers.

- **Centralised portal**
URL: presssewa.prgi.gov.in for filings and status tracking.

Additional Info

- **Legal & institutional context**
 - **Statutory anchor:** implementation under the **Press & Registration of Periodicals Act, 2023** and administered by the **Press Registrar General of India (PRGI)**.
 - **Administrative link:** PRGI functions under the **Ministry of Information & Broadcasting**.
- **Operational architecture**
 - **User types**
 - **Publishers:** create accounts, submit registration/intimation, track status.
 - **Specified Authorities (DPA/DM level):** receive and record local comments via a dedicated dashboard.
 - **Support systems**
 - **IT helpdesk** for technical issues.
 - **Training modules** for onboarding state officers and publishers.

- **Electoral College:** It consists of all members (both elected and nominated) of the **Lok Sabha** and the **Rajya Sabha**.
- **Election Method:** The election is held in accordance with the system of **proportional representation** by means of a **single transferable vote**, and the voting is by **secret ballot**.
- **Eligibility Criteria:** A candidate must be:
 - A citizen of India.
 - At least 35 years of age.
 - Qualified for election as a member of the **Rajya Sabha**.

- **Election Commission of India (ECI)**
 - **Constitutional Body:** The ECI is an autonomous constitutional authority established under **Article 324** of the Constitution.
 - **Function:** It is responsible for administering all election processes for the offices of the President and Vice-President, as well as for the Parliament and State Legislatures.

ECI Appoints Observers for Vice-Presidential Election

What's the News?

- The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** has appointed two senior civil servants as **observers** for the upcoming **Vice-Presidential election**.
- These officers, holding ranks equivalent to **Additional Secretary** or **Joint Secretary** in the Government of India, will oversee the entire election process.
- Their primary role is to ensure the arrangements for polling and counting of votes are conducted in a free and fair manner.
- The **Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha** has been designated as the **Returning Officer** for this election.

Role of Election Observers?

- **Mandate:** Observers are appointed by the **ECI** to act as its eyes and ears on the ground, ensuring that the Commission's rules and regulations are strictly followed.
- **Responsibilities:** They are tasked with overseeing all aspects of the election process at the place of the poll, which for the Vice-Presidential election is the **Parliament House**.
- **Significance:** Their presence helps in building confidence among stakeholders and ensures the impartiality and transparency of the electoral process. They report directly to the **ECI** on the conduct of the election.

Additional Info

- **Election of the Vice-President**
 - **Constitutional Provision:** **Article 66** of the Constitution of India lays down the manner of election of the Vice-President.

Parliament Monsoon Session: 15 Bills Cleared; Contentious Reforms Advance

What's the News?

- **Event:** The **Monsoon Session of Parliament** was adjourned sine die after both Houses cleared **15 bills** amid repeated disruptions and opposition protests.
- **Immediate impact:** Passage of major legislative items on **taxation**, **sports governance**, **online gaming**, and **ports & shipping**. Several high-profile reform bills were referred to committees for further scrutiny.
- **Parliamentary dynamics:** Sessions were marked by sustained opposition agitation. Parliamentary productivity was low with significant loss of debate hours.

Legislative Takeaways

- **Key bills passed by both Houses**
 - **Income-tax (No. 2) Bill, 2025** — reintroduced and cleared after earlier withdrawal and Select Committee review.
 - **National Sports Governance Bill, 2025** — establishes a unified framework for sports governance, athlete welfare and dispute resolution.
 - **Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025** — creates a regulatory authority for the online gaming sector, covers e-sports, educational and social gaming.
 - **Ports & Shipping package** — five bills including **Bills of Lading Bill**, **Carriage of Goods by Sea Bill**, **Coastal Shipping Bill**, **Merchant Shipping Bill** and **Indian Ports Bill** to overhaul maritime commercial law and logistics governance.
- **Bills sent for detailed scrutiny**
 - **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2025** and **Jan Vishwas**

(Amendment) Bill, 2025 referred to Select Committee.

- **Constitution (One Hundred and Thirtieth Amendment) Bill, 2025, Government of Union Territories (Amendment) Bill, 2025, and J&K Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2025** referred to Joint Committee; proposed changes include provisions on removal of ministers facing serious criminal charges.

• Other actions

- Parliament approved continuation of **President's Rule in Manipur** under constitutional provisions.

Additional Info

• Key Parliamentary Terminology

- **Adjournment:** A temporary suspension of the sitting of a House. The time for reassembly is specified.
- **Adjournment Sine Die:**
 - Literally means "without assigning a day for a further meeting."
 - It signifies the termination of a sitting of Parliament for an indefinite period.
 - The power to adjourn the House *sine die* lies with the presiding officer (**Speaker** in Lok Sabha, **Chairman** in Rajya Sabha).
- **Prorogation:**
 - This formally terminates a *session* of the House, not just a sitting.
 - It is done by the **President of India** on the advice of the Council of Ministers, as per **Article 85(2)(a)** of the Constitution.
 - Prorogation brings a session to an end; any pending bills do not lapse, but pending notices do.

• Sessions of the Indian Parliament

- **Constitutional Mandate: Article 85** of the Constitution mandates that the President shall summon each House of Parliament to meet at such time and place as they think fit. However, the interval between the last sitting of one session and the first sitting of the next session cannot exceed six months.
- **Parliamentary Conventions:** While not constitutionally mandated, the Parliament conventionally holds three sessions in a year:
 - **Budget Session:** Held from January/February to May, this is the longest and most significant session.
 - **Monsoon Session:** Typically held from July to September.
 - **Winter Session:** Held from November to December.

NITI Aayog Recommends Model Homestay Policy

What's the News?

- The **NITI Aayog** has released a report titled "**Rethinking Homestays: Navigating Policy Pathways**", which recommends a model policy framework for the homestay sector.
- The report, prepared in collaboration with industry stakeholders, addresses the lack of uniform regulations and aims to streamline the ecosystem to promote sustainable and inclusive tourism across India.

Model Homestay Policy?

- **Overview:** The policy seeks to standardize fragmented state-level regulations, simplify registration processes, and create an inclusive framework for **homestays** and **Bed and Breakfast (BnB)** establishments.
- **Key Objectives:**
 - **Boost Tourism Infrastructure:** Address the estimated shortage of **200,000 hotel rooms** by promoting homestays as a low-cost, scalable alternative.
 - **Generate Employment:** Enhance livelihoods in rural areas, support women and youth entrepreneurs, and promote community-based tourism.
 - **Preserve Cultural Heritage:** Offer travelers "culturally immersive experiences" while protecting local traditions.
- **Major Recommendations:**
 - **Digital Portal:** Establish a centralized platform for registration, renewals, and compliance management with application timelines capped at **30 days**.
 - **Financial Incentives:** Shift focus from individual amenities to **destination-level incentives** (e.g., Tier-I and Tier-II classifications for regions) to promote underserved areas.
 - **Utility Classification:** Treat homestays as residential units for utilities (water, electricity, taxes) to reduce operational costs.
 - **Capacity Building:** Provide training for hosts and integrate digital platforms to enhance consumer trust.

Additional Info

- **NITI Aayog:**
 - **Formation:** Established in 2015 via a resolution of the Union Cabinet.
 - **Role:** It replaced the Planning Commission and serves as the premier policy "Think Tank" of the Government of India.
 - **Function:** Provides directional and policy inputs to the central and state governments. It fosters **cooperative federalism** by involving states in national policymaking.
- **Homestay Model:**
 - It offers tourists an immersive cultural experience by staying in the home of a local family.
 - This model helps address the shortage of traditional hotel rooms and promotes local

entrepreneurship, especially in rural and semi-urban areas.

- It supports **community-based tourism** and provides livelihoods to people in remote locations.
- **Ministry of Tourism Initiatives:**
 - The Ministry of Tourism has a voluntary scheme for the approval and classification of Bed and Breakfast (B&B) / Homestay establishments to standardize services.
 - The **"Incredible India"** brand is a key initiative to promote India as a global tourism destination.

integrated planning and coordinated implementation of infrastructure connectivity projects. The objective is to facilitate multi-modal connectivity and last-mile connectivity, reducing logistics costs.

- **Indian Railways (IR):**
 - It is the fourth largest rail network in the world by size.
 - IR is a statutory body under the ownership of the Ministry of Railways, Government of India.
 - The first railway line in India was opened in 1853, connecting Mumbai (then Bombay) to Thane.
- **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** The projects align with India's commitment to climate action by reducing reliance on oil imports and cutting carbon emissions.
 - **SDG 9:** Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure (Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation).
 - **SDG 13:** Climate Action (Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts).

Cabinet Approves ₹12,328 Crore Railway Projects

What's the News?

The Union Cabinet approved four railway projects totaling **₹12,328 crore** to enhance connectivity, boost tourism, and improve freight movement across Gujarat, Karnataka, Telangana, Bihar, and Assam. These projects will add **565 km** to the Indian Railways network, benefiting over **47 lakh people** and generating significant employment during construction.

Railway Expansion Projects

Overview

The projects align with the **PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan** and focus on multi-modal connectivity, logistics efficiency, and reducing supply chain costs. They include:

- A **new rail line** in Gujarat's Kutch region.
- **Multi-tracking and doubling** efforts on congested routes in Karnataka, Telangana, Bihar, and Assam.

Key Details

- **Gujarat's Kutch New Line:**
 - **Cost:** ₹2,526 crore.
 - **Scope:** 145 route km connecting Deshalpar–Hajipir–Luna and Vayor–Lakhpur.
 - **Impact:** Will facilitate transportation of salt, cement, coal, and boost tourism by linking sites like **Dholavira** (Harappan site), Koteswar Temple, and Lakhpur Fort. Expected to benefit **866 villages** and **16 lakh people**.
- **Multi-Tracking Projects:**
 - **Secunderabad (Sanathnagar)–Wadi** (173 km, ₹5,012 crore).
 - **Bhagalpur–Jamalpur** (53 km, ₹1,156 crore).
 - **Furkating–New Tinsukia** (194 km, ₹3,634 crore).
 - **Timeline:** Completion in 3–5 years.
- **Freight and Environmental Benefits:**
 - Augment capacity for transporting coal, cement, fertilizers, and petroleum products.
 - Expected to add **68 MTPA** of freight traffic.
 - Reduce **oil imports by 56 crore litres** and cut **CO₂ emissions by 360 crore kg** (equivalent to planting 14 crore trees).

Additional Info

- **PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan:** Launched in 2021, it is a digital platform to bring 16 ministries, including Railways and Roadways, together for

President Appoints Two New Judges to Supreme Court Amid Collegium Dissent

What's the News?

- The President of India appointed **Justice Alok Aradhe** (Chief Justice of Bombay High Court) and **Justice Vipul Manubhai Pancholi** (Chief Justice of Patna High Court) as judges of the **Supreme Court of India**.
- The appointments restore the Court's full sanctioned strength of **34 judges**. However, the elevation of Justice Pancholi faced dissent from **Justice B.V. Nagarathna**, the sole woman member of the **SC Collegium**, citing issues of seniority, regional representation, and unresolved concerns related to his past transfer.

Collegium Decision and Dissent

Overview

- The **Supreme Court Collegium**, led by **Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai**, recommended the elevations on August 25, 2025, which were approved by the President within two days.
- While Justice Aradhe's appointment was uncontested, Justice Pancholi's recommendation was approved via a **4–1 majority**, with Justice Nagarathna dissenting.

Key Details

- **Justice Alok Aradhe:**
 - **Background:** Former Chief Justice of Bombay High Court, enrolled as advocate (1988), specialized in civil and constitutional law. Served across **Madhya Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, and Telangana High Courts**.
 - **Significance:** Brings extensive judicial experience from multiple jurisdictions.
- **Justice Vipul Pancholi:**
 - **Background:** Former Chief Justice of Patna High Court, began practice in Gujarat High

Court (1991). Elevated as Gujarat HC judge (2014) and transferred to Patna HC (2023).

- **Future Role:** Slated to become **Chief Justice of India in October 2031** for an 18-month tenure.
- **Controversy:**
 - Justice Nagarathna opposed Justice Pancholi's elevation due to:
 - **Low Seniority:** Ranks **57th** in all-India seniority list of HC judges.
 - **Regional Imbalance:** Elevation adds a **third judge from Gujarat HC**, neglecting representation from other regions (e.g., Eastern states).
 - **Integrity Concerns:** His 2023 transfer from Gujarat to Patna HC followed allegations of judicial impropriety, though an inquiry cleared him.
 - The Collegium's resolution did not publicly disclose the dissent or provide reasons for overriding it.

Additional Info

- **Collegium System:**
 - A self-appointment mechanism for judiciary, established via **Three Judges Cases (1981–1998)**.
 - Headed by CJI and four senior-most SC judges.
 - Criticized for lack of transparency and accountability.
- **Constitutional Provisions:** The appointment of Supreme Court judges is governed by **Article 124(2)** of the Constitution of India. This article states that every judge of the Supreme Court shall be appointed by the President after consultation with such judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts as the President may deem necessary.
- **Supreme Court Strength:** The Constitution initially provided for a Supreme Court with a Chief Justice and seven other judges. Parliament, however, has the power to increase this number. The sanctioned strength of the Supreme Court is currently **34 judges** (including the Chief Justice of India).
- **Qualifications:** To be appointed as a Supreme Court judge, a person must be a citizen of India and either:
 - Have been a judge of a High Court for at least five years.
 - Have been an advocate of a High Court for at least ten years.
 - Be, in the opinion of the President, a distinguished jurist.

- Designed to enhance financial inclusion, support livelihood, and boost digital adoption for street vendors.

PM SVANidhi Relunched

- **Beneficiaries:** Covers approximately **1.15 crore street vendors**, including **50 lakh new entrants**.
- **Loan Structure Revised:**
 - **1st tranche:** Raised to ₹15,000 (from ₹10,000)
 - **2nd tranche:** Raised to ₹25,000 (from ₹20,000)
 - **3rd tranche:** Remains ₹50,000
- **New UPI-linked RuPay Credit Card:** Issued to vendors who repay the second loan promptly, offering enhanced credit access.
- **Digital Cashback Incentives:** Vendors can earn up to **₹1,600 cashback** on digital retail and wholesale transactions.
- **Geographic Expansion:** Scheme now to cover **census towns** and **peri-urban areas**, beyond statutory towns, through phased rollout.
- **Capacity Building:** Includes modules on entrepreneurship, financial literacy, digital skills, marketing. Food vendors receive hygiene and food safety training via **FSSAI**.
- **SVANidhi se Samridhi Integration:** Monthly **Lok Kalyan Melas** to connect vendors and their families with welfare schemes.
- Implementation led jointly by **Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA)** and **Department of Financial Services (DFS)**.

Additional Info

- **PM SVANidhi Scheme:** It is a central sector scheme launched by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)** in 2020 to provide affordable working capital loans to street vendors to help them resume their livelihoods, which were adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Implementation:** The scheme is jointly implemented by MoHUA and the Department of Financial Services (DFS). The Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) is the national-level nodal implementing agency.
- **Objectives:** The scheme is designed to:
 - Facilitate collateral-free working capital loans.
 - Promote digital payments and financial literacy among street vendors.
 - Formalize the urban street vending sector and integrate them into the formal economy.
- **'SVANidhi se Samridhi':** This component of the scheme focuses on the holistic development of street vendors and their families by linking them to various government welfare schemes.

Cabinet Extends PM SVANidhi Scheme Till 2030

What's the News?

- Union Cabinet approved extension and restructuring of **PM SVANidhi (Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi)** scheme.
- Lending period extended from December 2024 to **March 31, 2030**, backed by an outlay of **₹7,332 crore**.

Supreme Court: Commercial Speech by Influencers Not Protected as Fundamental Right

What's the News?

- **Five influencers**, including **Samay Raina**, were directed by the **Supreme Court** to publish **unconditional**

apologies after remarks targeting persons with disabilities.

- The Bench of Justices Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi observed that **commercial speech** and **prohibited speech** do not attract the protection of **fundamental rights** and indicated possible **penal action** and monetary penalties to be considered.
- The Court asked the **Centre** to consult stakeholders and frame **guidelines** for influencer content, including inputs from the **News Broadcasters & Digital Association (NBDA)** and the **Attorney General**.

Scope — Regulation, Accountability and Legal Basis

- **Objective**
 - Clarify limits of **free speech** where content is **commercially motivated** or **harmful** to vulnerable groups.
- **Key points**
 - **Commercial speech** distinguished from protected political or artistic expression.
 - Court signalled need for **proportionate punishment** and **accountability** to prevent recurring harm.
 - Government asked to prepare **draft guidelines** for public consultation rather than impose a knee-jerk gag.

Additional Info

- **Article 19 of the Constitution:**
 - **Article 19(1)(a)** guarantees all citizens the right to freedom of speech and expression.
 - This right is not absolute and is subject to reasonable restrictions under **Article 19(2)**.
- **Reasonable Restrictions:** Article 19(2) allows the State to impose restrictions on the right to freedom of speech and expression on grounds of:
 - Sovereignty and integrity of India
 - Security of the State
 - Friendly relations with foreign states
 - Public order
 - Decency or morality
 - Contempt of court
 - Defamation
 - Incitement to an offense
- **Previous Landmark Judgments on Commercial Speech:**
 - **Tata Press v. Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd. (1995):** The Supreme Court held that '**commercial speech**' is a part of freedom of speech and expression. However, it also noted that misleading or deceptive advertisements do not enjoy this protection. This current ruling builds upon that precedent by explicitly linking commercial speech with prohibited content, which then removes its fundamental right protection.

Wealth of Chief Ministers (2025) — ADR Report Highlights

What's the News?

- The **Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR)** and **National Election Watch (NEW)** released their 2025 report analyzing the **declared assets** of India's Chief Ministers.
- **Top wealth: N. Chandrababu Naidu** (Andhra Pradesh) leads with over ₹931 crore.
- **Second: Pema Khandu** (Arunachal Pradesh) with ~₹332 crore.
- **Third: Siddaramaiah** (Karnataka) with ~₹51 crore.
- **At the bottom: Mamata Banerjee** (West Bengal) with just ₹15.38 lakh and no immovable property.

Key Data & Context

- **Public wealth distribution:**
 - Two CMs (~7%) are "billionaires" in rupee terms.
 - Combined assets of **30 Chief Ministers:** ~₹1,632 crore, average ~₹54.4 crore each.
- **Additional notable figures:**
 - **Neiphiu Rio** (Nagaland): ~₹46.95 crore.
 - **Dr. Mohan Yadav** (Madhya Pradesh): ~₹42 crore.
 - **N. Rangasamy** (Puducherry): ~₹38 crore.
 - **Anumula Revanth Reddy** (Telangana): ~₹30 crore.

Additional Info

- **Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR):**
 - An Indian non-governmental organization (NGO) established in 1999.
 - It works for electoral and political reforms in India.
 - ADR's mission is to enhance political accountability by providing voters with information about candidates' backgrounds, including criminal records, assets, liabilities, and educational qualifications.
- **Electoral Affidavits:**
 - As per the directions of the Supreme Court and the **Election Commission of India (ECI)**, all candidates contesting elections are required to file a sworn affidavit (in **Form 26**) along with their nomination papers.
 - This affidavit mandates the disclosure of details about the candidate's criminal cases, assets, liabilities, and educational background.
 - The information in these affidavits is self-sworn, and any false declaration can lead to legal action.
- **Relevant Constitutional & Legal Provisions:**
 - The requirement to disclose assets and liabilities is a result of Supreme Court judgments that upheld the **voter's right to know** about their candidates.
 - This right is considered part of the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression under **Article 19(1)(a)** of the Indian Constitution.
 - The **Representation of the People Act, 1951** provides the legal framework for the

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conduct of elections and includes provisions related to candidate nominations and disqualifications.

Schools to Facilitate Aadhaar Biometric Updates for Children (5–15 Years)

What's the News?

- **UIDAI**, in collaboration with the **Ministry of Education**, has directed schools to organise **Mandatory Biometric Update (MBU)** camps for children aged **5 and 15 years**, to complete outstanding Aadhaar biometric updates. The directive covers about **17 crore** pending updates.

Mandatory Biometric Update (MBU) Initiative

- **Objective:** Ensure accurate biometric data (photograph, fingerprints, iris) for children whose physiological features change with age. Updates are mandatory at **ages 5 and 15** to maintain Aadhaar validity and enable seamless authentication for services.
- **Key Mechanisms:**
 - **UDISE+ Integration:** Schools can now access real-time data on pending MBUs via the UDISE+ portal, streamlining targeted interventions.
 - **School-Led Camps:** States and UTs are organizing camps to facilitate updates, reducing last-minute rushes during exam registrations or scheme applications.
- **Cost Structure:**
 - Free of charge for children aged **5–7 years** (first MBU) and **15–17 years** (second MBU).
 - ₹100 fee (increasing to ₹120 from September 2025) for updates after these age windows.

Additional Info

- **UIDAI**
 - A statutory authority established in 2016 under the provisions of the **Aadhaar Act, 2016**.
 - It falls under the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**.
 - Its primary role is to issue **Aadhaar**, a 12-digit unique identification number, to all residents of India.
- **Aadhaar Act, 2016**
 - The Act provides for the targeted delivery of subsidies, benefits, and services, the expenditure for which is borne by the Consolidated Fund of India.
 - It gives a legal basis to the **Aadhaar** project and lays down the framework for its use and data protection.
- **Baal Aadhaar**
 - A blue-colored **Aadhaar card** issued to children below five years of age.
 - It is generated based on a photograph of the child and the demographic and biometric data of a parent or legal guardian. The child's own biometric data is not captured at this stage.

Centre Urges States to Accelerate Urban Cleanliness Drive

What's the News?

- The **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)** has urged states and Union Territories to intensify their efforts to clean up neglected urban areas.
- The initiative is part of the **Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U) 2.0**.
- The ministry emphasized the need for a time-bound strategy to achieve visible cleanliness and transform over 8 lakh "Cleanliness Target Units" (CTUs), which include challenging urban spots like legacy dumpsites.
- States are encouraged to use aggressive monitoring, regular reviews, and citizen participation via the **Swachhata App** to achieve these goals.

Cleanliness Target Units (CTUs)

- **Overview:** CTUs are identified urban spots (e.g., garbage dumps, polluted areas) targeted for transformation under SBM-U 2.0. Over **8 lakh CTUs** were remediated during the 2024 Swachhata Hi Seva campaign, with a renewed focus on challenging sites like legacy waste dumps.
- **Key Objectives:**
 - Ensure **visible cleanliness** and beautification of degraded urban areas.
 - Prevent re-accumulation of waste through reclaimed public spaces.
 - Leverage technology (e.g., **Swachhata App**) for citizen reporting and monitoring.
- **Implementation Framework:**
 - **Time-bound clearance:** States must adopt aggressive reviews and deadlines.
 - **Stakeholder collaboration:** Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) to partner with PSUs, private firms, NGOs, and CSR initiatives for resource mobilization.
 - **Citizen engagement:** Use of the Swachhata App (with **2 crore users**) for reporting CTUs, auto-assigning complaints to ward officials, and resolving issues within **7 days**.

Additional Info

- **Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM):**
 - The original mission was launched in 2014 with two sub-missions:
 - **Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin (SBM-G):** Implemented by the **Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation**.
 - **Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U):** Implemented by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs**.
 - Its primary objective was to achieve an "Open Defecation Free" (ODF) India.
- **Related Initiatives:**
 - **Gobar-Dhan Scheme:** A part of the SBM-G, it focuses on managing cattle and biodegradable waste and converting it into compost and bio-CNG.
 - **Swachh Survekshan:** An annual cleanliness survey conducted by MoHUA that ranks cities

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and towns based on sanitation and cleanliness parameters.

- **Constitutional Provision:**

- The 74th Amendment Act, 1992, gave constitutional status to Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).

- The Twelfth Schedule of the Constitution, introduced by this amendment, lists the functions of municipalities, including public health, sanitation, conservancy, and solid waste management.



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Social Issues

Telangana Police Rescue Over 7,600 Children in Operation Muskaan XI

What's New?

- The **Telangana police**, spearheaded by the **Women Safety Wing**, executed **Operation Muskaan XI**, rescuing **7,678 children** from exploitation, including child labor and trafficking.
- The operation led to **1,713 cases** being registered, **1,718 individuals** arrested, and a **Rs 47.76 lakh fine** imposed on employers.
- Immediate impacts include the reunification of thousands of children with their families and enrollment of many in schools.

Operation Muskaan XI: Child Protection Initiative

- Overview:**
 - Operation Muskaan XI**, a **Ministry of Home Affairs** initiative, aims to combat child exploitation by rescuing children from labor, trafficking, and begging, while ensuring their rehabilitation.
- Key details:**
 - Rescued children:** 7,678 (7,149 boys, 529 girls)
 - Origin:** 3,787 from other states (e.g., Odisha, Bihar, Rajasthan) and Nepal
 - Exploitation types:** 6,718 child laborers, 357 street children, 42 beggars, 2 bonded laborers, 559 others
 - Legal outcomes:** 1,713 cases, 1,718 arrests, Rs 47.76 lakh fine
- Objective:**
 - To enforce child protection laws and dismantle exploitation networks through coordinated efforts with NGOs and government agencies.

Social and Policy Significance

- Reinforces India's commitment to **child rights** under the **Juvenile Justice Act, 2015** and **Child Labour Act, 1986**, addressing systemic issues like inter-state trafficking.
- Highlights the role of **multi-agency collaboration** in governance, setting a precedent for state-level child welfare interventions.
- Emphasizes rehabilitation and education as tools to break the cycle of poverty and exploitation, aligning with **SDG 4 (Quality Education)** and **SDG 8 (Decent Work)**.

Additional Info

- Rehabilitation:** 6,593 children reunited with families, 1,049 placed in rescue homes, and 2,600 enrolled in schools.
- Methodology:** Involved **121 police teams** with **786 officers**, targeting high-risk areas like railway stations and construction sites.
- Scale:** In Hyderabad, 1,247 children rescued and 55 FIRs filed; Rachakonda commissionerate rescued 2,479 children.
- Policy context:** Builds on prior operations like **Operation Smile**, reflecting sustained efforts against child exploitation.

- Legal framework:** Actions supported by the **Minimum Wages Act** and **Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976**.

Tap-Water Access Exceeds 81 % in Rural India; Groundwater Levels Improve in 83 Blocks

What's the News?

- Under the **Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)**, over **15.68 crore** out of **19.36 crore** rural households now have **tap-water connections**, corresponding to an **81 % coverage** rate. At the mission's launch, only **17 %** of rural households had connections.
- Simultaneously, **groundwater levels** have improved in **83 identified blocks**, part of the **Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABY)** interventions.

Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM): Scaling Rural Tap Water

- Objective:** Provide **functional tap-water connections (FHTCs)** to all rural households through cost-sharing, targeting **55 litres per capita per day**.
- Funding Model:** Central grants disbursed "**Just in Time**" in two instalments per year, each further split based on utilization.
- Monitoring Mechanisms:** Use of **Aadhaar-linked data, geo-tagging, third-party inspections**, and **IoT-based meters**. Assessment found:
 - 86 %** households have **working tap connections**
 - 85 %** receive **adequate quantity**
 - 80 %** enjoy **regular supply**
 - 87 %** get **quality water**

Atal Bhujal Yojana: Recharging Groundwater

- Scope:** ABY targets **8,203 water-stressed gram panchayats** across **229 blocks** in seven states, with a total outlay of **₹6,000 crore**.
- Approach:** Performance-based and participatory. Includes **public data access** via Atal Jal Portal, **state steering committees, third-party audits**, and monitoring by the **Controller General of Accounts**.
- Outcome:** **83 blocks** have shown rising groundwater levels to date.

Significance: Rural Infrastructure & Water Security

- Public-Health & Quality of Life:** High tap-water coverage enhances **safe drinking water access**, reducing dependency on unreliable sources.
- Institutional Efficacy:** Integrates **technology (IoT, geo-tagging)** and **governance (in-time funding, community monitoring)** for execution transparency.
- Resource Sustainability:** Groundwater improvement signals positive outcomes from demand-management practices and participatory recharge efforts.

Additional Info

- JJM Launch:** Initiated in **August 2019** as a redesign of the **National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP)**.

- **Coverage Start:** Only **3.23 crore (17 %)** rural households had pipe-water access at the outset.
- **Monitoring Practice:** JJM measures service parameters closely; ABY tracks groundwater with transparency and audit mechanisms.

Centre Prioritises Humane Stray Dog Management via Expanded ABC Programme

What's the News?

- The central government reaffirms that the **Animal Birth Control (ABC)** programme is the sole approved method for managing stray dog populations—no culling or relocation.
- Civic bodies must **capture, sterilise, vaccinate**, then return stray dogs to their original locations.
- New scheme revisions include financial support of **₹800 per sterilised dog, ₹600 per cat, and ₹2 crore grants** for veterinary infrastructure via **AWBI**. Local bodies are urged to ensure sterilisation coverage of at least **70% of stray dogs**.

Policy Details

- **Objective:** Promote a **humane, science-based** approach aligning stray animal control with **animal welfare** and **public health** priorities.
- **Implementation framework:**
 - Enforced under the **ABC Rules, 2023**, enacted pursuant to the **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960**.
 - Local bodies are designated primary implementers. Financial incentives and infrastructure upgrades support scaled-up sterilisation campaigns.
 - Advisory mandates, issued by multiple secretaries, stress achieving **70% coverage** in sterilisation efforts.

Significance

- **Public health:** Sustained sterilisation and vaccination reduce stray dog population growth and **rabies risk**.
- **Animal welfare:** Avoids inhumane methods like culling or relocation; supports WHO-recommended **Capture–Neuter–Vaccinate–Release (CNVR)** model.
- **Governance:** Pushes for institutional accountability and resource allocation at local levels, aligning public health with welfare responsibilities.

Additional Info

- **Historical context:** The ABC model evolved as a preferred humane strategy after courts and welfare groups opposed lethal control methods.
- **Budget framework:** ₹800/dog, ₹600/cat reimbursements; ₹2 crore grant for facility upgrades.
- **International standard:** CNVR approach aligns with guidelines from the **World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH)**.
- **Stakeholders:** Involves **AWBI**, urban and rural **local bodies**, veterinary institutions, and **animal welfare NGOs** under a coordinated implementation model.

Bhubaneswar to Host National Conference on SC/ST Welfare

What's the News?

- Bhubaneswar will host the **National Conference of Chairpersons of Committees on Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes**.
- This marks the first time the conference is held **outside New Delhi**.
- Lok Sabha Speaker **Om Birla** will inaugurate the event, featuring an exhibition and souvenir release.

Role of Parliamentary and Legislature Committees in Welfare of SCs & STs

- **Scope and Theme:** "Role of Parliamentary and Legislature Committees in Welfare, Development and Empowerment of SCs and STs".
- **Goals:**
 - Strengthen **constitutional safeguards**
 - Enhance **socio-economic development**
 - Enable **accountability** in welfare policy implementation
 - Share **best practices** across states and union territories
 - Align with vision of **Viksit Bharat by 2047**

Additional Info

- **Constitutional Provisions for SCs and STs:**
 - **Article 15(4):** Enables the state to make special provisions for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes, including SCs and STs.
 - **Article 17:** Abolishes "Untouchability" and forbids its practice in any form.
 - **Article 46:** Mandates that the state shall promote, with special care, the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections, particularly SCs and STs, and protect them from social injustice and exploitation.
 - **Article 330 & Article 332:** Provide for the reservation of seats for SCs and STs in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, respectively.
 - **Article 338 & Article 338A:** Deal with the **National Commission for Scheduled Castes** and the **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes**, respectively, which are constitutional bodies to safeguard their interests.
- **Key Government Initiatives:**
 - **Scheduled Castes Sub Plan (SCSP) and Tribal Sub Plan (TSP):** Strategies to ensure a targeted flow of funds and benefits from various government departments to SC and ST communities.
 - **Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAGY):** An initiative for the integrated development of villages with a significant SC population.
 - **Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme:** A major educational intervention for SC students, aiming to reduce dropout rates and promote higher education.

NARI 2025 — Mumbai & Kohima among safest; Delhi, Patna among least safe

What's the News?

- **National Annual Report & Index on Women's Safety (NARI 2025)** benchmarks women's safety in **31 cities** using a survey of **12,770 women** and a composite scoring method.
- **Findings:** national safety score ~ **65%**; about **60%** of women report feeling safe in their city while **40%** feel "not so safe" or unsafe.
- **Top / bottom:** **Kohima, Visakhapatnam, Bhubaneswar, Aizawl, Gangtok, Itanagar, Mumbai** score among the safest; **Patna, Jaipur, Faridabad, Delhi, Kolkata, Srinagar, Ranchi** rank lowest.

NARI 2025 Index?

- **Overview:** NARI 2025 is the first comprehensive national index to evaluate women's safety beyond crime statistics, focusing on lived experiences, perceptions, and institutional responsiveness. It assigns a **national safety score of 65%**, categorizing cities as "much above," "above," "below," or "much below" this benchmark.
- **Key Findings:**
 - **Safest Cities:** Kohima, Visakhapatnam, Bhubaneswar, Aizawl, Gangtok, Itanagar, and Mumbai (strong gender equity, better infrastructure, and effective policing).
 - **Least Safe Cities:** Ranchi, Srinagar, Kolkata, Delhi, Faridabad, Patna, and Jaipur (poor infrastructure, patriarchal norms, and weak institutional responses).
 - **Harassment Data:** 7% of women faced harassment in 2024 (14% among ages 18–24), primarily verbal (58%). Neighborhoods (38%) and public transport (29%) were top hotspots.
 - **Reporting Gaps:** Only 22% of incidents are formally reported, with action taken in just 16% of cases. Trust in authorities is low, with only 25% believing complaints would be addressed effectively.
- **Methodology:** The index evaluated physical, psychological, financial, and digital safety dimensions, including infrastructure quality, policing, and civic participation.

Additional Info

- **Related Government Initiatives**
 - **Nirbhaya Fund:** A dedicated fund established by the Government of India in 2013 to implement initiatives aimed at enhancing the safety and security of women in the country.
 - **One Stop Centre (OSC) Scheme:** Provides integrated support and assistance to women affected by violence, both in private and public spaces.
 - **Sakhi niwas (Working Women Hostels):** A scheme to provide safe and conveniently located accommodation for working women, with daycare facilities for their children.
 - **Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao:** A flagship program launched in 2015 to address declining Child

Sex Ratio (CSR) and related issues of empowerment of women.

Legal Framework

- **Indian Penal Code (IPC):** Contains various provisions to address crimes against women, including sections on assault, harassment, and kidnapping.
- **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005:** Provides civil remedies to victims of domestic violence.
- **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013:** Provides a mechanism for redressal of sexual harassment complaints.

Government to Extend Social Security to Gig and Platform Workers

What's the News?

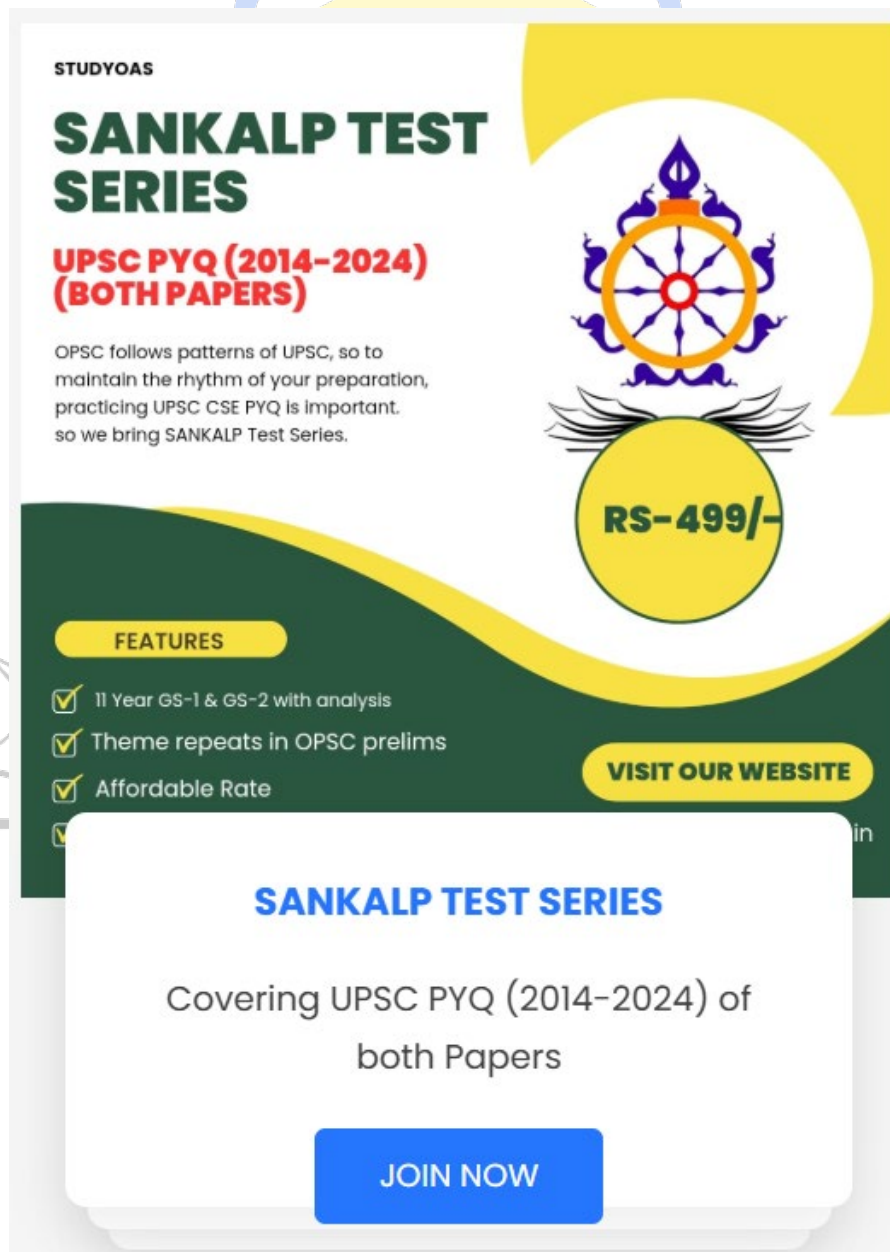
- The Government of India has announced plans to extend social security and healthcare coverage to **gig and platform workers** through the **e-Shram portal** and **Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)**.
- This initiative, introduced in the **Union Budget 2025–2026**, mandates registration on the e-Shram portal for workers to access benefits like identity cards, health insurance, and pension schemes.
- The move aims to formalize India's growing gig workforce, estimated to reach **2.35 crore workers by 2029–30**, and address vulnerabilities such as lack of financial security and healthcare access.

e-Shram Portal and PM-JAY Integration

- **Overview:** The e-Shram portal serves as a **national database for unorganised workers**, including gig workers (e.g., delivery persons, ride-hailing drivers) and platform workers (those engaged via digital platforms). Registration provides a **Universal Account Number (UAN)** and identity cards, enabling access to multiple welfare schemes. Integration with PM-JAY offers **health coverage of ₹5 lakh per family annually** for secondary/tertiary hospitalization.
- **Key Objectives:**
 - **Formalization:** Provide legal recognition to gig workers, who currently operate outside traditional employer-employee relationships.
 - **Financial Protection:** Mitigate risks like wage theft, arbitrary job deactivations, and lack of insurance through structured social security nets.
 - **Inclusive Growth:** Ensure gig workers access schemes like **life insurance, disability cover, and pensions** alongside healthcare.
- **Implementation Framework:**
 - **Registration Drive:** Gig workers must self-register on the e-Shram portal (register.eshram.gov.in) to avail benefits. As of August 2025, **over 30.98 crore unorganised workers** (including **3.37 lakh gig workers**) are registered, with Uttar Pradesh leading (8.39 crore registrations).

- **Funding:** Schemes are funded via a mix of central-state partnerships (e.g., **60:40 fund sharing**), welfare fees from aggregators (1–2% of transaction payouts), and government grants.
- **Technology Integration:** The portal is linked to **14 welfare programs** and uses **Aadhaar-based authentication** and vernacular interfaces (via **Bhashini**) to bridge digital divides.
- It is the first-ever national database of unorganised workers, including migrant workers, construction workers, and gig workers.
- The portal aims to provide unorganised workers with a **Universal Account Number (UAN)** and link them to various social security and welfare schemes.
- **Code on Social Security, 2020:**
 - This landmark legislation provides, for the first time, a formal legal definition for "gig" and "platform" workers.
 - It mandates that the government can formulate social security schemes for these workers, covering benefits such as life and disability cover, accident insurance, and health benefits.
 - The code also allows for the establishment of a Social Security Fund, with aggregators (the digital platforms) required to contribute a percentage of their annual turnover.
- **Gig and Platform Workers:**
 - A **gig worker** is a person who performs work outside a traditional employer-employee relationship.
 - A **platform worker** is a gig worker who uses a digital platform or app to access work.
 - Examples include app-based taxi drivers, food delivery agents, and online freelancers.
- **e-Shram Portal:**
 - Launched in 2021 by the **Ministry of Labour and Employment**.

Additional Info



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Empowerment

India's Skill Impact Bond Transforms Vocational Training for Youth

What's New?

- India's **Skill Impact Bond (SIB)**, launched by the **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)** in **2021**, has emerged as a transformative model for **job-led skilling**, targeting **50,000 youth** (over **62% women**) across **18 states** and **115 districts**.
- The initiative, backed by a **\$14.4 million fund**, focuses on **employment outcomes** rather than just training enrollment, achieving **75% job placement** and **60% retention** beyond three months by 2025.
- The program's success in **closing gender gaps** was highlighted, with **female certification rates** rising from **86% to 92%**, **placement rates** from **66% to 81%**, and **three-month retention** from **48% to 66%** across four training cohorts (six-month cycles).
- Women also showed a rise in **self-employment**, from **6% to 14%**, particularly among **sewing machine operators**.

Skill Impact Bond

- Overview:**
 - The **Skill Impact Bond**, India's first **development impact bond** for skilling, is a public-private partnership led by **NSDC** to train and place **50,000 youth** (18–40 years, unemployed or earning below **Rs 15,000/month**, or from households earning under **Rs 25,000/month**) in sectors like **automotive, healthcare, retail, and apparel**.
 - Launched in **2021**, it operates through **outcome-based financing**, where payments to training providers are tied to verified **job placement** and **retention** outcomes.
- Key features:**
 - Coalition:** Includes **British Asian Trust**, **Michael & Susan Dell Foundation (MSDF)**, **Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF)**, **HSBC India**, **JSW Foundation**, and **Dubai Cares**, with **USAID** and **FCDO (UK)** as technical partners. **NSDC** and **MSDF** invested **\$4 million** as risk capital, while **CIFF**, **HSW**, **JSW**, and **Dubai Cares** fund outcomes.
 - Training model:** Offers six-month courses through partners like **Pan-IIT Alumni Foundation** and **Magic Bus India**, covering skills like **automotive machine operation** and **retail management**. Outcomes are verified via **Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI)** surveys and document checks.
 - Gender focus:** Prioritizes women, who face **28% of pandemic-related job losses** despite being **24% of the workforce**, per **NSDC data**. Women's retention rates now

match or surpass men's, with success stories like **Punam Kumari** from Jharkhand, earning **Rs 18,000/month** as an automotive operator.

- Significance:** Shifts skilling from **input-focused** (enrollment) to **outcome-focused** (jobs, retention), aligning with **SDG 8 (Decent Work)** and **Viksit Bharat 2047**. It sets a model for **state governments** to adopt outcome-based financing, per **Oxford Policy Management**.

Impacts & Implications

- Employment impact:**
 - The SIB addresses India's **20.3% female labor force participation rate**, the lowest in South Asia, by ensuring **sustained employment**.
 - It supports **MSMEs** and **formal sector jobs**, boosting **economic inclusion**.
- Policy innovation:** The bond's success, with **75% placement** and **60% retention**, encourages **state-level adoption** of impact bonds, potentially scaling to **1 million youth** by 2030, per **Dalberg Advisors**.
- Challenges:** Scaling to **rural areas**, addressing **skill mismatches** in emerging sectors like **green energy**, and ensuring **sustainable funding** beyond the **four-year program**.

Additional Info

- NSDC:**
 - Established under the **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship** in **2008**, it oversees **4,000+ training centers** and has skilled **3 crore youth** by 2025.
 - The SIB is its first **impact bond**, with **\$14.4 million** funding over four years, per **NSDC reports**.
- Program specifics:** Operates in states like **Jharkhand**, **Uttar Pradesh**, and **Tamil Nadu**, with **Jharkhand** leading in enrollment, per **@ieeducation_job**. Training includes **soft skills** (e.g., communication, professional ethics) and **technical skills** (e.g., CNC machining). **80% of trainees** are placed in **formal sector jobs**, with **average salaries** of **Rs 15,000–20,000/month**.
- Gender outcomes:** Women's **self-employment** in **apparel** and **home-based enterprises** grew, with **14% of female trainees** starting businesses by Cohort IV. **Gender pay gaps** narrowed by **10%**, though disparities persist in **technical roles**, per **British Asian Trust data**.
- Global context:**
 - The SIB is the **world's largest skilling impact bond**, per **CIFF**, inspiring similar models in **South Africa** and **Vietnam**.
 - It aligns with **ILO's Decent Work Agenda**, addressing India's **12% youth unemployment** (PLFS 2025).
- Success story:** **Punam Kumari**, a 19-year-old from **Giridih, Jharkhand**, trained as an **automotive machine operator** at **Kalyan Gurukul, Bokaro**, and secured a job at **IM Gears, Chennai**, contributing to her

family's income and saving for future goals, per **Pan-IIT records**.

- **Evaluation:**
 - **Oxford Policy Management** conducts independent assessments, reporting a **20% improvement** in job retention compared to traditional skilling programs.
 - The SIB's **data-driven approach** is set to influence **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** vocational training reforms.

Government Outlines Schemes for Socio-Economic Empowerment of Minority Communities

What's the News?

- The Union government has detailed a consolidated framework to boost the socio-economic status of India's **notified religious minority communities** through integrated schemes under the **Ministry of Minority Affairs**.
- The merged approach aims to improve access to education, income generation, and cultural preservation with focused financial and institutional interventions.

What Is PM VIKAS?

An umbrella initiative named **Pradhan Mantri Virasat Ka Samvardhan (PM VIKAS)** integrates earlier schemes to deliver a more holistic package across education, livelihoods, leadership, culture, and skill enhancement.

- **Skilling & Training** (akin to *Seekho aur Kamao*): Targeting youth from minority groups for market-relevant skills.
- **Education Support** (from *Nai Manzil* and *Nai Udaan*): Financial and mentorship support for school-dropouts and UPSC/PSC aspirants.
- **Women Leadership & Entrepreneurship** (via *Nai Roshni*): Empowering women from minority communities to take on leadership roles.
- **Cultural Preservation** (*Hamari Dharohar, USTTAD*): Promotion of traditional arts, crafts and heritage through market access.
- Emphasis on **credit and market linkages**, especially via **National Minorities Development & Finance Corporation (NMDFC)** schemes such as concessional term loans, education loans, micro-finance and Virasat support

Additional Info

Ministry of Minority Affairs

- **Established on January 29, 2006**, carved out from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to focus on issues concerning notified minority communities: **Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis, and Jains**.
- **Key Schemes:** Implements schemes like **Nai Udaan** (financial support for UPSC/SSC/State PSC prelims qualifiers), **Moma Scholarship** (for financially weak minority students pursuing higher education), **Seekho aur Kamao** (skill development), and **Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas**

Karyakram (development of Minority Concentration Areas).

- **Leadership:** Headed by the **Minister of Minority Affairs**, currently **Kiren Rijiju** (since June 2024), who also chairs the **Central Wakf Council**, managing State Wakf Boards. **George Kurian** is the Minister of State (since June 2024).
- **Budget:** The ministry's budget allocation has increased, with **₹3183.24 crore** noted in 2025 for various empowerment schemes, reflecting a commitment to minority welfare.
- **Other Initiatives:** Includes **Jiyo Parsi** (to curb population decline of Parsis), **Nai Roshni** (leadership development for minority women), and **Hamari Dharohar** (preserving minority heritage).

Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PM-JVK)

- **Objective:** The **Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK)**, launched in **May 2018**, aims to **improve socio-economic infrastructure** and basic amenities in **Minority Concentration Areas (MCAs)** to reduce developmental disparities.
- **Scope:** Targets **minority communities** (Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis, and Jains) in identified **1300+ backward blocks, towns, and village clusters** across India, covering **33% of minority population**.
- **Funding:** Operates on a **Centre-State cost-sharing model** (60:40 for most states, 90:10 for North-East and hilly states), with **₹3,972 crore allocated** in 2023-24 for implementation.
- **Implementation:** Managed by the **Ministry of Minority Affairs**, with **District Collectors** overseeing project execution, ensuring alignment with **local needs and minority welfare**.
- **Evolution:** Restructured from the earlier **Multi-sectoral Development Programme (MsDP)** in 2018 to expand coverage, improve flexibility, and enhance focus on **minority-dominated areas**.

MY Bharat Partners with SOUL to Develop 1 Lakh Youth Leaders

What's the News?

- **MY Bharat**, a youth platform under the **Department of Youth Affairs**, has inked an MoU with the **School of Ultimate Leadership Foundation (SOUL)**.
- Aim: Train **100,000 youth leaders** aged 18–29 across India through leadership and capacity-building initiatives.

What Is the MY Bharat–SOUL Leadership Initiative?

- **Scope:** A three-year engagement, extendable by mutual consent.
- **Focus Areas:**
 - Leadership in **governance, public policy, social entrepreneurship, foreign policy, communications, digital literacy, and financial literacy**.
- **Implementation Mechanisms:**

- Inclusive, merit-based selection process covering rural, urban, tribal, women, and marginalised groups.
- Programme design, delivery, seminars, workshops, conclaves, fellowships.
- Capacity building for institutions and organisations serving youth.
- Joint research and policy advocacy.
- Training content development and exchange of trainers.
- Online quizzes for selection, networking events to connect participants.
- **Upcoming Activity:** Online leadership programme launching in **September 2025**.

Additional Info

- **MY Bharat** (also known as *Mera Yuva Bharat*) is a **phygital platform** launched in October 2023 to enable youth-led nation-building through digital tools and physical mobilisation.
- It caters to youth aged 15–29 as per the National Youth Policy.

Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan — World's Largest Tribal Grassroots Leadership Programme

What's the News?

- **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** launched **Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan**, a national programme to build decentralised tribal leadership and strengthen last-mile responsive governance.
- **Scale:** targets **~1 lakh tribal-dominated villages, 20 lakh change leaders**, across **~550 districts** and **30 States/UTs**.
- **Modus operandi:** capacity building via **Regional/State Process Labs, Governance Process Labs**, and a national toolkit to institutionalise community-led problem solving.

Programme Design & Objectives

- **Overview**
 - **Aim:** institutionalise **responsive, people-led governance** in tribal areas to improve delivery of health, education, livelihoods and basic services.
- **Key components**
 - **Cadre building:** train **State Master Trainers** who cascade training to district, block and village levels.
 - **Process labs:** hands-on learning labs to co-create local development plans and remove implementation bottlenecks.
 - **Community teams:** village teams and change leaders to monitor schemes and drive local accountability.
- **Significance**
 - **Governance outcome:** aims to convert scheme reach into measurable service improvements at the grassroots.
 - **Systemic effect:** strengthens state-society interface and creates institutional memory for tribal governance.

Additional Info

- **Programme metrics & delivery**
 - **Coverage:** **~1 lakh villages, 20 lakh changemakers, ~550 districts, 30 States/UTs**.
 - **Training architecture**
 - **Regional Process Labs (RPLs) → State Process Labs (SPLs) → District/Block/Village level labs.**
 - **Toolkit Vol-II** provides standard modules and facilitation guides for trainers.
- **Policy & institutional links**
 - **Nodal agency:** **Ministry of Tribal Affairs**.
 - **Implementing partners:** government training bodies and field partners (state administrations, civil-society resource organisations).
 - **Alignment:** part of **Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh** and contributes to the **Viksit Bharat 2047** vision.
- **Constitutional relevance**
 - **Directive Principle link:** advances the obligation in **Article 46** (promotion of educational and economic interests of Scheduled Tribes).
 - **Governance angle:** illustrates centre-led mission delivery model using capacity building, convergence and social accountability—useful for answers on implementation challenges and centre-state cooperation.

CISF Launches First All-Women Commando Unit

What's the News?

- The **Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)** has begun training its first **all-women commando unit**.
- The unit will join **Quick Reaction Teams** and **Special Task Forces**, assigned to sensitive installations such as airports and metro systems.

All-Women Commando Unit

- **Training Location:** Regional Training Centre, Barwaha, Madhya Pradesh.
- **Training Details:**
 - **Duration:** 8-week intensive course. First batch (30 women) training from August 11 to October 4; second batch starting October 6 through November 29.
 - **Curriculum** includes: weapons handling, live-fire drills under stress, endurance runs, obstacle courses, rappelling, forest survival skills, plus a 48-hour confidence-building exercise to assess decision-making and team coordination under simulated hostile conditions.
- **Initial Cohort:** Approximately 100 women from the Aviation Security Group and other sensitive CISF units will complete the programme in this phase.

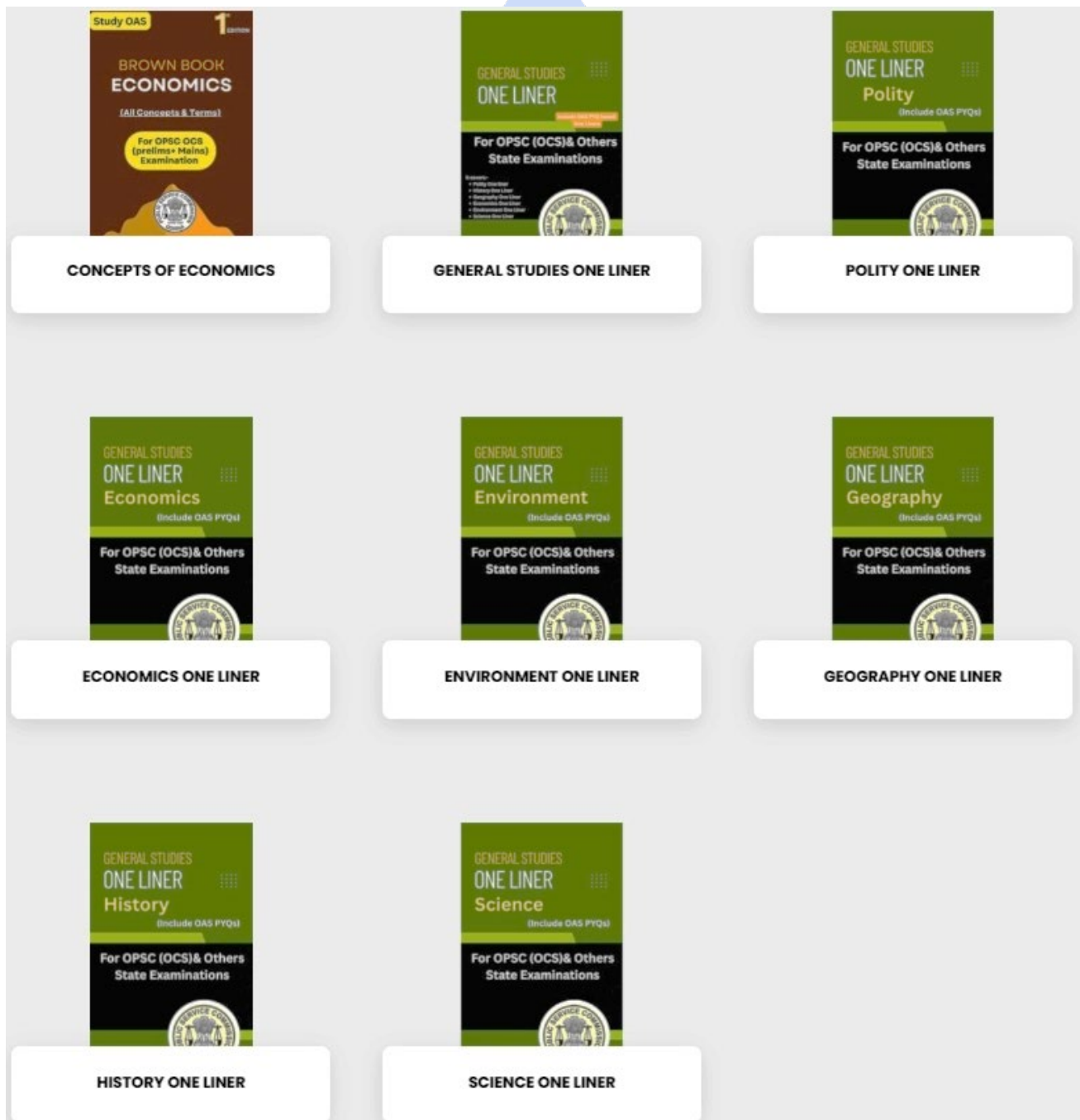
- **Objective:** Make this course a **regular feature** in CISF's training calendar to expand women's role in core operational capacities.

Additional Info

- **Central Industrial Security Force (CISF):**
 - One of India's seven Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
 - Established in 1969 to provide security to Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs).
 - Its motto is "Protection and Security" (Sanrakshan aur Suraksha).
 - Its mandate has expanded to include securing airports, the Delhi Metro, government

buildings, heritage monuments, and other vital installations.

- **Historical Context of Women in CAPFs:**
 - Women allowed in CISF in supervisory roles only since **1992**. Subsequently expanded to combat roles via direct recruitment and officer entry through UPSC. As of mid-2010s, 33 % reservation at constabulary level was introduced for CISF and CRPF.
 - Other all-women operational units exist, such as CRPF's **Danteshwari Ladake** (anti-Naxal) and earlier female commandos in NSG/SPG.



Culture and Arts

First Harappan Settlement Discovered in Rajasthan's Thar Desert

What's New?

- A groundbreaking archaeological discovery uncovered a **4,500-year-old Harappan settlement** at **Ratadia Ri Deri**, Jaisalmer district, Rajasthan, near the **India-Pakistan border**, marking the first evidence of the **Indus Valley Civilization** in the **Thar Desert**.
- The site, located approximately **60 km from Ramgarh tehsil** and **17 km northwest of Sadewala village**, expands the known geographical footprint of the Harappans, previously thought to be confined to riverine areas like the **Saraswati** and **Indus** basins.
- The excavation, led by **Dilip Kumar Saini** from **Rajasthan University**, historian **Parth Jagani**, and **Dr. Jeevan Singh Kharkwal** from **Rajasthan Vidyapeeth**, revealed **urban-style artifacts**, including **pottery**, **chert blades**, and **brick structures**, suggesting a **sophisticated settlement** adapted to the arid desert.
- The findings have been submitted to the **Indian Journal of Science** and an **international peer-reviewed journal**.

Harappan Settlement Discovery

- **Overview:**
 - The **Ratadia Ri Deri site**, dating between **2600 BCE and 1900 BCE**, is the first confirmed **Harappan settlement** in the **Thar Desert**, challenging assumptions that the **Indus Valley Civilization** avoided arid regions.
 - The site was identified after local teacher **Pradeep Kumar Garg** reported findings to the **Save Our Heritage Foundation**, with subsequent validation by **Dr. Pankaj Chandak** and **Dr. Krishnapal Singh**.
- **Key findings:**
 - **Pottery:** Red and wheat-colored handmade pottery, including **bowls**, **pitchers**, **cups**, and **perforated jars**, decorated with **geometric patterns**.
 - **Tools:** **Chert stone blades** (8–10 cm), likely sourced from **Rohri Hills, Pakistan**, indicating long-distance trade.
 - **Structures:** **Standard rectangular bricks** and a **furnace with a central column**, similar to those at **Kanmer (Gujarat)** and **Mohenjo-Daro (Pakistan)**, suggesting planned urban architecture.
 - **Other artifacts:** **Clay and conch shell bangles**, **terracotta cakes**, and **stone mills**, reflecting a complex socio-economic system.
- **Significance:**
 - The site indicates the Harappans' ability to adapt to **resource-scarce desert environments**, likely leveraging trade routes along the **now-extinct Saraswati River**.
 - It bridges a geographical gap between **Kalibangan**

(Rajasthan) and **Dholavira (Gujarat)**, revealing a **rural-urban network**.

Historical and Cultural Significance

- **Redefining Harappan extent:**
 - The discovery expands the **Indus Valley Civilization's geographical scope**, suggesting resilience in adapting to **arid climates** and challenging the narrative of river-centric settlements.
 - It highlights a **rural-urban continuum**, with smaller settlements like **Ratadia Ri Deri** supporting larger centers.
- **Trade and connectivity:**
 - The presence of **Rohri Hills chert** indicates a **trade network** spanning modern-day **India and Pakistan**, reinforcing the Harappans' economic sophistication.
 - The site's proximity to the **Pakistan border** suggests it was a strategic hub for **resource exchange**.
- **Cultural preservation:** The findings boost **Rajasthan's heritage tourism**, with plans for a **museum** to showcase artifacts, aligning with India's efforts to promote **cultural identity** and **archaeological research**.

Additional Info

- **Indus Valley Civilization:**
 - Flourishing from **3300–1300 BCE**, it spanned modern-day **India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan**, covering **1.5 million sq km** with **over 1,000 sites**.
 - Known for **urban planning** (e.g., grid layouts, drainage systems), **standardized weights**, and an **undeciphered script**, major sites include **Harappa**, **Mohenjo-Daro**, **Dholavira**, and **Kalibangan**.
- **Ratadia Ri Deri specifics:**
 - The site spans **2–3 hectares**, smaller than urban centers like **Mohenjo-Daro (100 hectares)** but comparable to rural hubs like **Lothal (Gujarat)**.
 - The **furnace structure** suggests **artisanal production**, possibly for pottery or metalwork, while **wedge-shaped bricks** (ratio 4:2:1) match Harappan standards.
 - **Soil samples** indicate possible **seasonal water sources**, supporting settlement viability.
- **Archaeological context:**
 - Complements recent discoveries like **4,000-year-old burials in Haryana (2023)** and **Dholavira's water systems (2024)**.
 - The **Saraswati River's drying** (circa 1900 BCE) likely forced migration, per **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** studies.
 - The site's **remote location** minimized modern disturbances, preserving artifacts.
- **Preservation efforts:**
 - The **Save Our Heritage Foundation**, in collaboration with the **ASI** and **Rajasthan**

government, plans to fence the site to prevent **looting**.

- The **National Museum, Delhi**, may display select artifacts, with **Rs 50 lakh** allocated by Rajasthan for initial conservation.
- **Challenges:** Limited **excavation funding**, harsh **desert conditions**, and the need for **cross-border archaeological cooperation** due to proximity to Pakistan.

sustain the language, which currently lacks its own writing system. Materials are archived and made publicly available via the **Sanchika repository**.

SPPEL and Toda Language Preservation

Scheme for Protection and Preservation of Endangered Languages (SPPEL):

- Targets languages spoken by fewer than 10,000 people or lacking linguistic documentation.
- Includes field research, creation of **bilingual/trilingual dictionaries**, **pictorial glossaries**, and **ethno-linguistic profiles**.
- Data accessible through platforms like the **Sanchika portal**.

Toda-specific Outcomes:

- The Toda language, a **proto-South-Dravidian tongue**, now has a **Tamil-script primer** for youth literacy.
- Elder traditions not being passed down verbally—written documentation is critical for intergenerational transmission.

Significance: Cultural Resilience & Linguistic Diversity

Cultural Identity

The Toda language is tied to religious practices, sacred landscapes, and folklore. Preservation sustains cultural memory and identity for the Toda people.

National Metric of Linguistic Diversity

With over **1,300 languages** officially recognized and many more unclassified in India, protecting each one, like Toda, preserves the mosaic of the nation's linguistic heritage.

Governance and Inclusivity

SPPEL exemplifies government's institutional role in cultural preservation, aligning with broader goals of supporting tribal heritage and linguistic inclusion.

Additional Info

- **Language Endangerment in India:** Numerous tribal languages lack scripts, posing challenges for documentation and inclusion in education systems.
- **Digital Tools:** Increasingly used elsewhere—audio-visual archives, apps, and community networks aid preservation (e.g., Sora, Bodo languages; digital intranets for Sahariya tribe).
- **Threat Multipliers:** Climate change and migration exacerbate language loss, as seen in regions like Bihar where ecological disruption undermines intergenerational transmission.

Artefacts Unearthed in Sulawesi Push Back Earliest Wallacean Hominid Presence by Over a Million Years

What's the News?

- Archaeologists from Australia and Indonesia discovered **stone tools** on Sulawesi (Calio, Soppeng) dating from **1.04 to 1.48 million years ago**—the earliest known evidence of hominins in Wallacea.
- Found tools are small, chipped chert flakes, some retouched, likely used for cutting or crafting.
- Dating methods combined radioactive tracing, palaeomagnetic analysis, and fossil context to validate ages.

Significance: Prehistoric Migration and Wallacea's Role

- Suggests **Homo erectus** or a similar hominin reached Sulawesi at least 1 million years ago—much earlier than established timelines.
- Challenges assumptions that early hominins lacked sea-crossing capability; Wallacea islands required maritime navigation.
- Redefines Wallacea's importance in human migration models and possibly identifies a precursor lineage to smaller "hobbit" hominins like *Homo floresiensis* or *Homo luzonensis*.

Additional Info

- Prior to this, oldest Sulawesi tool evidence was only ~194,000 years old, and the earliest skeletal remains dated to 25,000–16,000 years ago.
- The Nature journal article includes data from excavations between 2019 and 2022.
- Spatially, Wallacea forms a critical biogeographical corridor between Eurasia and Sahul (Australia-New Guinea). Earlier symbolic artifacts in Sulawesi (cave art and ornaments) date to ~30–40,000 years ago, by modern *Homo sapiens*.

Toda Tribe Leads India's Push to Preserve Endangered Languages

What's the News?

- In the Nilgiri Hills near Ooty, **Kurtaz Vasamalli**, a Toda community elder, collaborates with **SPPEL** (Scheme for Protection and Preservation of Endangered Languages), managed by **CIIL**, under the **Ministry of Education**.
- The initiative documents **Toda oral traditions, vocabulary, and grammar**, and develops literacy tools—including a **primer in Tamil script** for children—to

Goa to Host FIDE World Cup 2025—India's Chess Moment

What's the News?

- The **FIDE World Cup 2025** is confirmed for **Goa, India**, taking place from **October 30 to November 27, 2025**.
- This marks India's first time hosting the Open World Cup in over two decades.
- The event will feature **206 players**, with **three spots** up for grabs in the **2026 Candidates Tournament**.

Tournament Highlights

- **Prize Pool:** USD 2 million (approx. ₹17.5 crore)
- **Format:** Single-elimination knockout over eight rounds; high-stakes "win or go home" structure.

- **Top Participants** include reigning World Champion **D Gukesh**, **Magnus Carlsen**, **Fabiano Caruana**, and **R Praggnanandhaa**.
- **Format Details:**
 - First round: Players seeded 51–206 compete; top 50 seeds receive byes to Round 2.
 - Each round spans three days: two days of classical games followed by tie-breaks if needed.

Additional Info

- **Historical Context:**
 - India last hosted the World Cup in **2002** (Hyderabad), won by **Vishwanathan Anand**.
 - Recent Indian successes in chess include:
 - **Gukesh** becoming the **World Champion** in 2024.
 - Indian teams winning **Gold** in both Open and Women's categories at the **2022 Chess Olympiad** (Chennai).
 - **Divya Deshmukh** winning the **Women's World Cup** in July 2025.
- **Governance and Policies:**
 - Supported by the **All India Chess Federation (AICF)** and **FIDE**.
 - Aligns with initiatives like **Khelo India** and **Digital India** (e.g., promoting chess through online platforms).

- Showcase India's capability to host mega sporting events and advance its ambition to host the **2036 Olympics**.
- Promote **sustainable and inclusive development** aligned with the Commonwealth Sport's "Reset Principles," focusing on athlete-centric planning, gender balance, and para-sport integration.

Key Features:

- **Full-fledged sports program** including traditional Indian sports like **kabaddi** and **kho kho**, unlike the scaled-down 2026 Glasgow edition.
- **Minimal new infrastructure** reliance, utilizing existing venues like the **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Sports Enclave** and upcoming facilities (e.g., Naranpura Sports Complex).
- Expected participation from **72 countries**, with events generating opportunities in **sports management, logistics, and media**.

Strategic Significance:

- Aims to erase memories of the **2010 Delhi CWG**, which faced allegations of corruption, and demonstrate India's organizational prowess.
- Aligns with **Gujarat's broader development** goals, including metro expansions, bullet train connectivity, and urban rejuvenation projects.

Additional Info

- **India's Past Hosting:** India previously hosted the Commonwealth Games in **New Delhi in 2010**. The event was India's most successful CWG campaign to date, with the country securing **101 medals** to finish second on the medal tally.
- **Commonwealth Sport:** It is the international body responsible for the direction and control of the Commonwealth Games. The current President is **Chris Jenkins OBE**.
- **India's Performance in 2022 CWG:**
 - **Venue:** Birmingham, England.
 - **Medal Tally:** India finished **4th** with a total of **61 medals**.
 - **Medals Breakup:** **22 Gold**, **16 Silver**, and **23 Bronze**.
 - **Top Sports:** Wrestling, Weightlifting, and Boxing were the top medal-winning sports for India.

India Bids for 2030 Commonwealth Games in Ahmedabad

What's the News?

- The **Union Cabinet**, chaired by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**, approved India's bid to host the **2030 Commonwealth Games (CWG)** in **Ahmedabad, Gujarat**.
- The bid, submitted to **Commonwealth Sport** (Commonwealth Games Federation), positions Ahmedabad as the host city for the **centenary edition** of the Games, marking 100 years since the inaugural event.
- The government emphasized Ahmedabad's **world-class infrastructure**, including the **Narendra Modi Stadium** (world's largest cricket stadium), and the event's potential to boost tourism, generate jobs, and inspire youth participation in sports.

India's CWG 2030 Bid

- **Objectives:**

Environment

Supreme Court Upholds Power of Pollution Boards to Impose Environmental Damages

What's the News?

- The **Supreme Court of India**, in a landmark judgment, has affirmed that the **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)** and **State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs)** have the authority to impose environmental compensation on entities that cause pollution.
- The ruling clarifies that this power is an inherent part of their function to prevent and control pollution, based on the **"polluter pays" principle**.
- This decision sets aside a previous ruling by the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** which had denied this power to the boards.

Key Aspects of the Judgment

A three-judge bench led by Chief Justice **D Y**

Chandrachud outlined the rationale for empowering the pollution control boards.

- Basis of Power:** The Court held that the authority to levy environmental compensation is implicitly granted under the **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974** and the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**.
- Nature of Compensation:** The judgment distinguished this power from imposing a penalty or fine. It clarified that the compensation is **remedial and compensatory** in nature, intended to cover the costs of environmental restoration and restitution, not to punish the polluter.
- Ensuring Effectiveness:** The Court observed that making the boards wait for a judicial body to pass an order for every instance of pollution would render them "toothless" and undermine their statutory purpose of preventing environmental degradation.
- Civil Liability:** The imposition of such damages falls under civil liability, making it a necessary tool for the boards to fulfill their mandate effectively without going through complex criminal proceedings for every violation.

Additional Info

Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)

- The **CPCB** is a statutory organisation constituted in **September 1974** under the **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974**.
- It was later entrusted with powers and functions under the **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981**.
- It provides technical services to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and coordinates the activities of SPCBs.

The 'Polluter Pays' Principle

- This principle is a cornerstone of environmental law, stipulating that those who produce pollution should bear the costs of managing it to prevent damage to human health or the environment.
- The Supreme Court of India has previously incorporated this principle as part of the country's legal framework in landmark cases like **Vellore Citizens'**

Welfare Forum v. Union of India (1996). It holds the polluter liable for compensating the victims of pollution and covering the costs of environmental restoration.

Largest Asian Tortoise Species Reintroduced into Nagaland Community Reserve

What's the News?

- Ten critically endangered **Asian Giant Tortoises** (*Manouria emys*) have been reintroduced into the **Zeliang Community Reserve** in Nagaland's Peren district.
- This initiative is a collaboration between the **Nagaland Forest Department** and the **India Turtle Conservation Programme (ITCP)**.
- The released tortoises were bred in captivity at the **Nagaland Zoological Park**, which holds India's largest population of this species.

The Asian Giant Tortoise

- Description:** The largest tortoise in mainland Asia, often called the "small elephant of the forest." It plays a crucial role in seed dispersal and forest regeneration.
- Habitat:** Found in tropical and subtropical forests across Southeast Asia, including Northeast India.
- Conservation Status:** Listed as **Critically Endangered** on the IUCN Red List and under **Schedule IV** of India's Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. The primary threats are hunting for meat and habitat loss.
- Reintroduction Process:** The tortoises were soft-released into a fenced enclosure to help them acclimate before their full release. They are fitted with VHF tags for monitoring their survival and dispersal.

Additional Info

- India Turtle Conservation Programme (ITCP):** A joint program of the **Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA)** and the **Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) - India**, working to conserve freshwater turtles and tortoises in India.
- Zeliang Community Reserve:** A community-managed forest in Nagaland that has been identified as a suitable habitat for the Asian Giant Tortoise. Community reserves are a type of protected area in India where local communities are involved in conservation efforts.

Using Radioactive Isotopes to Combat Rhino Poaching

What's the News?

- Scientists in South Africa have launched the **Rhisotope Project**, a novel anti-poaching initiative that involves injecting a small, harmless quantity of radioactive material into rhinoceros horns.
- This technique aims to make the horns undesirable for consumers and easily detectable by radiation monitors.

at international borders, thereby disrupting illegal trafficking networks.

The Rhisotope Project

- **Objective:** To devalue rhino horns and enhance their traceability to curb poaching and illegal trade.
- **Methodology:**
 - A small hole is drilled into the rhino's horn, and a carefully calculated, non-lethal dose of a stable, radioactive isotope (like **Carbon-14** or **Gallium-68**) is inserted.
 - The dose is too low to harm the rhino or humans but is strong enough to be detected by radiation detection equipment, such as the thousands of monitors already installed at ports and airports globally.
 - The presence of radioactive material is intended to create a stigma and fear among end-users regarding health risks, reducing demand.
- **Key Institutions:** The project is a collaboration between South Africa's **University of the Witwatersrand (WITS)** and Russian state nuclear corporation **Rosatom**, along with other global nuclear organizations.
- **Significance:** This innovative approach complements existing anti-poaching strategies like dehorning, GPS tracking, and dye infusion. By making the horns a liability for traffickers, it targets the entire supply chain.

Additional Info

- **Rhino Horn Composition:** Rhino horns are made of **keratin**, the same protein found in human hair and fingernails, and have no proven medicinal value.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - **White Rhino:** Near Threatened (IUCN Red List).
 - **Black Rhino:** Critically Endangered.
 - **Greater One-Horned Rhino (Indian Rhino):** Vulnerable.
 - **Javan & Sumatran Rhinos:** Critically Endangered.
- **Indian Rhino Conservation:**
 - **Indian Rhino Vision 2020 (IRV 2020):** Launched in 2005, it aimed to attain a wild population of at least 3,000 Greater one-horned rhinos spread over seven protected areas in Assam. The goal was achieved.
 - **National Rhino Conservation Strategy (2019):** Launched to conserve the Greater one-horned rhinoceros, it includes provisions for research, monitoring, and strengthening protection.
 - **Protected Areas:** Major rhino habitats in India include **Kaziranga National Park**, **Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary**, and **Orang National Park** in Assam, and **Jaldapara National Park** in West Bengal.

through the commissioning of a **500 kW rooftop solar plant**. The solar installation is expected to **eliminate its electricity bills** and enable surplus power generation via net metering.

- Concurrently, the Assembly launched the **National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA)** under the **One Nation, One Application** initiative, marking a shift to fully **paperless and digital legislative proceedings**.

Implementation Highlights

- The solar capacity has been scaled up from an earlier 200 kW system to a **500 kW installation**, targeting full readiness ahead of the Monsoon Session.
- Estimated **monthly savings of ₹15 lakh** (approx. ₹1.75 crore annually) will be redirected toward developmental works. Surplus energy will be fed into the grid via net metering.
- The **NeVA platform** enables smart delegate units, RFID/NFC access, multilingual support, real-time access to documents via tablets, and automated audio-visual systems—creating a **digital-first legislative environment**.

Significance for Governance & Sustainability

- **Environmental Significance:** This landmark initiative positions the Delhi Assembly as a national model for **sustainable governance**, aligning with net-zero and clean-energy targets.
- **Institutional Significance:** The digital overhaul through NeVA enhances **efficiency, transparency, and inclusivity** in legislative processes.

Additional Info

- The **Assembly building**, constructed in **1912** and once home to India's first Parliament, now blends heritage with innovation under the slogan: **"Virasat aur Vikaas saath chalega"** (Legacy and development go hand in hand).
- This dual transformation—both renewable and digital—heralds a new chapter in institutional modernization enabled by central government support under the **Digital India** umbrella.

India Defends Ethanol Blending Programme Amid E-20 Concerns

What's the News?

The **Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas** responded to public concerns about **20% ethanol-blended petrol (E-20)**, insisting the fuel is safe, efficient, and crucial to India's transition to cleaner energy. The **Lok Sabha** did not feature the matter—it comes via an official release (PIB) and press statements. Opposition protests did not play a role in the medium of reporting.

E-20 Fuel: Context, Details & Impact

- **Environmental Gains & Energy Security:**
 - Based on a NITI Aayog study, sugarcane-based ethanol reduces greenhouse gas emissions by ~65%, maize-based ethanol by ~50%, compared to petrol.
 - Since 2014-15, blending has saved **₹1.44 lakh crore** in foreign exchange, substituted **245 lakh MT of crude**, and cut **CO₂ emissions** by

Delhi Assembly Runs Solely on Solar and Launches Digital Legislature

What's the News?

- The **Delhi Legislative Assembly** has become the **first legislature in India** to be fully powered by **solar energy**,

~736 lakh MT—equivalent to planting **30 crore trees**.

- In the current year, farmers are expected to receive **₹40,000 crore**, with forex savings around **₹43,000 crore**.
- **Vehicle Performance & Compatibility:**
 - Claims of negative impacts on mileage, engine life, or insurance are labelled **misinformation**.
 - Studies by **IOCL, ARAI, SIAM** show **marginal** mileage reductions—**1–2%** in E-10 vehicles tuned for E-20, **3–6%** in others.
 - Drivers may observe **better acceleration and ride quality**, due to ethanol's higher octane (~108.5 vs petrol's ~84.4).
 - Older vehicles might need **replacement of minor rubber parts or gaskets**, inexpensive and manageable during routine servicing.
 - **Insurance coverage** remains unaffected. Reports of policy voiding are misinterpretations and **"totally baseless."**
- **Supply & Price Dynamics:**
 - Ethanol, once cheaper, now costs more than petrol—**₹71.32 per litre (2024-25)** vs refined petrol. High procurement costs persist.
 - The government retains blending mandates for energy transition, sustainability, and farmer welfare.
- **Programme Roadmap:**
 - E-20 implementation is confirmed until **October 31, 2026**. Extension beyond requires stakeholder consultation and inter-ministerial evaluation.
- **Industry Position:**
 - The **Indian Sugar and Bio-Energy Manufacturers Association (ISMA)** calls the programme a **"national imperative"**, dismissing engine-related concerns.
 - Public backlash continues—reports of significant mileage drops—and concerns that the E-20 drive may hurt India's edible oil self-sufficiency by shifting crop patterns.

Significance: Policy, Economic & Environmental Dimensions

Environmental & Energy Strategy

E-20 is a cornerstone of India's **green energy transition** and pledge to achieve **net-zero emissions by 2070**, while reducing dependency on crude imports.

Rural and Economic Impact

The programme channels substantial revenue to farmers, improves sugarcane and maize viability, and provides alternate revenue streams via biofuel—strengthening rural economies and mitigating agrarian distress.

Technical & Governance Assurance

Backed by empirical studies and automotive standards, the scheme combines **scientific validation** with phased rollout—reflecting governance intent to balance innovation with stability.

Agricultural Trade-offs

Rising corn cultivation has undermined oilseed acreage, threatening edible oil self-reliance targets. This unintended

consequence underlines the complexity of policy interventions.

Additional Info

- India achieved the E-20 target **five years ahead** of the 2025–26 schedule, from just **1.5% blending in 2014**.
- Global precedents:
 - **Brazil** has long used E-27 fuels successfully.
 - **Flex-fuel vehicles** in Brazil, the U.S. (E15, E85), and Asia (Thailand, Philippines) show compatibility with blended fuels.

Accelerating Climate Risks in the Himalayas

What's the News?

- A recent scientific study reports that **climate change** has dramatically increased glacier melt in the Himalayan region, effectively **doubling river flow** in many areas over the past decade. This surge is visible in at least 10% of Himalayan rivers.
- Major river basins like the **Indus, Yangtze, Amu Darya, and Syr Darya** are experiencing unusually high discharge due to the additional glacier melt. The **Western Himalayas** are particularly affected, since they rely more on snow and ice melt.
- While the extra meltwater temporarily boosts water availability (benefiting agriculture and hydropower), it also carries more sediment and heightens flood risks. Experts warn that prolonged glacier shrinkage (**projected loss of 29–67% of ice by 2100**) will reduce water flow in the long term.

Study Findings and Implications

- **River Volumes Doubling:** An analysis published in *AGU Advances* found that rapid glacier melt in the Himalayas has doubled water discharge in many rivers over 10 years. Researchers examined the entire Himalayan range and its rivers, noting a 10% surge region-wide.
- **Geographical Variation:** Western Himalayan rivers (fed by glaciers and snow) saw more increase than eastern rivers (mostly monsoon-fed). This reflects climate patterns: warming accelerates ice melt in the west, while the east's rain-dependence buffers some effects.
- **Short-Term Effects:** Initially, communities benefit from extra water for irrigation and power. However, the meltwater carries heavy silt—posing threats to hydroelectric turbines and clogging waterways. Ecosystems sensitive to clear, cold water are also disrupted.
- **Long-Term Concerns:** If current trends continue, the glaciers' contribution to river flow will decline, endangering water security for regions like the Indo-Gangetic plains and Central Asian countries. Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) and landslides may increase.
- **Adaptation:** Scientists urge using the data for better planning. For example, dams in the western Himalayas may need redesigned spillways, and sediment traps may become common. Policies for integrated Himalayan water management are critical.

Environmental and Policy Significance

- The Himalayas are often called the “**Water Tower of Asia**”, feeding major rivers for 1.5+ billion people. Accelerated glacier loss directly threatens water availability in India, China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and beyond.
- This finding aligns with other assessments (e.g. ICIMOD’s Hindu Kush Himalaya report: **~28% glacier ice lost between 1987-2015**). It underscores the urgency of climate action under agreements like the **Paris Accord** and India’s **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**.
- Regional cooperation (Indus Water Treaty, Brahmaputra agreements) may need revisiting in light of changing flows. Downstream nations should consider joint monitoring of glacial melt and disaster preparedness for GLOFs.
- For India, heightened Himalayan melt and extreme weather events (as seen in past disasters like 2013 Kedarnath) demand stronger disaster management and climate adaptation strategies under national missions (e.g. National Mission on Himalayan Studies). Protecting Himalayan ecosystems (forests, wetlands) also becomes more vital to mitigate risks.

High Selenium in Groundwater in Parts of Haryana and Punjab

What’s the News?

- The **Ministry of Jal Shakti**, via Minister of State V. Somanna, reported elevated **selenium levels** in a limited number of groundwater samples from **Jhajjar district (Haryana)** and **Rupnagar district (Punjab)**. These **exceeded the permissible limit of 10 ppb**.
- Out of **5,956 total samples** collected across 17 States/UTs in 2019, only **four** (two from each district) breached the limit.

Groundwater Contamination: Framework & Response

- Contamination detection is part of monitoring under the **Central Ground Water Board (CGWB)**.
- Under **Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)**, drinking water supply is benchmarked against **BIS:10500 standards**. Regions with chemical contamination are prioritised for **alternative safe water sources** or **community water purification plants (CWPPs)** delivering 8–10 lpcd.
- States may allocate up to **2% of their JJM funds** for **Water Quality Monitoring & Surveillance (WQM&S)**—covering lab infrastructure, field test kits, awareness, etc.
- CGWB also conducts **public awareness programs**—1,550 sessions involving ~136,000 participants—to inform on groundwater issues, pollution prevention, and recharge techniques.
- The government has released two handbooks:
 - **Concise Handbook for Monitoring Water Quality of Piped Drinking Water Supply**—guidelines for testing across supply points, and remedial actions.

- **Drinking Water Treatment Technologies Handbook**—outlining suitable technologies for various regions.

Additional Info

- **Selenium Toxicity:** Trace mineral beneficial in low quantities, but harmful at elevated levels—linking to symptoms like skin issues, neurological disorders, and reproductive toxicity.
- **Geogenic Cause:** Selenium often originates from natural geological formations (seleniferous soils), not always anthropogenic sources.

Varanasi Pilots Removable Solar Panels Between Railway Tracks

What’s the News?

- **Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW), Varanasi** commissioned a pilot **removable solar panel system** installed between railway tracks.
- **Pilot scale: 70 m** of track fitted with **28 panels** totalling **15 kWp** capacity.
- **Immediate impact:** adds local renewable generation without land acquisition and demonstrates an operable, non-disruptive installation method for rail yards.

On-track Solar Pilot — Design and Significance

- **Overview**
 - **Objective:** augment Indian Railways’ renewable capacity and test use of yard/workshop track space for power generation.
- **Key technical and operational points**
 - **System features:** removable mounting; rubber vibration pads and epoxy fixation to protect panels and track integrity.
 - **Performance metrics (pilot):**
 - **Installed capacity:** 15 kWp (28 panels).
 - **Power density (pilot estimates):** reported ~220–240 kWp/km.
 - **Energy density (pilot estimates):** reported ~880–960 units/km/day.
 - **Operational advantage:** uses existing rail corridor space so **no land acquisition** and panels are removable for maintenance or seasonal needs.
- **Significance for policy and scale**
 - **Scalability potential:** concept intended for yard lines and non-traffic stretches across the national network as a complementary renewable source.
 - **Cost and auditability:** reduces dependence on external power purchases for workshops and supports Indian Railways’ sustainability goals.

Saltwater Crocodiles Rise in the Sundarbans

What's the News?

- **Event:** State forest survey reports an increase in **saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*)** observations in the **Sundarbans Biosphere Reserve**.
- **Key figures:** **213 direct sightings** recorded; population estimate updated to **220–242 individuals** with **125 adults**, **88 juveniles**, and **23 hatchlings** observed.
- **Immediate implications:** Indicates population recovery but also rising human–crocodile encounters due to habitat pressure and nesting-site loss.

Population & Habitat Trends

- **Survey overview**
 - **Transect effort** expanded and produced higher encounter rates (about **1 crocodile per 5.5 km** of creek).
 - **Age-structure improvement** shown by increased hatchling counts, signaling recent successful nesting.
- **Habitat signals**
 - **Favoured conditions:** creek widths, salinity range and temperature thresholds inform distribution and conservation planning.
 - **Threats:** loss of nesting sites from erosion and sea-level/climate impacts is driving more crocodiles toward human-settled islands.

Additional Info

- **Saltwater Crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*)**
 - It is the largest living reptile and crocodilian known.
 - **Conservation Status:**
 - **IUCN Red List:** Least Concern.
 - **CITES:** Appendix I (except for the populations of Australia, Indonesia, and Papua New Guinea, which are included in Appendix II).
 - **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule I.
 - It is found in coastal areas and river mouths across the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia, and northern Australia.
- **Sundarbans**
 - A vast mangrove forest in the coastal region of the Bay of Bengal, spanning India and Bangladesh.
 - It is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**, a **Ramsar Site**, and a **Biosphere Reserve**.
 - The region is famous for being the only mangrove forest in the world inhabited by tigers.
- **Conservation Efforts**
 - The **Bhagabatpur Crocodile Project**, initiated in 1976, has been a key conservation and breeding program.
 - The project successfully released 577 crocodiles into the wild until its conclusion.

NTCA Narrows Recognised Tiger Corridors to 32 Pathways

What's the News?

- The **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** has restricted the definition of tiger corridors to only 32 "least cost pathways" identified in a 2014 report, reversing its earlier stance that advocated for incorporating multiple scientific studies.
- This move simplifies clearances for development projects like mining and infrastructure in ecologically sensitive areas but raises concerns among conservationists about long-term tiger survival and genetic diversity.

NTCA's Revised Corridor Definition?

- **Overview:** Tiger corridors are natural linkages between tiger habitats that enable movement, gene flow, and population stability. The NTCA's new policy limits recognized corridors to:
 - The 32 least cost pathways (shortest routes with minimal ecological resistance) from its 2014 report.
 - Corridors mentioned in **Tiger Conservation Plans (TCPs)** prepared by states.
- **Exclusions:** The definition ignores updated studies, including:
 - **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)** research (2016, 2021) using telemetry and landscape modelling.
 - **All-India Tiger Estimation (AITE)** data highlighting broader tiger movement patterns.
- **Implications:**
 - **Development Projects:** Eases clearances for projects in Maharashtra (e.g., **Western Coalfields Limited's** Durgapur mines and **Lloyds Metals & Energy's** Surajgarh iron ore mines).
 - **Ecological Risks:** Fragments habitats, threatens genetic diversity, and increases human-wildlife conflicts.

Additional Info

- **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA):**
 - It is a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
 - It was established in 2005 following a recommendation by the Tiger Task Force.
 - Its mandate is to manage Project Tiger and other tiger conservation programs.
 - The NTCA is an important body for the implementation of the provisions of the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- **Project Tiger:**
 - Launched in 1973, it is a centrally-sponsored scheme to protect tigers in their natural habitats.
 - It has been instrumental in the recovery of the tiger population in India.
- **Tiger Corridors:**
 - These are strips of land that connect two or more tiger reserves or protected areas.
 - They are vital for maintaining genetic diversity among tiger populations and preventing

inbreeding by facilitating the movement of tigers between different habitats.

- **Wildlife Institute of India (WII):**
 - An autonomous institution under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
 - It conducts wildlife research and management training.
 - It is responsible for carrying out the **All India Tiger Estimation (AITE)**, which is conducted every four years.

Centre Constitutes National Designated Authority for Carbon Markets

What's the News?

- **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** has constituted a **National Designated Authority (NDA)** to steer India's entry into **Article 6** carbon trading under the **Paris Agreement**.

NDA — Role and Design

- **Composition:** **21-member** body chaired by the **Environment Secretary** with cross-ministry representation.
- **Mandate:** recommend eligible activities, evaluate and approve projects, authorise use of **emission reduction units (ERUs)** for India's **NDCs**, and monitor compliance with Article 6 rules.
- **Operational focus:** create national criteria for tradable credits, align domestic markets with international transfers, and ensure sustainable-development safeguards.
- **Key Functions of NDA:**
 - Recommend activities (e.g., renewable energy, afforestation, green hydrogen) for emission reduction trading.
 - Evaluate and authorize projects under **Article 6.4 (Paris Agreement Crediting Mechanism)**.
 - Maintain a registry of approved projects and ensure transparency in credit issuance.

Additional Info

- **Carbon Market:** A trading system where carbon credits are bought and sold. Each credit represents one tonne of carbon dioxide (CO₂) or its equivalent greenhouse gas removed, reduced, or avoided from the atmosphere. They serve as a financial incentive for companies to reduce their carbon footprint.
- **Article 6, Paris Agreement:** This article outlines the framework for international cooperation on climate action, including a mechanism for countries to voluntarily transfer emission reduction outcomes (**ITMOs** - Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes). The creation of an NDA is a mandatory requirement under this article. The operational rules for Article 6 were finalized at **COP29 in Baku** in November 2024.
- **India's Climate Targets:**
 - To reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by **45%** by 2030, from 2005 levels.
 - To achieve **50%** cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030.

- To create an additional carbon sink of **2.5 to 3 billion tonnes** of CO₂ equivalent by 2030.
- **Indian Carbon Market (ICM):** The **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS)**, notified in 2023, provides the legal basis for the ICM. The **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)** and the **Ministry of Power** are the key implementing agencies for the domestic market.

Maharashtra Partners with BNHS to Restore Ujani Wetland

What's the News?

- The **Maharashtra Water Resources Department (WRD)** and the **Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)** signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for the **eco-restoration of Ujani Reservoir**, a critical man-made wetland along the Bhima River in western Maharashtra.
- Supported by the **Cipla Foundation**, the agreement aims to address threats from invasive species, promote sustainable fisheries, and enhance eco-tourism while linking biodiversity conservation with livelihood security for local communities.
- The MoU was formalized in Mumbai in the presence of **WRD Minister Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil** and senior officials.

Ujani Wetland Restoration Initiative

- **Ecological Significance:**
 - Ujani (also known as **Bhigwan**) is recognized as an **Important Bird Area (IBA)** under the **Central Asian Flyway**, serving as a crucial habitat for migratory birds and supporting agriculture, hydroelectric power, drinking water supply, and fisheries.
- **Key Objectives:**
 - Combat invasive species like **water hyacinth, Ipomoea, Tilapia, African catfish, and Suckermouth catfish**, which disrupt native ecosystems and cause economic losses to fishermen.
 - Restore native habitats through **climate-resilient fisheries development**, promote sustainable fishing practices, and train local bird guides and anglers to boost eco-tourism.

Additional Info

- **Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS):**
 - Founded in **1883**, it is one of India's largest non-governmental organizations dedicated to nature conservation and research.
 - Its guiding principle is that conservation must be based on scientific research, a tradition championed by its late president, the renowned ornithologist **Dr. Sálim Ali**.
 - It is a partner of **BirdLife International** in India.
- **Wetlands in India:**
 - India has designated over 80 sites as Wetlands of International Importance (**Ramsar Sites**), the highest in South Asia.
 - The **Ramsar Convention** (1971) is an international treaty for the conservation and

sustainable use of wetlands. India is a signatory to this convention.

- Wetlands act as natural filters, contributing to flood control, groundwater recharge, and providing habitats for a vast array of flora and fauna.

- Index links to national goals on energy efficiency and supports Centre-state coordination for implementation and reporting.

Additional Info

- **State Energy Efficiency Index (SEEI):**
 - SEEI is a tool to track and compare the progress of states and UTs in managing and improving energy efficiency.
 - It promotes data-driven monitoring, sharing of best practices, and healthy competition among states.
- **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE):**
 - The BEE is a statutory body established in 2002 under the provisions of the **Energy Conservation Act, 2001**.
 - Its mission is to assist in developing policies and strategies to reduce India's energy intensity.
 - It is responsible for programs like the **Star Rating** for appliances and the **Perform, Achieve, and Trade (PAT)** scheme for energy-intensive industries.
- **Alignment with National Goals:**
 - Energy efficiency is a foundational pillar for achieving India's climate goals, including its commitment to achieve **Net-Zero emissions by 2070** and a **45% reduction in emissions intensity by 2030**.
 - The SEEI helps states align their actions with these national goals.


Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh Top State Energy Efficiency Index 2024

What's the News?

- **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)** released the **State Energy Efficiency Index (SEEI) 2024** assessing states and UTs on energy-efficiency performance.
- **Maharashtra** led **Group 1** and **Andhra Pradesh** led **Group 2**.

SEEI 2024 — Key findings

- **Top metrics**
 - **Maharashtra** score: **80.5%** (Group 1).
 - **Andhra Pradesh** score: **79.3%** (Group 2).
 - **Group winners:** **Assam** (Group 3) and **Tripura** (Group 4).
- **Categorisation**
 - States grouped by **Total Final Energy Consumption (TFEC)**:
 - **Group 1:** >15 MToe.
 - **Group 2:** 5–15 MToe.
 - **Group 3:** 1–5 MToe.
 - **Group 4:** <1 MToe.
- **Policy relevance**



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Health

FSSAI and Ministry of Ayush Release Definitive List of Ayurveda Aahara Products

What's New?

- The **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)**, in collaboration with the **Ministry of Ayush**, has released a definitive list of **Ayurveda Aahara** products.
- This initiative aims to promote holistic nutrition by integrating traditional Ayurvedic principles with modern food safety standards.
- The list serves as a standardized reference for products rooted in ancient Indian wisdom, enhancing consumer trust and ensuring authenticity.

Ayurveda Aahara Products

- Ayurveda Aahara refers to food products prepared according to Ayurvedic principles, an ancient Indian system of medicine focused on balancing the body's doshas (energies) to promote health and well-being.
- The list includes items such as herbal teas, dietary supplements, and functional foods, categorized by ingredients, preparation methods, and intended health benefits.
- It is designed to assist manufacturers, retailers, and consumers, fostering the growth of the Ayurveda Aahara market while ensuring product safety and quality.

Cultural and Health Significance

- This release bridges traditional knowledge and modern regulation, potentially boosting the Ayurveda industry and encouraging research in holistic health.
- It ensures access to safe, standardized products, supporting public health.
- The move aligns with the government's emphasis on promoting traditional medicine systems and reflects global interest in natural wellness solutions.

Additional Information

- FSSAI regulates food safety in India, while the Ministry of Ayush oversees traditional medicine systems, including Ayurveda.
- Their collaboration underscores a commitment to blending heritage with contemporary standards.
- The list's development likely involved consultations with experts in Ayurveda, food science, and regulation.
- It builds on initiatives like the establishment of the Ayush Ministry in 2014 and the National Ayush Mission, which seeks to enhance Ayush services and public health infrastructure.

Ghats carry toxic heavy metals, posing **carcinogenic and non-carcinogenic health risks**, particularly to children.

- The research, led by **Dr. Sanat Kumar Das**, identified metals like **cadmium, chromium, copper, and zinc** in non-precipitating clouds, with the **Eastern Himalayas** showing **1.5 times higher pollution levels** than the Western Ghats.

Heavy Metal Contamination in Clouds

Overview:

- The study challenges the notion of "clean" mountain rain, highlighting how clouds transport toxic metals from polluted lowlands to high-altitude ecosystems, impacting human health and fragile environments.

Key Details:

- **Metals Detected:** Cadmium (Cd), Chromium (Cr), Copper (Cu), Zinc (Zn)
- **Health Risks:** Inhalation of contaminated cloud water increases cancer risk (e.g., due to dissolved chromium) and developmental disorders, with children facing a **30% higher risk** than adults.
- **Pollution Sources:** Vehicular emissions and industrial activities in foothill regions.
- **Regional Variation:** Eastern Himalayas more polluted due to higher industrial and vehicular activity compared to the Western Ghats.

Objective:

- To assess health risks from heavy metal exposure via cloud water through inhalation, ingestion, and dermal absorption, using statistical models.

Environmental and Health Significance

- **Public Health:** The presence of carcinogenic metals in cloud water threatens high-altitude communities relying on precipitation, necessitating urgent monitoring and mitigation.
- **Ecosystem Impact:** Contamination risks disrupting fragile Himalayan ecosystems, affecting biodiversity and water quality.
- **Policy Implications:** Highlights the need for stricter emission controls and environmental regulations to curb industrial and vehicular pollution.

Additional Info

Study Details:

- Published in **Environmental Advances** (DOI: 10.1016/j.envadv.2025.100647).
- Conducted during the monsoon onset, focusing on non-precipitating clouds.
- Compared to global peers, Indian clouds are less polluted than those in **China, Pakistan, Italy**, and the **United States**, but rising pollution levels remain a concern.

Context:

- Heavy metals (atomic weight 63.5–200.6, density >4000 kg/m³) originate from natural

Toxic Heavy Metals in Himalayan Clouds Raise Health Concerns

What's New?

- A study by the **Bose Institute**, Kolkata, under the **Department of Science and Technology**, revealed that clouds over the **Eastern Himalayas** and **Western**

(Earth's crust) and anthropogenic sources (smelting, mining, industrial activities).

- Over **50 heavy metals** exist, with **17** being highly toxic (e.g., arsenic, lead, cadmium).
- **Challenges:**
 - Limited prior data on monsoon cloud contamination complicates risk assessment.
 - Rapid urbanization and industrial growth in Himalayan foothills exacerbate pollution.

Telangana Recognized for Highest Organ Donation Rate in India

What's New?

- **Telangana** has been honored with a national award for achieving the **highest organ donation rate** in India, recognized during the **15th Indian Organ Donation Day** celebrations in **New Delhi**.
- The award, presented by **Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda**, acknowledges the success of the **Jeevandan programme**, which facilitated **725 organ and tissue transplants** from **188 brain-dead donors** in 2024.

Organ Donation Leadership

- **Overview:**
 - The **Jeevandan programme**, launched in 2013 by the **Government of Telangana**, has positioned the state as a pioneer in **cadaveric organ donation**, driven by robust policy frameworks and public awareness initiatives.
 - Administered by the **Cadaver Transplantation Advisory Committee (CTAC)** and the **Appropriate Authority for Cadaver Transplantation (AACT)**, it ensures ethical and equitable organ distribution.
- **Key details:**
 - **Donation metrics:** In 2024, **188 brain-dead donors** contributed to **725 transplants**, including **297 kidneys, 175 livers, 26 hearts, 152 corneas, and 75 lungs**.
 - **Comparative performance:** Telangana's **4.88 donors per million population (pmp)** contrasts with the national average of **0.8 pmp**, while global leaders like **Spain** achieve **48 pmp** and the **United States** **30 pmp**.
 - **Award recognition:** The **National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO)** conferred the award, underscoring Telangana's contribution to India's record **18,900 organ transplants** in 2024.
 - **Policy support:** The **Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act (THOTA)** ensures transparency and prevents commercial organ trade, bolstering public trust.

Additional Info

- **Historical context:**
 - The **Jeevandan programme**, initiated in 2013, replaced the **Telangana Transplantation of Human Organs Act, 1995**, modeled on the national **THOTA 1994**, which regulates organ

donation and prohibits commercial transactions.

- Since its inception, **Jeevandan** has facilitated over **6,309 organ and tissue transplants** from **1,673 deceased donors**, reflecting steady growth in donor numbers.
- **Operational framework:**
 - The **CTAC**, chaired by the **Special Chief Secretary of Health**, and the **AACT**, led by the **Director of Medical Education**, oversee organ allocation and compliance with ethical standards.
 - Hospitals receive specialized training to handle **brain-death cases** sensitively, improving family consent rates.
- **Support mechanisms:**
 - The **Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi** provides up to **₹15 lakh** for transplant surgeries, and **Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY** covers kidney transplants, easing financial burdens.
 - Post-transplant patients receive **₹10,000 per month** for medical costs, supporting recovery and compliance.

Indian Nutrition Study on TB Influences WHO Global Policy

What's the News?

- An Indian study, the **RATIONS trial**, has provided crucial evidence on the link between nutrition and Tuberculosis (TB), prompting the **World Health Organization (WHO)** to update its global guidelines.
- The WHO now recommends systematic nutritional assessment and support for all individuals with TB, a policy shift directly influenced by India's research findings.

The RATIONS Trial

The **RATIONS (Reducing Activation of Tuberculosis by Improvement of Nutritional Status)** trial was a landmark study conducted by the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) - National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis (NIRT)** in Chennai.

- **Objective:** To assess the impact of nutritional support on preventing TB infection from progressing to active disease among household contacts of TB patients.
- **Methodology:** The trial provided food baskets (including rice, pulses, milk powder, and oil) and multivitamins to families of TB patients.
- **Key Findings:**
 - Nutritional support led to a nearly **40% reduction** in TB incidence among all household members.
 - The reduction was even more significant, at almost **50%**, among close family contacts.
 - The intervention also reduced mortality and helped prevent weight loss in existing TB patients.

Additional Info

National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP)

- **Goal:** To eliminate TB in India by **2025**, five years ahead of the global Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target of 2030.
- **Strategy:** A multi-pronged approach including early diagnosis through **Active Case Finding (ACF)** campaigns, free treatment, and robust patient support systems.
- **Key Initiatives:**
 - **Ni-kshay Portal:** A web-based patient management system for monitoring TB patients.
 - **Nikshay Poshan Yojana (NPY):** A direct benefit transfer (DBT) scheme providing financial assistance for nutrition.

Nikshay Poshan Yojana (NPY)

- **Objective:** To provide nutritional support to TB patients to improve treatment outcomes and address undernutrition, a major co-morbidity.
- **Mechanism:** A Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) of **₹500 per month** is provided to each notified TB patient for the entire duration of their treatment.

AI-Designed Antibiotics Target Drug-Resistant Gonorrhoea and MRSA

What's the News?

- **Event:** Researchers led by MIT used **generative AI** to design novel antibiotic molecules that killed drug-resistant **Neisseria gonorrhoeae** and **MRSA** in laboratory and animal tests.
- **Key outcomes:** Two lead compounds (**NG1, DN1**) showed strong antibacterial activity and cleared infections in mice models.
- **Immediate impact:** Demonstrates a fast, cost-efficient route to explore chemical space for antibiotics and revitalises the drug-discovery pipeline while clinical development remains necessary.

AI-Designed Antibiotics — what this means

- **Method**
 - **Generative AI** screened and generated tens of millions of hypothetical molecules.

- Computational filters shortlisted candidates for synthesis and lab testing.

Scientific significance

- AI produced molecular structures **structurally different** from existing antibiotic classes.
- Novel structures reduce immediate cross-resistance risk and expand therapeutic options against **AMR**.

Translational status

- Compounds validated in vitro and in mice.
- **Next steps:** optimisation, preclinical toxicology, and multi-phase clinical trials before human use.

Additional Info

Scientific context

Background:

- Traditional antibiotic discovery has slowed; most existing classes originate from mid-20th century.
- AI enables searching chemical regions previously inaccessible to conventional screens.

Technical details:

- Two generative approaches were combined to create and evaluate candidate molecules.
- Only a small fraction of AI-proposed molecules are synthesizable and safe; iterative wet-lab validation is required.

Policy and public-health context

- **Global burden:** AMR is an urgent global health threat; bacterial AMR caused over **1.2 million** deaths in 2019 and contributes to several million deaths annually.
- **India: National Action Plan on AMR (NAP-AMR)** provides the policy framework for surveillance, stewardship, and R&D support at national and state levels.
- **Governance levers:** Regulatory pathways, public funding for translational R&D, and stewardship incentives are critical to convert AI discoveries into accessible treatments.

Education

Higher Education Commission of India to Reshape Regulatory Landscape

What's the News?

- Government proposes formation of the **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)**. It will replace **UGC, AICTE, and NCTE** under a unified regulatory structure.
- HECI aims to unify fragmented regulation, promote institutional autonomy, and integrate advanced technologies in governance.

Structural Framework

- Four specialised verticals within HECI:
 - National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC)**: Unified approval and oversight with AI-powered real-time monitoring.
 - National Accreditation Council (NAC)**: Outcome-based quality assurance focusing on employability, research, and industry linkage.
 - Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC)**: Performance-linked funding akin to UK's Research Excellence Framework.
 - General Education Council (GEC)**: Curriculum modernisation via **National Higher Education Qualification Framework**.
- Key tools and technologies:
 - National Education Intelligence Platform (NEIP)** with predictive analytics and dashboards.
 - Blockchain-secured credentialing system** for verification of degrees.
 - Regional Education Excellence Centres (REECs)** for regional oversight.
 - AI tools for feedback analysis and infrastructure audits.
- Implementation roadmap: phased rollout from **2026–27** to full implementation by **2030**, targeting global positioning and integration of all functions.

Constitutional and Financial Safeguards

- HECI will have protected legal status, insulated from political interference, with staggered leadership terms.
- Guaranteed funding set at **1.5% of GDP**, inflation-adjusted.
- Transparency ensured through blockchain-recorded decisions and public institutional dashboards.

Additional Info

- Historical Context**: The **NEP 2020** builds on recommendations from the **National Knowledge Commission (2009)**, **Yashpal Committee (2010)**, and **Committee for Evolution of the New Education Policy (2016)**, advocating for a single regulator to reduce over-regulation.
- Related Policies**: The HECI aligns with **NEP 2020's** goals of increasing **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)** to 50% by 2035 and promoting multidisciplinary education.
- Constitutional Relevance**: Education is a **Concurrent List** subject (**Seventh Schedule, Entry 25**), necessitating balanced central-state coordination, which **HECI's** Advisory Council aims to address.

CBSE to Introduce Open-Book Exams for Class IX from 2026–27

What's the News?

- CBSE has approved **open-book assessments (OBAs)** for **Class 9** starting **2026–27**, following positive feedback from a **pilot study**.
- Exams will cover **core subjects**—language, mathematics, science, and social science—and be part of **three pen-and-paper internal assessments per term**.
- The change aligns with **NEP 2020** and **NCFSE 2023**, aiming to shift from rote learning to **competency-based evaluation**.
- Schools may opt into the format; it's initially **non-mandatory**.

What Are Open-Book Exams?

- Students may use **approved resources** like textbooks and notes during exams.
- The objective is **interpretation, synthesis, and application**, not recall.
- Success hinges on ability to **navigate and apply material**, not on memory.

Rationale and Context

- A **pilot conducted in late 2023** spanned Classes 9–12 across key subjects. Teacher support was strong, despite student scores ranging from **12 % to 47 %**, indicating challenges in effective use of resources.
- CBSE will develop **standardised sample papers and guidance materials** and provide training to support implementation.
- Previous attempt: **OTBA (Open Text-Based Assessment)** in 2014 was discontinued by 2017–18 due to insufficient development of critical thinking.

Additional Info

- Globally, **open-book exams have existed since the 1950s** (e.g., Hong Kong 1953), and studies show they reinforce **conceptual understanding**, especially among weaker students.
- During **COVID-19**, various Indian universities (e.g., DU, JNU, IITs) used OBEs, revealing both benefits and adaptation challenges.
- Related Initiatives**: Complements **NEP 2020's** push for **School-Based Assessments** and the **National Assessment Centre (PARAKH)**, which standardizes evaluation frameworks.
- Constitutional Relevance**: Education, a **Concurrent List** subject (**Seventh Schedule, Entry 25**), allows **CBSE** to drive national reforms while coordinating with states.

Lok Sabha Clears Bill to Establish IIM Guwahati

What's the News?

- Lok Sabha passed the **Indian Institutes of Management (Amendment) Bill, 2025** via voice vote, without debate.
- The Bill designates **IIM Guwahati** as an **institution of national importance** under the IIM Act.
- Assam will receive a **corpus of ₹550 crore** (per some reports ₹555 crore) over five years for establishment; thereafter the institute is to be financially self-sustaining.
- The institute will operate under mentorship of **IIM Ahmedabad**, starting from a temporary campus; a permanent campus is planned in **Palasbari, Kamrup district**.
- The Bill stems from a **Memorandum of Settlement** between the Centre, Assam government, and ULFA under the **Special Development Package** for development linked to the 2023 peace agreement.
- Opposition protests over the **SIR (Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls)** disrupted proceedings; adjournments occurred.

Additional Info

- Assam enrolls over **5.5 lakh** higher-education students; IIM will enhance leadership and managerial capacity.
- Until IIM Guwahati's own Board is constituted, the central government will appoint officials to act on behalf of the Board.
- With this addition, total IIMs declared as institutions of national importance rise to **22**.

Kerala Achieves Complete Digital Literacy Through 'Digi Keralam' Campaign

What's the News?

- Kerala has become the first state in India—arguably the world—to attain **100% digital literacy**.
- Over **21.87 lakh** citizens were trained under the government's **Digi Keralam** programme.
- Chief Minister **Pinarayi Vijayan** is poised to make a formal declaration confirming this milestone.

Why This Matters

- **Digi Keralam** covered all age groups and demographics, making digital skills and access universally available.
- The campaign fostered inclusivity and community engagement through extensive volunteer support.

Additional Info

- **Historical Context**

- Kerala first achieved **universal literacy** in the early 1990s.
- **Pullampara Panchayat** served as the pilot, becoming the state's first fully digital-literate panchayat.

Programme Details

- **Digi Keralam** launched in 2023, aimed to bridge digital gaps across the population.
- Training modules taught smartphone basics, app usage (e.g., YouTube, messaging), and online utility payments.
- **Volunteers** numbered over **2.5 lakh**, including youth, NSS/NCC members, Kudumbashree workers, and community actors.

Inclusivity Metrics

- Surveyed **83 lakh** people to identify digitally illiterate individuals; trained **21+ lakh** thereafter.
- People aged 75–90 were included once age restrictions were lifted; over **15,000** participants above 90 took part.
- Among the digitally empowered was **105-year-old** M A Abdullah Maulavi, who learned to use smartphones and access digital services.

Digital Infrastructure & Governance

- Kerala also pioneered **K-FON**, its own high-speed internet network, aiming to provide affordable digital access to all households.
- The state already offers **9,000+ government services online** and leverages **K-SMART** for local governance services.
- KITE Kerala (formerly IT@School) supports ICT-enabled education and digital skills from schools to citizen services.

Kerala Fibre Optic Network (KFON) Project:

- This project is a cornerstone of Kerala's digital infrastructure strategy.
- Its objective is to provide high-speed, reliable internet connectivity across the state.
- A key feature is the provision of free internet connections to families living Below the Poverty Line (BPL) and subsidized internet access for others.

National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM):

- This is a central government initiative launched to empower at least one person per household with crucial digital literacy skills.
- The mission's goal is to make citizens IT literate so they can actively participate in the digital economy and access e-governance services.

Economy and Finance

India Releases Supply and Use Tables for 2020–21 and 2021–22

What's New?

- The **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)** released the **Supply and Use Tables (SUTs)** for **2020–21** and **2021–22**, providing a detailed snapshot of India's **economic transactions** across **66 product groups** and **54 industries**.
- This marks the first release since **2018**, offering insights into the economy's recovery post-COVID-19, with **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** growth of **8.7%** in 2021–22, driven by **manufacturing** and **services**.
- The SUTs reveal **supply chain dynamics**, showing **agriculture's contribution** at **18.5% of total supply** in 2021–22, while **manufacturing** and **services** accounted for **31%** and **45%**, respectively. **Imports** rose by **12%** in 2021–22 due to increased demand for **petroleum products** and **electronics**, per **MoSPI data**.

Supply and Use Tables

- **Overview:**
 - The **SUTs**, compiled under the **System of National Accounts (SNA) 2008**, map the flow of **goods** and **services** across India's economy, detailing **production**, **consumption**, and **trade**.
 - Released by **MoSPI**, they cover **66 products** (e.g., crops, machinery) and **54 industries** (e.g., textiles, IT services), providing a framework to analyze **economic interlinkages**.
- **Key features:**
 - **Supply Table:** Records **domestic production** (e.g., **Rs 180 lakh crore** in 2021–22) and **imports** (**Rs 28 lakh crore**), adjusted for **taxes** and **subsidies**. **Agriculture** contributed **Rs 33 lakh crore**, with **cereals** and **dairy** as key products.
 - **Use Table:** Tracks **intermediate consumption** (**Rs 95 lakh crore** by industries) and **final consumption** (**Rs 85 lakh crore** by households, government), with **exports** at **Rs 22 lakh crore** in 2021–22.
 - **Applications:** Supports **Input-Output Tables**, **GDP calculations**, and **policy decisions** on taxation, trade, and industrial growth. It highlights **value addition**, with **services** contributing **55% to GVA** in 2021–22.
- **Significance:** The SUTs enable **evidence-based policymaking**, revealing post-COVID shifts like increased **digital services demand** (e.g., **IT sector growth of 15%**) and supply chain bottlenecks in **electronics** due to global chip shortages.

Economic Significance

- **Policy relevance:**
 - The SUTs guide **budget allocation**, identifying high-impact sectors

like **manufacturing** (e.g., **Make in India** boost) and **services** (e.g., **IT exports**).

- They inform **GST reforms** by mapping **tax incidence** across products.
- **Trade insights:** Highlight India's reliance on **imported petroleum** (20% of import value) and **electronics** (15%), supporting strategies to reduce **trade deficits** (**Rs 45.8 lakh crore** in 2021–22) via **Atmanirbhar Bharat**.
- **Challenges:** Ensuring **data timeliness** (delayed from 2018), improving **granularity** for emerging sectors like **green energy**, and addressing **informal economy gaps** (30% of GDP, per **NITI Aayog**).

Additional Info

- **MoSPI:**
 - Established under the **Statistics Act, 2008**, it oversees **National Accounts Statistics**, with SUTs compiled by the **National Accounts Division**.
 - The **2020–21 SUT** reflects a **3.9% GDP contraction** due to COVID-19, while **2021–22** shows an **8.7% rebound**, per **National Accounts Statistics 2025**.
- **SUT specifics:**
 - Cover **66 products** (e.g., rice, steel, software) and **54 industries** (e.g., agriculture, chemicals, financial services).
 - **Agriculture's share** dropped from **19.2%** in 2020–21 to **18.5%** in 2021–22, while **services** rose from **43% to 45%**.
 - **Imports** grew from **Rs 25 lakh crore** to **Rs 28 lakh crore**, driven by **global commodity prices**.
- **Global context:**
 - India's SUTs align with **UN SNA 2008**, used by **OECD countries** and **China**, enabling **cross-country comparisons**.
 - The **World Bank** cites India's **services-led growth** as a model for developing economies.
- **Applications:**
 - Used by **NITI Aayog** for **SDG monitoring** (e.g., **SDG 8: Decent Work**), by **RBI** for **monetary policy**, and by **Commerce Ministry** for **export strategies**.
 - The **electronics sector** showed a **10% import dependency** increase, prompting **PLI scheme** expansions.
- **Data gaps:** The **informal sector** (e.g., street vendors, small workshops) is underrepresented, with **30% of employment** untracked, per **PLFS 2025**. **MoSPI** plans to integrate **eSankhyiki Portal** data for real-time updates by **2027**.

India's Forex Reserves Rise by \$2.7 Billion to \$698.19 Billion

What's New?

- India's foreign exchange reserves surged by **\$2.7 billion**, reaching **\$698.19 billion** as of **July 25, 2025**, according to the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**.
- This increase follows a decline of **\$1.183 billion** in the prior week, indicating a rebound in reserve levels.

Forex Reserves Update

- Overview:** The rise in reserves is driven by gains in key components, reflecting robust foreign investment inflows and effective reserve management by the RBI.
- Key Details:**
 - Total Reserves:** \$698.19 billion, up \$2.7 billion
 - Foreign Currency Assets:** \$588.926 billion, up \$1.316 billion
 - Gold Reserves:** \$85.704 billion, up \$1.206 billion
 - Special Drawing Rights (SDRs):** \$18.809 billion, up \$126 million
 - Reserve Position in IMF:** \$4.753 billion, up \$55 million
 - The increase is linked to strong **foreign direct investment (FDI)** and **foreign portfolio investment (FPI)** inflows, with notable figures of **\$8.8 billion** in FDI in April 2025 and **\$1.7 billion** in FPI in May 2025.
- RBI's Role:** The RBI intervenes in the forex market to stabilize the rupee and curb excessive volatility, ensuring orderly market conditions.

Additional Info

- Historical Context:** Reserves have trended upward recently, growing from **\$692.721 billion** in late May 2025 to **\$698.19 billion** by July 2025, after hitting a peak of **\$704.885 billion** in September 2024.
- Global Standing:** India ranks among the top nations with the largest forex reserves, a testament to its economic strength.
- Policy Framework:** The RBI's proactive management supports rupee stability and aligns with broader monetary policy goals.

marking the seventh consecutive month of collections exceeding **Rs 1.8 lakh crore**.

- Key details:**
 - Gross collections:** Rs 1.96 lakh crore (up 7.5% YoY)
 - Domestic transactions:** Rs 1.43 lakh crore (up 6.7% YoY)
 - Imports:** Rs 52,712 crore (up 9.5% YoY)
 - Refunds:** Rs 27,147 crore (up 66.8% YoY)
 - Net revenue:** Rs 1.69 lakh crore (up 1.7% YoY)
- Objective:**
 - To sustain fiscal health and support government expenditure through consistent tax revenue growth.

Additional Info

- Historical context:**
 - GST collections have shown consistent growth, with April 2025 recording an all-time high of **Rs 2.37 lakh crore**.
 - Between April and July 2025, gross GST revenue rose by **10.7%** to **Rs 8.18 lakh crore** compared to the same period in 2024.
- State-wise performance:**
 - Smaller states like Tripura (+41%), Meghalaya (+26%), and Sikkim (+23%) posted strong growth.
 - Larger states such as Maharashtra (+6%), Karnataka (+7%), and Tamil Nadu (+8%) saw moderate increases, while Gujarat recorded a muted **3%** rise.
- Policy framework:**
 - The **GST Council** continues to play a pivotal role in shaping tax policies, with recent reforms aimed at simplifying compliance and boosting revenue.
- Challenges:**
 - The sharp rise in refunds, particularly for domestic transactions, highlights ongoing issues like inverted duty structures, which may require further policy adjustments.

India's GST Collections Rise by 7.5% in July 2025

What's New?

- India's **Gross Goods and Services Tax (GST)** collections for July 2025 increased by **7.5%** year-on-year, reaching **Rs 1.96 lakh crore**, as per government data.
- The growth was driven by higher revenue from domestic transactions and imports, though the pace was slower than in recent months.
- A notable **66.8% surge** in refunds to **Rs 27,147 crore** impacted net revenue growth.

GST Collections Update

- Overview:**
 - The GST collections reflect steady economic activity and improved compliance, with July

NITI Aayog Unveils \$200 Billion Electric Vehicle Opportunity for India

What's New?

- NITI Aayog** has released a report titled "**Unlocking a \$200 Billion Opportunity: Electric Vehicles in India**", spotlighting the vast potential of the electric vehicle (EV) market.
- Launched by **NITI Aayog Member Rajiv Gauba** and CEO **B.V.R. Subrahmanyam**, the report provides a roadmap to accelerate EV adoption by tackling challenges like infrastructure, affordability, and supply chain issues.
- It introduces the **India Electric Mobility Index (IEMI)** to track and benchmark the progress of states and Union Territories (UTs) in electric mobility.

India's EV Market Potential

- The report targets a **\$200 billion market opportunity** by 2030, supporting India's goal of **30% EV penetration** in vehicle sales.

- It focuses on high-potential segments like electric buses and trucks, advocating a shift from incentives to mandates and disincentives.
- The **IEMI** assesses states and UTs on 16 indicators, including transport electrification and charging infrastructure, with **Delhi, Maharashtra,** and **Chandigarh** emerging as leaders in 2024.

Economic and Environmental Significance

- **Economic Impact:** The EV sector could drive job creation, boost manufacturing, and attract investment, aligning with **Make in India**.
- **Environmental Benefit:** Aiming for 30% EV penetration by 2030 could cut transport-related emissions (13.5% of India's total), supporting the **net-zero by 2070** goal.
- It complements policies like **FAME II** and state EV frameworks, adopted by **29 states and UTs**.

Additional Info

- **Context:** India's EV sales grew from **50,000 units in 2016** to **2.08 million in 2024**, with penetration at **7.7%**, lagging behind global leaders like **China (20%)** and **Norway (80%)**.
- **Infrastructure:** With **25,000 charging stations** installed by 2025, India needs **39 lakh** to support **8 crore EVs** by 2030.
- **Challenges:** High costs, limited charging networks, and battery supply constraints remain hurdles.

Centre Reports Over 53.85 Crore Loans Sanctioned Under PMMY Scheme

What's New?

- The government informed Parliament that since its inception, **53.85 crore loans** amounting to over **Rs 35.13 lakh crore** have been sanctioned under the **Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY)**.
- The scheme provides **collateral-free credit up to Rs 20 lakh** to micro and small enterprises, enabling self-employment and income generation.

PMMY Scheme Achievements

- **Overview:**
 - The **Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY)**, launched in 2015, aims to provide financial support to non-corporate, non-farm small/micro enterprises by offering loans up to Rs 20 lakh.
- **Key details:**
 - **Sanctioned loans:** 53.85 crore loans worth over Rs 35.13 lakh crore since inception.
 - **Financial institutions:** Loans are provided by Commercial Banks, RRBs, Small Finance Banks, MFIs, and NBFCs.
 - **Application process:** Borrowers can apply through nearby bank branches or online via the Udyamimitra portal.

Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY)

Overview: Launched on **April 8, 2015**, by the Government of India under the **Ministry of Finance**, the **Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY)** aims to provide **collateral-free loans up to Rs 20 lakh** to non-corporate, non-farm micro and small enterprises to promote entrepreneurship and

financial inclusion. Administered by the **Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency (MUDRA)**, it supports income-generating activities in manufacturing, trading, and services.

Key Features:

- **Loan Categories:**
 - **Shishu:** Up to Rs 50,000
 - **Kishore:** Rs 50,001 to Rs 5 lakh
 - **Tarun:** Rs 5,00,001 to Rs 10 lakh
 - **Tarun Plus:** Up to Rs 20 lakh (introduced later)
- Loans are provided through Commercial Banks, Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), Small Finance Banks, NBFCs, and Microfinance Institutions (MFIs).
- **MUDRA Card:** A debit card for working capital needs.
- **Credit Guarantee:** Backed by the **Credit Guarantee Fund for Micro Units (CGFMU)** to mitigate lender risks.

GST Evasion of Rs 7.08 Lakh Crore Detected Over Last Five Financial Years

What's New?

- Central GST officers have detected GST evasion amounting to **Rs 7.08 lakh crore** over the last five financial years, including input tax credit (ITC) fraud of **Rs 1.79 lakh crore**.
- This information was shared in Parliament by the **Minister of State for Finance, Pankaj Chaudhary**.

GST Evasion Detection

- **Overview:**
 - The detection of significant GST evasion highlights the ongoing challenges in tax compliance and the efforts to combat fraud.
- **Key details:**
 - Total evasion detected: **Rs 7.08 lakh crore**
 - ITC fraud: **Rs 1.79 lakh crore**
 - Detection in FY25: Over **Rs 2.23 lakh crore**
 - In FY25, **15,283 cases** of ITC fraud detected, amounting to **Rs 58,772 crore**
 - Measures to prevent evasion: **E-invoicing, GST analytics, risk-based audits**

Additional Info

Introduction of GST

The **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** was introduced in India on **July 1, 2017**, marking a significant reform in the country's indirect tax system. It replaced a fragmented structure of multiple taxes such as VAT, excise duty, and service tax with a single, unified tax regime. The primary objectives of GST were to:

- Simplify the tax system by eliminating the cascading effect of taxes (tax on tax).
- Create a **unified national market** by harmonizing tax rates and policies across states.
- Boost tax compliance through a digital and transparent framework.

GST operates as a **destination-based tax**, levied at the point of consumption rather than production, aligning with global best practices.

Types of GST

GST in India is categorized into four types, each addressing specific transactions:

- **Central GST (CGST):** Levied by the central government on intra-state supplies of goods and services. Revenue goes to the Centre.
- **State GST (SGST):** Levied by state governments on intra-state supplies, with revenue retained by the respective state.
- **Integrated GST (IGST):** Levied by the central government on inter-state supplies and imports. Revenue is shared between the Centre and the consuming state.
- **Union Territory GST (UTGST):** Levied on supplies within Union Territories without legislatures (e.g., Chandigarh, Lakshadweep), with revenue accruing to the UT administration.

Constitutional Provisions

The implementation of GST required amendments to the Indian Constitution to empower both the Centre and states to levy this tax concurrently. Key provisions include:

- **101st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2016:** This amendment paved the way for GST by introducing:
 - **Article 246A:** Grants both Parliament and state legislatures the power to make laws related to GST, a unique feature of fiscal federalism.
 - **Article 279A:** Establishes the **GST Council**, a joint forum chaired by the Union Finance Minister, with state finance ministers as members. It recommends GST rates, exemptions, and administrative policies.
- The amendment also redefined the taxation powers under the Seventh Schedule, shifting indirect taxes like sales tax and excise duty under the GST framework.

- Integration with **merchant ecosystems** and international expansion (e.g., UAE, Singapore, Nepal).

Additional Info

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)

- **Founded:** 2008, an umbrella organization for retail payment systems in India.
- **Promoters:** Reserve Bank of India and Indian Banks' Association.
- **Key Products:** UPI, RuPay, IMPS, Bharat BillPay, FASTag.
- **Regulation:** Governed under the **Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007**.

UPI International Expansion

- Accepted in **UAE, Singapore, Bhutan, Nepal, and France** through partnerships.
- **NPCI International Payments Ltd (NIPL)** driving cross-border UPI use for remittances and merchant payments.

RBI Monetary Policy Committee Holds Repo Rate at 5.5%

What's the News?

- The **Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** has unanimously decided to keep the benchmark policy **repo rate unchanged at 5.5%**.
- The committee also maintained its policy stance as **"neutral"**, signaling a wait-and-watch approach amid evolving inflation and growth dynamics.

Key Policy Rates and Economic Projections

The MPC has held key rates and retained its economic forecasts for the fiscal year 2025-26.

- **Policy Repo Rate:** Unchanged at **5.50%**.
- **Standing Deposit Facility (SDF) Rate:** Remains at **5.25%**.
- **Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) Rate and Bank Rate:** Unchanged at **5.75%**.
- **Real GDP Growth Projection (FY26):** Retained at **7.3%**.
- **CPI Inflation Projection (FY26):** Maintained at **4.5%**, with the committee remaining focused on aligning inflation with the **4%** target.

Economic Implications

Maintaining the repo rate and a **"neutral"** stance carries significant implications for the economy.

- **Neutral Stance:** This indicates that the MPC retains flexibility to either increase or decrease the policy rate in future meetings, depending on how macroeconomic conditions, particularly inflation and growth, evolve. It signals that the central bank is not locked into a specific direction for interest rates.
- **Impact on Economy:** The decision to hold rates steady provides stability to the financial system. For consumers and businesses, this means that lending rates for loans (like home and auto loans) are likely to remain stable in the short term, supporting consumption and investment. The RBI's priority remains the durable alignment of inflation with its target, ensuring price stability without prematurely hindering economic momentum.

Daily UPI Transactions Cross 700 Million Mark for the First Time

What's the News?

- **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** transactions have crossed **700 million per day**, marking a new record for digital payments in India.
- This milestone reflects strong adoption of **real-time payment systems** for both **peer-to-peer (P2P)** and **person-to-merchant (P2M)** transactions.

UPI Growth and Features

- **Launched by NPCI in 2016**, UPI enables instant money transfer through mobile devices using a **single identifier (VPA)**.
- **Key details:**
 - Processes **high-volume microtransactions** at negligible cost.
 - Allows **interoperability across banks** and payment apps.
 - **24x7 availability**, supporting **bill payments, QR-based merchant payments, and recurring mandates**.
 - Adoption accelerated by **UPI Lite** for small-value transactions and **Credit on UPI** feature.
- **Driving factors:**
 - Growing smartphone and internet penetration.
 - Government's **Digital India** push and **zero MDR policy** for UPI transactions.

Additional Info

Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)

- **Function:** The MPC is a statutory body tasked with setting India's key policy interest rates, including the repo rate, to achieve its inflation target.
- **Composition:** It is a **six-member committee** chaired by the **RBI Governor**. It includes three members from the RBI and three external members appointed by the Government of India.
- **Mandate:** The primary objective of the MPC is to maintain price stability while keeping in mind the objective of growth. Under the flexible inflation targeting framework, the government has mandated the RBI to maintain **Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation at 4%** with a tolerance band of **+/- 2%** (i.e., a range of 2% to 6%).
- **Legal Basis:** The MPC was established under **Section 452B** of the amended **RBI Act, 1934**.

Key Monetary Policy Instruments

- **Repo Rate:** The rate at which the RBI lends money to commercial banks against government securities. It is the principal tool for managing liquidity and signaling the monetary policy stance.
- **Standing Deposit Facility (SDF):** An instrument that allows the RBI to absorb liquidity from commercial banks without needing to provide government securities as collateral. The SDF rate acts as the floor of the policy rate corridor.
- **Marginal Standing Facility (MSF):** A facility through which scheduled commercial banks can borrow additional overnight money from the RBI at a penal rate. The MSF rate acts as the ceiling of the policy rate corridor.

Economic Significance

- **Higher inclusion** enables **greater participation in formal credit, savings, insurance, and digital payment systems**.
- Facilitates delivery of **Direct Benefit Transfers (DBTs)** and welfare schemes efficiently.
- Promotes **financial stability** and supports **inclusive economic growth** by integrating marginalized populations.
- Boosts effectiveness of digital infrastructure such as **UPI, Jan Dhan accounts, and Aadhaar-enabled services**.

Additional Info

RBI Financial Inclusion Index

- First published in **August 2021**, with yearly updates.
- Based on 97 indicators across rural and urban regions.
- Does **not capture corporate or institutional inclusion** — only **individual consumer access and usage**.
- Key contributors to recent growth include:
 - Rise in **PM Jan Dhan Yojana** accounts crossing **50 crore**.
 - Growth in **UPI transaction volumes**.
 - Expansion of **microfinance, PM-SVANidhi, and social security schemes**.

Related Government Schemes

- **PM Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY):** Universal banking access.
- **PM Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana & PM Suraksha Bima Yojana:** Social security.
- **Stand Up India & MUDRA Yojana:** Inclusive entrepreneurship.
- **Digital India & India Stack:** For digital infrastructure and e-KYC.

RBI's Financial Inclusion Index Rises to 67 in 2025

What's the News?

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has reported that India's **Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index)** has increased to **67.0 in March 2025**, up from **64.2 in March 2024**.
- This improvement reflects expanded access, usage, and quality of financial services across the country, including in rural and underserved areas.

What Is the FI-Index?

The **Financial Inclusion Index**, introduced by RBI in 2021, is a composite measure that captures the extent of financial inclusion in India.

- **Index Range:** 0 (complete exclusion) to 100 (full inclusion).
- **2025 Score:** 67.0 — indicates **broad-based growth** across all segments.
- **Three Key Dimensions:**
 - **Access:** Availability of financial services (e.g., branches, ATMs, BC outlets).
 - **Usage:** Extent of usage (e.g., deposit accounts, credit, insurance).
 - **Quality:** Grievance redressal, financial literacy, and digital engagement.

RBI Enables SIP and Auto-Bidding Facility for Treasury Bills Through Retail Direct

What's the News?

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has introduced two significant features for **Retail Direct users**: **Systematic Investment Plan (SIP)** for **Treasury Bills (T-Bills)** and an **auto-bidding facility** for both initial investment and reinvestment in T-Bill auctions.
- These enhancements aim to simplify access to short-term government securities for **retail investors**, fostering disciplined and automated investing.

SIP & Auto-Bidding: Features & Mechanics

- **SIP in T-Bills** allows investors to make periodic investments into T-Bills, akin to mutual fund SIPs, without requiring lump-sum commitment.
- **Auto-bidding** enables automatic placement and reinvestment of bids in primary auctions. Investors set preferences like tenor, amount, and frequency; bids are executed using the **National Automated Clearing House (NACH)**.

Economic & Financial Significance

- Encourages **retail participation** in the **government securities market**, previously dominated by

institutions, potentially improving **liquidity** and **price discovery**.

- Aids in **capital preservation** and **cash management**, offering better returns than idle bank deposits while maintaining sovereign safety.
- Aligns with broader objectives of the RBI's **Development and Regulatory Policies**, enhancing accessibility and **financial inclusion** in fixed-income instruments.

Additional Info

About the Retail Direct Platform

- **Launched** in November 2021, it enables direct participation by retail investors in Government Securities (G-Secs), including T-Bills, **without intermediaries**.
- Offers features such as opening a **Gilt Account**, access to **primary auctions**, **secondary market trading**, and investments in **Sovereign Gold Bonds** and **Floating Rate Savings Bonds**.

Investment Considerations

- **Minimum Investment**: Typically ₹10,000 in multiples thereof for a bid.
- **Liquidity Risk**: T-Bills held until maturity yield fixed returns. Early exit may involve price fluctuations due to interest rate movements and limited secondary market depth.

India's Pension Funds: Catalysts for Green Economy Transition

What's the News?

- India's transition to a **green economy** demands enormous capital—estimates suggest **US \$10–12.5 trillion** for net-zero pathways and **US \$100 billion annually** for climate adaptation by 2030.
- Indian **pension funds**, managing over **US \$600 billion**, remain **largely untapped** as climate finance sources. Their long-term nature and patient capital make them ideal for such investments.

Why Pension Funds Matter for Climate Finance

- **Long-term investor horizon**: Aligns well with capital-intensive, multi-decadal climate projects like renewable energy, clean transport, and adaptation infrastructure.
- **Stable and resilient capital**: Less prone to short-term market fluctuations—crucial for climate-tech investments.
- **Risk alignment**: As liability-bearing institutions, pension funds must account for **systemic climate risks** which can affect future payouts. European examples show integration of such risk into asset strategies; Indian funds must follow suit.

Regulatory & Institutional Gaps

- Pension regulators like **PFRDA**, **EPFO**, and **NPS** currently offer **limited guidance** on climate-focused investing. While NPS follows a stewardship code, enforcement is weak and climate risk integration remains optional.
- **Beneficiary awareness** is low—investors typically don't know whether their funds account for climate risks or sustainability in asset allocation.

Significance for Economics & Climate Policy

Economic Significance

- Mobilizing pension-level capital can **bridge India's green financing gap** and reduce dependence on public funds or foreign grants.
- Climate-aligned portfolios may outperform carbon-intensive sectors in the long run, enhancing **financial returns** while supporting sustainable growth.

Policy Significance

- Pension funds can support India's **just transition**, ensuring inclusive development through climate investments.
- Integrating climate risk into pension fund governance aligns with global standards like **TCFD** (Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures) and **IOSCO** principles, enhancing accountability and resilience.

Additional Info

Global Precedents & Strategies

- Globally, pension regulators are increasingly mandating **climate risk disclosures**, **stress testing**, and **asset-level integration** to safeguard beneficiaries and financial stability.

Potential Instruments

- Pension funds could deploy capital into **Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InVITs)**, **Alternate Investment Funds (AIFs)**, and **corporate green bonds** with credit enhancements—attractive tools for channeling money into climate-aligned projects.

Business Confidence Index (BCI) Jumps to 149.4 in April–June Quarter

What's the News?

- The **Business Confidence Index (BCI)**, as per the **National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER)**, surged to **149.4** in the April–June quarter of FY 2024–25, up from **139.3** in the preceding quarter.
- Majority of firms expect improvements in production, domestic sales, exports, and import of raw materials, reflecting growing optimism. However, **hiring and wage expectations remained unchanged**.

Understanding the Business Confidence Index

The **BCI** is a composite measure based on the Business Expectations Survey, covering:

- Expectations of **overall economic conditions** in the next six months.
- Forecast of improved **financial position of firms**.
- Evaluation of the current **investment climate**.
- Status of **capacity utilisation**—whether it is near or above optimal levels.

Key Sentiment Metrics

- **Production Increase**: 78.7% of firms anticipate growth.
- **Domestic Sales**: 79.1% expect expansion.
- **Exports**: 66.5% foresee an increase.
- **Raw Material Imports**: Expectations rose to 54.3% (from 46.1%).
- **Pre-tax Profits**: Around 61% expect improvement.
- **Labour Market**: Stagnant sentiment in hiring and wage growth.

Economic Significance

- The sharp rise in BCI signals **restored business optimism**, potentially fueling investments and production.
- Yet, the disconnect between production optimism and the **labour market indicates cautious hiring**, possibly due to cost concerns or efficiency policies.
- Overall, the indicator suggests a **moderately positive macroeconomic outlook**, with scope for strengthening job creation.

Additional Info

- The insights are drawn from a **quarterly survey of 479 firms across six major cities**, conducted in June 2025.
- **NCAER**, India's oldest and largest independent economic policy think-tank established in 1956, is known for rigorous data-driven research.

India's Retail Inflation Hits Eight-Year Low at 1.55 %

What's the News?

India's **retail inflation**, as measured by the **Consumer Price Index (CPI)**, declined sharply to **1.55 % in July 2025**, the lowest since **June 2017**, and the second-lowest figure on record. This marked a substantial drop from **2.10 % in June**. Declines were sharp in **food prices**, especially **vegetables and pulses**.

Inflation Breakdown and Trends

- **Food Price Index (CPFI)**: Entered negative territory at **-1.76 %**, lowest since **January 2019**. Vegetables plummeted by **20.7 %**, pulses by **13.76 %**.
- **Rural vs Urban**:
 - Rural CPI: **1.18 %**
 - Urban CPI: **2.05 %**
- **Core Inflation** (excluding food and fuel): Held steady near **4 – 4.12 %**, indicating persistent demand-side pressures.

Significance: Economic and Policy Implications

- **Monetary Policy Space**: Data lies well below RBI's comfort band of **2–6 %**. RBI maintained its repo rate at **5.5 %** and revised its FY 2026 inflation forecast downwards to **3.1 %** from **3.7 %**.
- **Temporary Nature Expected**: Analysts argue the fall is largely food-driven and influenced by base effects, not an overall easing of inflation. CPI may rise above **4 %** by early 2026.
- **Market Reaction**: Stock markets responded positively. Nifty and Sensex rose, supported by global sentiment and India's disinflationary trend.

Additional Info

- **Base Effect**: July 2024 witnessed high food inflation, which makes the year-on-year comparison particularly steep.
- **Agricultural Impact**: Deflation in food items may harm farm incomes, though analysts point to rising rural wages and strong sowing patterns as mitigating factors.
- **Outlook**:
 - Inflation likely to rise in coming months.
 - RBI may keep policy on hold unless inflation proves persistent downward.

Cabinet Approves ₹4,600 Crore Semiconductor Projects in Odisha, Punjab & Andhra Pradesh

What's the News?

The Union Cabinet approved four new semiconductor manufacturing projects under the **India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)**, involving a **₹4,600 crore** investment (approx. US\$524 million). This brings the total sanctioned semiconductor initiatives to **ten** across six states, valued at **₹1.60 lakh crore**, and is expected to generate over **2,000 skilled jobs**.

Project Overview

- **Odisha** (Info Valley, Bhubaneswar):
 - **SiCSem Pvt Ltd** (with the UK's Clas-SiC Wafer Fab): India's **first commercial Silicon Carbide (SiC) compound semiconductor fab**—annual capacity: 60,000 wafers and 96 million packaged units. Target sectors: **defence, EVs, railways, solar inverters**, etc.
 - **3D Glass Solutions Inc.**: Advanced **packaging and embedded glass substrate unit**, producing **69,600 glass panel substrates, 50 million assembled units, 13,200 3D-Heterogeneous Integration modules** annually. Applications include AI, high-performance computing, photonics, and automotive electronics.
- **Punjab** (Mohali):
 - **Continental Device India Ltd. (CDIL)**: Expansion of an existing plant for **high-power discrete devices**—MOSFETs, IGBTs, Schottky diodes, transistors—in silicon and SiC. Output: **158 million units per year**.
- **Andhra Pradesh**:
 - **Advanced System in Package (ASIP) Technologies** (in collaboration with South Korea's APACT Co. Ltd.): Semiconductor manufacturing unit targeting output of **96 million units per year**, for mobile phones, set-top boxes, and automotive electronics.

Significance: Economic & Strategic Impact

- **Atmanirbhar Bharat**: Enhances domestic capacity in critical semiconductor technologies—SiC fabs and advanced packaging—strengthening India's supply chain resilience.
- **Industrial Diversification**: Positions Odisha as a major semiconductor hub; expansions in Punjab and Andhra Pradesh broaden geographical spread.
- **Skill and Tech Ecosystem**: Projects demand specialized talent, creating pathways for high-skilled employment and encouraging ancillary industries.
- **Global Partnerships**: Collaborations with UK and South Korea inject international expertise and technology into India's semiconductor landscape.

Additional Context

- **SCL Mohali Upgrade**: Rajya Sabha MP Vikramjit Singh Sahney urged faster modernization of the **Semiconductor Laboratory (SCL)** in Mohali. The ₹10,000

core upgrade, part of a larger ₹76,000 crore semiconductor and display ecosystem initiative, remains pending.

S&P Global Lifts India's Sovereign Credit Rating to BBB

What's the News?

- **S&P Global** upgraded India's long-term sovereign credit rating from **BBB-** to **BBB** (stable outlook). It also raised the short-term rating to **A-2** from **A-3** and the transfer and convertibility assessment to **A-** from **BBB+**.
- This marks the first S&P upgrade for India in **18 years**, the previous being in 2007.
- The upgrade reflects **economic resilience**, **fiscal consolidation**, improved **spending quality**, and **policy stability**.

Economic Stability & Policy Strength

- India's **real GDP growth** averaged **8.8%** during FY22–24, the highest in Asia-Pacific. Projected to grow at **6.8% annually** over the next three years.
- **Monetary policy**, particularly **inflation targeting**, has anchored inflation expectations effectively.
- High **infrastructure-led capital expenditure** and better quality of public spending underpin improved credit metrics.

External Factors & Market Response

- **US tariffs** (up to 50%) are seen as **manageable**, given that ~60% of India's growth is driven by **domestic consumption**.
- Following the upgrade, the **rupee** **appreciated** modestly and the **10-year bond yield** dropped by around **7–10 basis points**.

Additional Info

- S&P's upgrade follows its **May 2024** revision of India's outlook from *Stable* to *Positive*, driven by improved macro fundamentals.
- S&P projects a **decline in India's debt-to-GDP ratio** to **78% by FY2029**, down from **83% in FY2025**.
- S&P flagged potential **downgrade risks** if political commitment to **fiscal consolidation** weakens or if **growth slows structurally**. Also noted that rating could improve further if **net change in general government debt** remains below **6% of GDP** structurally.
- **Constitutional Relevance**: Fiscal management relates to **Article 112** (Annual Financial Statement) and **Article 292** (Borrowing by the Government of India), emphasizing prudent debt management.
- **Other Agencies**: **Morningstar DBRS** also upgraded **India** to **BBB** in May 2025, citing similar factors like structural reforms and fiscal discipline.

WPI Inflation Contracts Further to Two-Year Low

What's the News?

- India's **Wholesale Price Index (WPI)** inflation declined to **-0.58%** year-on-year in July, steeper than June's – 0.13%.
- **Food Inflation**: Decreased to **-2.15%** in July from 8.68% in June, with vegetable prices dropping significantly by **-36.13%**.
- **Primary Articles**: Inflation fell to **-4.95%**, driven by lower prices of agricultural products and minerals.
- **Fuel and Power**: Deflation deepened to **-2.65%**, attributed to lower prices of **mineral oils** and **crude petroleum**.
- **Manufactured Products**: Inflation rose slightly to **1.58%**, indicating some price resilience in this sector.

Trend & Metrics

- This marks the **second consecutive month** of wholesale deflation and the **lowest WPI reading in two years**.
- Strong spring harvest and easing food and energy costs are key drivers.

Significance – Economic Outlook

- The deeper wholesale deflation signals easing **producer-level inflation**, offering potential **monetary policy space** for the RBI to focus on growth.
- Severe declines in food prices could **improve real earnings** for consumers but may **compress producer margins**.
- Comparable fall in **retail CPI inflation**, nearing eight-year lows, reinforces expectations of a sustained disinflationary phase.

Additional Info

- **Mo-M Movement**: WPI registered a **+0.39% month-on-month rise** in July, suggesting short-term fluctuations despite annual deflation.
- **Historical Context**: **WPI inflation** was last negative in June 2023 at **-4.12%**, with the current **-0.58%** being the lowest since June 2023.
- **Related Initiatives**: The **RBI** targets **CPI inflation** at 4% (with a 2-6% band), and lower **WPI** supports this goal, aligning with **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act** objectives for price stability.
- **Constitutional Relevance**: **Article 112** (Annual Financial Statement) underscores the importance of fiscal discipline, which benefits from controlled inflation.

Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (PMVBRY)

What's the News?

- On Independence Day, PM Modi announced the **Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana**, a ₹1 lakh-crore scheme to create over 3.5 crore jobs in 2 years. It particularly targets first-time private-sector jobseekers and businesses.
- The plan offers a one-time incentive of **₹15,000 (two installments)** to youth getting their first private-sector

job (salary up to ₹1 lakh/month). About **19.2 million** first-time employees are expected to benefit.

- Employers will get incentives tied to new hires: up to ₹3,000 per new worker per month for 2 years (extended to 4 years for manufacturing jobs). This encourages firms to add staff beyond a baseline.
- The scheme complements the earlier **Employment-Linked Incentive (ELI)** scheme (Budget 2024) and is aimed at formalizing jobs (EPF registration) and boosting local manufacturing amid global trade headwinds.

Scheme Details and Objectives

- **Part A (First-Time Employees):** Targets youths entering the workforce. Eligible new private-sector employees (EPFO registered) receive their full one-month EPF wage (max ₹15,000) in two parts — one after 6 months of service, the second after 12 months upon completing a financial literacy course. To promote savings, part of the payment is locked in a fixed deposit account. Estimated 1.92 crore youths will be covered.
- **Part B (Employer Incentive):** Applies to all sectors with emphasis on manufacturing. For each additional employee (salary ≤ ₹1 lakh) hired and retained at least 6 months, the employer gets up to ₹3,000/month for 2 years. In manufacturing, this extends to 3rd and 4th year. Around 2.6 crore new jobs are expected from these incentives.
- **Administration:** All payments to employees (Part A) will be via Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) using Aadhaar-linked payments. Employer incentives go directly to their PAN-linked bank accounts. The scheme requires EPFO registration, thereby widening social security coverage.
- **Eligibility Thresholds:** Only formal sector jobs count (employees on EPF rolls). Firms with ≤50 workers must hire 2 additional staff; firms >50 must add 5 staff to qualify. This prevents trivial adjustments and targets net job creation.

Economic Significance

- The scheme directly targets youth unemployment, transforming India's demographic dividend into economic gain. By subsidizing first salaries and hiring costs, it lowers barriers to formal employment.
- It is expected to spur consumption (new workers get ₹15k windfall) and incentivize firms (especially MSMEs) to expand workforces. Manufacturing focus aligns with *Aatmanirbhar Bharat* (self-reliant India) drives for domestic production.
- Formalizing jobs enhances tax collection (via EPF contributions) and extends social security to millions of young workers. Over 3.5 crore formal jobs can significantly boost the organized sector and GDP growth.
- The scheme also signals government priority on jobs as a pathway from "Swatantra Bharat" (independent India) to "Samridhha Bharat" (prosperous India). It complements other labour reforms and skills initiatives.

Additional Info:

- The Economic Survey (2024) noted India needs roughly 7.85 million new non-farm jobs annually to employ its growing workforce.

- The PMVBRY aims to meet a large portion of this. The scheme builds on Budget 2024's Employment-Linked Incentive (ELI), and on earlier labor codes (e.g. Code on Social Security 2020) that promote worker welfare. It will be monitored by the Ministry of Labour & Employment.

NPCI Ends UPI P2P Collect Requests to Curb Fraud

What's the News?

- The **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** will disable the **peer-to-peer (P2P) "collect request"** feature on UPI starting **October 1, 2025**, across all banks and UPI apps.
- **Purpose:** Prevent a surge in digital payment frauds, wherein fraudsters exploited this feature to send deceptive payment requests.
- **Instruction:** All member banks, payment service providers (PSPs), and apps must ensure that **no P2P "collect" transaction is initiated, routed, or processed** beyond October 1.

Policy Rationale & Details

- **Objective:** Remove a known vulnerability. The feature had been capped at ₹2,000 per transaction and 50 per day, yet fraud persisted.
- **Continued Features:**
 - **Send Money** via UPI ID, QR code, or contact access remains unaffected.
 - **Merchant collect requests** from platforms like Flipkart, Amazon, IRCTC remain permitted.
- **Implications:**
 - Users lose a convenient "request money" tool.
 - Security improves by shifting to **payer-initiated** transactions, reducing unauthorized debits.

Additional Info

- **UPI Background:**
 - Launched in 2016 by **NPCI**, UPI is an inter-bank instant payment system regulated by **RBI**, handling P2P and P2M transactions.
- **Prior Abuse Mitigations:**
 - NPCI earlier imposed caps: ₹2,000 per P2P collect request and 50 such transactions per day.
- **Systems Preparation:**
 - Circular dated **July 29, 2025**, issued to banks and PSPs, required system updates to block P2P collects by October 1.

India's Top 10 Most Valuable Family Businesses in 2025

What's the News?

- **Barclays Private Clients and Hurun India** released the **2025 Most Valuable Family Businesses List**, ranking India's top family-run enterprises by valuation.

- **Ambani family** tops for the second year, with a valuation of **₹28.2 lakh crore**—equivalent to roughly **one-twelfth of India's GDP**.
- **Top three families**—Ambani, Birla, and Jindal—
together are worth **₹40.4 lakh crore**, nearly matching the GDP of the Philippines.

Leading Families Overview

- **Ambani Family** (Reliance Industries): ₹28.2 lakh crore
- **Bajaj Family**: Retained second spot with ₹8 lakh crore, up ₹89,990 crore
- **Kumar Mangalam Birla Family** (Aditya Birla Group): Third, ₹6.5 lakh crore, up ₹1.1 lakh crore
- **Jindal Family**: Fourth, ₹5.7 lakh crore, up ₹1 lakh crore
- Other notable top-10 families include **Mahindra, Nadar, Murugappa, Premji, Anil Agarwal (new entrant), Asian Paints group**.
- In **first-generation family businesses**, **Adani family** leads (₹14 lakh crore), followed by **Poonawalla family** (₹2.3 lakh crore)
- Among **unlisted businesses**, **Haldiram's family** remains top, valued at ₹85,800 crore

Economic Significance

- **Scale of value**: Top 300 business families combined value stands at **₹134 lakh crore** (~\$1.6 trillion), surpassing the GDP of Turkey and Finland.
- **Daily value generation**: These families generated **₹7,100–7,820 crore per day** and paid **₹1.8 lakh crore in taxes**, constituting ~15% of corporate tax collections.
- **Generational leadership**:
 - 227 families run by second-generation
 - 50 by third-generation (e.g., Mahindra)
 - 18 by fourth-generation (e.g., Birla)
 - Three fifth-generation (e.g., Burman)
- **Corporate governance**: 74% of these enterprises are publicly listed; **62 have professional CEOs**, and female leadership now represents **22 firms** (up from 15).
- **Sectoral spread**:
 - Industrial products: 48 firms
 - Automobile & auto components: 29 firms (avg ₹52,320 crore value)
 - Chemicals & petrochemicals: 27 firms
 - Pharmaceuticals: 25 firms (avg ₹41,000 crore)
 - Consumer-oriented: 40%
 - B2B: 49%
 - Mixed models: 11%

GST Overhaul Set to Drive Consumption & Growth in India

What's the News?

- **Morgan Stanley** projects that the upcoming rationalisation of **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** rates, combined with income tax cuts, monetary easing, job growth, and rising real wages, will enhance **domestic consumption and demand**.
- The **GST Council** is proposing a simplified two-slab structure: **5% and 18%**, with an optional 40% on "sin goods". Nearly all items in the 12% bracket would move to 5%, and most in the 28% bracket to 18%.

- The reform is expected by **Diwali** and seen as a significant **stimulus of ₹2.4 lakh crore**, potentially boosting GDP by **50–70 basis points** and reducing **CPI inflation by ~40 bps**.
- In the **short term**, spending may dip as consumers await clarity on new rates, but demand is expected to rebound post-implementation.

Overview of the Reform

- **Objective**: Streamline GST to a two-tier system (5% and 18%), enhance affordability and simplify compliance.
- **Expected Impact**:
 - **Stimulus**: ₹2.4 lakh crore uplift in consumption.
 - **GDP growth**: Boost by **50–70 bps**.
 - **Inflation relief**: CPI may fall by **~40 bps**.
 - **Fiscal trade-off**: Anticipated revenue loss, offset partially by growth-led tax gains.
- **Consumer Behaviour**: Temporary demand dip expected due to uncertainty, followed by rebound.

Additional Info

- **Fiscal Design**:
 - 99% of products from 12% slab → 5%; 90% from 28% → 18%.
 - GST slabs (5%, 12%, 18%, 28%) currently contribute different revenue shares; rationalisation ensures wider base.
 - Loss in GST collection estimated at ~50–60 bps of GDP annually; central deficit impact under 0.1% GDP.
 - Compensation cess expiry (Mar 2026) may free fiscal space.
- **Market Response**:
 - Strong rally in auto and FMCG stocks following news of reforms.

India's Unemployment Rate Climbs Down to 5.2% in July

What's the News?

- The **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)** data shows India's overall unemployment rate decreased to **5.2% in July**, down from **5.6% in June**.
- **Rural unemployment** fell to **4.4%** (from 4.9%), while **urban unemployment** edged up to **7.2%** (from 7.1%).
- Among **urban youth (15–29 years)**, unemployment rose to **19.0%**, whereas **rural youth** saw a decrease to **13%**.
- **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)** climbed to **54.9%** from 54.2%.
- The unemployment rate for **Q1 FY26 (April–June)** averaged **5.4%**.
- This is the lowest unemployment rate in three months; data shows notable improvement in **female employment**.

Additional Info

- The **PLFS defines employment broadly**—anyone working at least one hour in the previous week qualifies. Critics argue this may understate true **underemployment**.

- A **Reuters** poll of economists flagged **data inaccuracy**, estimating actual unemployment could be **double** the official figure—or significantly higher.
- Some independent experts point to issues like underemployment, low female workforce participation, stagnant wages, and policy gaps in job creation, especially in manufacturing.

EPFO Achieves Record Net Member Addition in June 2025

What's the News?

- The **Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)** has reported its highest-ever net member addition, with approximately 21.89 lakh members joining in June 2025.
- The payroll data indicates a significant increase in formal sector employment.
- Out of the total, around 12.65 lakh new members have come under the social security cover of **EPFO** for the first time.

Key Trends in Formal Employment

- **New Enrollments:** 10.62 lakh new subscribers; up **12.68%** from May, **3.61%** year-on-year.
- **Youth (18–25 age group):** Accounted for **60.22%** of new enrollments (6.39 lakh); net additions in this cohort stood at **9.72 lakh**, rising **11.41%** from May and **12.15%** year-on-year.
- **Rejoined Members:** 16.93 lakh rejoined EPFO; **5.09%** month-on-month increase and **19.65%** rise compared to June 2024.
- **Female Participation:**
 - 3.02 lakh new female subscribers (↑ 14.92% MoM, ↑ 1.34% YoY).
 - Net female payroll addition: 4.72 lakh (↑ 11.11% MoM, ↑ 10.29% YoY).

Additional Info

- **Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)**
 - It is a statutory body established by the **Employees' Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952**.
 - It functions under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Labour & Employment**, Government of India.
 - **EPFO** is one of the world's largest social security organisations in terms of clientele and the volume of financial transactions.
 - It administers three major schemes:
 - **Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) Scheme, 1952**
 - **Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS), 1995**
 - **Employees' Deposit Linked Insurance (EDLI) Scheme, 1976**
- **Historical Context & Policy Relevance:**
 - Payroll tracking began in **April 2018**, covering data since September 2017.
 - Youth-driven hiring indicates expansion of formal employment—first-time job seekers entering organised sector.

- Rise in female and rejoined members reflects increasing inclusivity and workforce continuity under social security coverage.

State-Level and Industry Breakdowns:

- Top five states/UTs contributed **61.51%** of net additions (~13.46 lakh).
- **Maharashtra** led with **20.03%** share. Other major contributors: Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana
- Industries showing growth include **expert services** (42.14% of additions), particularly **manpower suppliers** (51.31% within that segment).

E-commerce Dominates Consumer Refund Grievances

What's the News?

- The **e-commerce** sector has emerged as the leader in consumer refund-related grievances, with 3,594 cases reported.
- The **National Consumer Helpline (NCH)** facilitated refunds amounting to ₹1.34 crore within this sector.
- Across 27 sectors, the NCH successfully facilitated total refunds of ₹2.72 crore, addressing 7,256 consumer grievances.
- The travel and tourism sector followed e-commerce in the volume of refund grievances.

National Consumer Helpline (NCH) and Grievance Redressal

- The **NCH** has significantly enhanced its efficiency and reach through technological advancements, acting as a unified platform for consumers, government agencies, private companies, and regulatory bodies.
- A notable increase in call volumes has been observed, rising from 12,553 in December 2015 to 1,55,138 in December 2024.
- The average monthly complaint registrations have grown from 37,062 in 2017 to 1,11,951 in 2024.
- The number of convergence partners has expanded from 263 in 2017 to 1,131 in 2025, strengthening the grievance redressal mechanism.
- To improve accessibility, the **NCH** has integrated **WhatsApp** with its toll-free number (1915), enabling consumers to register grievances directly, especially during high call volumes.

Additional Info

- **Consumer Protection Act, 2019:**
 - This act replaced the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, to provide timely and effective administration and settlement of consumer disputes.
 - It established the **Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)** to promote, protect, and enforce the rights of consumers as a class.
 - The act includes provisions for e-commerce and direct selling, making it more relevant to the current market landscape.

- **National Consumer Helpline (NCH):**
 - Launched by the Department of Consumer Affairs, the **NCH** operates as a national helpline for consumers.
 - It provides information, advice, and guidance to consumers on their rights and helps in the resolution of their complaints.
 - The helpline is accessible through a toll-free number and other digital channels.

IREDA Sets ₹8,200 Crore Revenue Target for FY 26

What's the News?

- **Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA)** has entered a performance-based MoU with **Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE)**.
- The **revenue target** for FY 2025-26 is set at **₹8,200 crore**.
- In the previous fiscal (FY 2024-25), IREDA exceeded its target—achieved **₹6,743.32 crore** against a target of **₹5,957 crore**.

IREDA's FY 26 Target & Strategic Goals

- **Revenue Growth:** Target reflects over **21% increase** from FY 25 actual.
- **Performance Metrics Included** in MoU:
 - **Return on Net Worth (RoNW)**
 - **Return on Capital Employed (RoCE)**
 - **Non-Performing Assets (NPA) to Total Loans ratio**
 - **Asset Turnover Ratio**
 - **Earnings Before EBITDA**
- **Track Record:**
 - "Excellent" MoU performance rating for **four consecutive years since FY 2020-21**.
 - In FY 2023-24 MoU ranking, rated top among NBFC and power sector entities, and among the **top four CPSEs** across sectors.
- **Latest Results (Q1 FY 26):**
 - Revenue rose **29% year-on-year** to **₹1,947.60 crore**, which is ~23% of the full-year target.
 - Gross NPA increased, but detailed figures available in statements.

Additional Info

- **About IREDA:**
 - A **Mini Ratna (Category-I)** and a **Navratna** Public Sector Enterprise under the administrative control of the **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)**.
 - Established in 1987 as a Non-Banking Financial Institution (NBFI).
 - Its primary objective is to promote, develop, and extend financial assistance for projects related to new and renewable sources of energy and energy efficiency.
- **Related Government Initiatives for Renewable Energy:**
 - **National Green Hydrogen Mission:** Aims to make India a global hub for the production, usage, and export of green hydrogen and its derivatives.

- **PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana:** Provides financial assistance and subsidies to households for installing rooftop solar panels, aiming to provide free electricity.
- **PM-KUSUM (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha Evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan):** Encourages farmers to use solar energy for irrigation by providing subsidies for solar pumps and allowing them to sell surplus power to the grid.
- **Renewable Purchase Obligation (RPO):** A mandate requiring electricity distribution companies to purchase a certain percentage of their power from renewable energy sources.

RBI Governor Flags Global Uncertainty, Emphasises Monetary Policy's Role

What's the News?

- **RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra** highlighted global economic fragility due to **trade frictions, geopolitical tensions, and supply chain disruptions**, creating heightened risks for India.
- He emphasised the **monetary policy's dual mandate**: preserving **macroeconomic stability** while supporting **growth**.
- He urged the economy to "**push the frontiers of growth**", by responding rapidly to challenges and seizing opportunities.

Monetary Policy & Strategic Outlook

- The RBI maintains a **neutral policy stance** with the **repo rate at 5.5%**.
- The RBI commits to maintaining **ample liquidity**, reinforcing its role as a growth enabler.
- In view of **50% US tariffs**, the RBI stands ready to **mitigate external shocks** including exploring trade in **local currencies** and bolstering financial resilience.

Additional Info

- **Reserve Bank of India (RBI):**
 - India's central bank, established on April 1, 1935, under the **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934**.
 - It is a key institution in the Indian financial system, responsible for regulating monetary policy, issuing currency, and managing the country's foreign exchange reserves.
- **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC):**
 - A statutory body constituted under Section 45ZB of the RBI Act, 1934.
 - The MPC is responsible for setting the benchmark interest rate (**Repo Rate**) to achieve the inflation target.
 - Its primary objective is to maintain price stability while keeping in mind the objective of growth. The current inflation target is 4%, with a tolerance band of +/- 2%.
 - The committee consists of six members: three from the RBI (including the Governor as the ex-officio Chairperson) and three external members appointed by the Central Government.

• Key Monetary Policy Tools:

- **Repo Rate:** The rate at which the RBI lends short-term funds to commercial banks. It is the primary tool for influencing liquidity and inflation.
- **Reverse Repo Rate:** The rate at which the RBI borrows funds from banks.
- **Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR):** The percentage of a bank's total deposits that must be maintained as cash reserves with the RBI.
- **Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR):** The percentage of a bank's deposits that must be maintained in liquid assets like government securities, cash, or gold.

- It is a six-member body responsible for setting the benchmark interest rate (**repo rate**) in India to achieve the inflation target.
- The MPC was constituted under the **RBI Act, 1934**.
- Its primary objective, as mandated by the government, is to maintain price stability while keeping in mind the objective of growth. The current inflation target is **4%**, with a tolerance band of **+/- 2%**.
- The committee includes three officials from the RBI (including the Governor as the ex-officio Chairperson) and three external members nominated by the Government of India.

RBI Launches September Round of Inflation Expectations Survey of Households (IESH)

What's the News?

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** initiated the **September 2025** round of its **Inflation Expectations Survey of Households (IESH)** across **19 cities**.
- Purpose: gather household perceptions on price trends—general and specific—for current, three-month ahead, and one-year ahead horizons, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Data will inform **monetary policy formulation**.

Inflation Expectations Survey of Households (IESH)

Overview

The IESH is a key tool for the RBI to assess household-level inflation expectations, which influence actual inflation trends and economic behavior. This round aims to capture:

- Perceptions of **current inflation** and **price changes** across specific product categories.
- Expectations for inflation over the **next three months** and **one year**.

Key Details

- **Methodology:**
 - **Door-to-door surveys** by a Mumbai-based agency (**M/s Hansa Research Group Pvt. Ltd.**) in selected households.
 - **Online participation** open to the public via the RBI website to ensure wider representation.
- **Cities Covered:**
 - Includes **metropolitan hubs** (Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Hyderabad) and **regional centers** (Ahmedabad, Bhopal, Guwahati, Jaipur, Patna, Thiruvananthapuram, etc.) to reflect diverse consumption patterns.
- **Product Categories:**
 - Essential goods (food, fuel, medicines) and services (transport, healthcare, education).

Additional Info

- **Inflation:** It is a general and sustained increase in the prices of goods and services in an economy over a period of time. This results in a reduction in the purchasing power of a currency.
- **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC):**

UAE's ADNOC Signs 15-Year LNG Deal with IndianOil

What's the News?

- **ADNOC (Abu Dhabi National Oil Company)** has signed a **15-year Sales and Purchase Agreement (SPA)** with **Indian Oil Corporation (IndianOil)** for the supply of **1 million tonnes per annum (mtpa)** of **LNG**, primarily from the **Ruwais LNG project**. The agreement converts a previous Heads of Agreement into a definitive contract.
- **By 2029**, IndianOil will become ADNOC's **largest LNG buyer**, with a combined offtake of **2.2 mtpa** (1 mtpa from Ruwais + 1.2 mtpa from Das Island).

Ruwais LNG Project

- Located in **Al Ruwais Industrial City, Abu Dhabi**. Expected to commence **commercial operations in 2028**.
- Designed with **two liquefaction trains**, each capable of **4.8 mtpa**, for a **total capacity of 9.6 mtpa**. Over **8 mtpa** has already been committed via long-term contracts.
- The project will be the **first Middle East LNG facility** powered by **clean electricity** and incorporate **AI-based efficiency and safety technologies**, reducing carbon footprint.

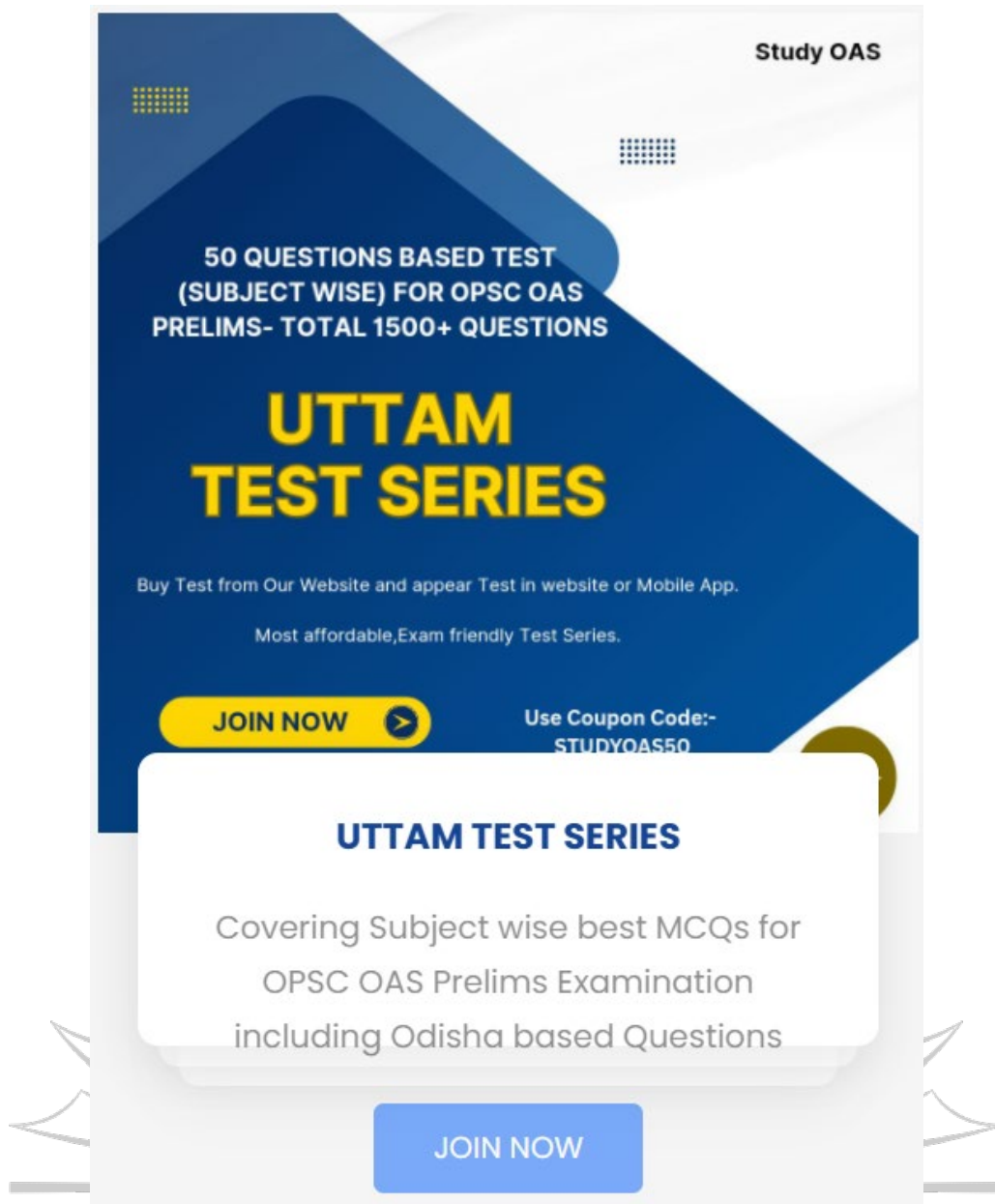
Additional Info

- **Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG)**
 - Natural gas that has been cooled to a liquid state at approximately **-161°C**.
 - This process reduces its volume significantly, making it easier and more cost-effective to store and transport via ships to markets not connected by pipelines.
 - LNG is primarily composed of methane and is a crucial transitional fuel in the global shift to lower-carbon energy sources.
- **Indian Oil Corporation (IOC)**
 - A state-owned enterprise under the ownership of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.
 - It is India's largest integrated and diversified energy company, with operations across the entire hydrocarbon value chain, including refining, marketing, and petrochemicals.

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- **India's Energy Policy**

- The Government of India has a target to increase the share of natural gas in the country's primary energy mix from the current **6.3%** to **15% by 2030**.
 - This goal is being supported by a range of initiatives, including the expansion of the **National Gas Grid** and the development of **City Gas Distribution (CGD)** networks.
-



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Science and Technology

Bengaluru Ranks 26th in Global AI City Index, Singapore Takes Top Spot

What's New?

- **Bengaluru** has secured the **26th position** in the **2025 Global AI City Index**, establishing itself as India's leading hub for **AI research and development (R&D)** and **data centres**, as per a report by **Counterpoint Research**.
- **Singapore** claimed the top spot globally, driven by its vibrant **startup ecosystem** and strong **public-private collaboration** in sectors like healthcare and transportation.
- Other Indian cities, including **Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, and Kolkata**, are also rising in the rankings, with **Mumbai and Delhi** noted for innovative AI applications in **traffic management** and **public security**.

AI City Index Rankings

- **Overview:**
 - The **2025 AI City Index** by **Counterpoint Research** evaluates cities based on their **AI adoption, R&D capabilities, infrastructure, and policy frameworks**. **Bengaluru** leads Indian cities, followed by **Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, and Kolkata**.
 - **Bengaluru**, alongside **Riyadh, Hangzhou, and São Paulo**, is among the fastest-growing AI cities globally, driven by its robust **startup ecosystem** and **foreign investment** in AI.
- **Key details:**
 - **Bengaluru's strengths:** Hosts over **750 AI-driven startups**, contributes **40% of India's AI R&D**, and is home to major **data centres** supporting global tech firms like **Microsoft, Google, and Amazon**.
 - **Other Indian cities:** **Mumbai and Delhi** are leveraging AI for **smart city initiatives**, including **traffic optimization** (e.g., AI-based signal systems) and **public safety** (e.g., facial recognition). **Chennai and Kolkata** are emerging in **AI education and healthcare applications**.
 - **Global leaders:** **Singapore** excels in **healthcare and transportation AI**, while **Seoul** leads in **AI education**, and **Beijing** plans formal **AI training** for students from 2025.
 - **Challenges:** Indian cities need a stronger **regulatory framework** and **AI roadmap** to sustain growth and compete globally.

Additional Info

- **Bengaluru's AI ecosystem:**
 - Known as India's **Silicon Valley**, **Bengaluru** hosts **global innovation centres** for companies like **NVIDIA, IBM, and Intel**, alongside **IIT-Bengaluru and IISc**, which drive AI research.

- The city accounts for **30% of India's AI patents** and has **15 AI-focused incubators**, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship.
- **Policy context:**
 - The **National AI Strategy 2018** by **NITI Aayog** emphasizes **#AIforAll**, aiming to integrate AI in healthcare, education, and agriculture, with **Bengaluru** as a key implementation hub.
 - **Karnataka's AI Policy 2020** offers incentives like **tax breaks** and **subsidized land** for AI startups, attracting investments from **SoftBank** and **Sequoia Capital**.
- **Global comparison:**
 - **Singapore's** success is driven by its **Smart Nation initiative**, with **\$12 billion** invested in AI infrastructure and **5,000 AI professionals** trained annually.
 - **Beijing's** AI education push includes **\$2 billion** for school curricula, while **Seoul** invests **\$1.5 billion** in AI-driven healthcare solutions.
- **Challenges in India:**
 - Despite progress, India's **AI adoption** is hindered by **data privacy concerns, skill gaps** (only **2.5% of engineers** are AI-trained), and **inadequate regulatory clarity** under the **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023**.
 - **Bengaluru** faces infrastructure challenges, including **power shortages** and **urban congestion**, impacting data centre scalability.

India Post Payments Bank Launches Aadhaar-Based Face Authentication for Digital Banking

What's the News?

- **India Post Payments Bank (IPPB)** has rolled out Aadhaar-based face authentication for customer transactions nationwide.
- This feature allows banking transactions using facial recognition, eliminating the need for fingerprints or OTPs.
- The initiative aims to enhance financial inclusion, particularly benefiting the elderly and differently-abled individuals.
- IPPB's Managing Director and CEO, **R. Viswesvaran**, emphasized the move as a step towards redefining financial inclusion at scale.

Aadhaar-Based Face Authentication?

The Aadhaar-based face authentication feature enables customers to perform banking transactions using facial recognition technology, developed under the framework of the **Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)**.

- **Key details:**
 - Transactions can be completed without physical biometric inputs or OTPs.

- The feature is designed to be secure, contactless, and convenient.
- It supports various banking services, including account opening, balance inquiries, fund transfers, and utility payments.
- IPPB leverages its extensive network of post offices and postal employees to deliver these services, especially in rural and semi-urban areas.
- **Significance:** This initiative aligns with the government's **Digital India** and **Financial Inclusion** missions, aiming to make banking more accessible and dignified for all citizens.

Additional Info

- **India Post Payments Bank (IPPB):**
 - Established in **2018** under the Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications.
 - Aims to build the most accessible, affordable, and trusted bank for the common man in India.
 - Operates through a vast network of approximately **1.65 lakh post offices** and over **3 lakh postal employees**.
 - Serves over **11 crore customers** across **5.57 lakh villages and towns**.
 - Leverages **India Stack** technologies to offer paperless and presence-less banking services.
- **Aadhaar:**
 - A **12-digit unique identification number** issued by UIDAI to Indian residents.
 - Used for various purposes, including authentication for government services and banking transactions.
 - The Aadhaar-based face authentication feature is part of UIDAI's efforts to enhance security and convenience in digital transactions.

- **Public infrastructure damage**
- **Coverage:** Analyzes data from **2011 to 2021** across **735 districts**.
- **Outcome:** Identifies districts with **consistently high flood vulnerability** based on cumulative impact over the years.
- **Objective:** Helps in prioritizing **disaster mitigation funding, relief planning, and resilient infrastructure investment**.

Policy & Planning Significance

- Aligns with India's commitments under **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR)** and **National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP)**.
- Enhances **district-level disaster preparedness**, particularly in vulnerable regions such as **Assam, Bihar, West Bengal, and Uttar Pradesh**.
- Encourages **data-driven flood mitigation**, helping planners to move beyond ad-hoc responses toward long-term resilience.

Additional Info

Related National Efforts

- **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA):** Nodal body for disaster risk management in India.
- **Central Water Commission (CWC):** Monitors flood forecasting and water levels.
- **Digital initiatives:** Integration with GIS and **Real-Time Flood Monitoring Systems** for targeted responses.

India's Flood Risk Profile

- India is among the **top 10 flood-prone countries** globally.
- Around **40 million hectares** of land is vulnerable to floods annually.
- **Climate change** has increased the intensity and frequency of extreme rainfall events, raising flood risks across new regions.

District Flood Severity Index Developed to Measure Flood Impact on People

What's the News?

- A new tool called the **District Flood Severity Index (DFSI)** has been developed to assess and compare the **impact of floods** on people at the **district level** across India.
- The DFSI goes beyond traditional measures like rainfall or water levels and instead focuses on **human and socio-economic impact**, making it a people-centric disaster assessment tool.

What Is the DFSI?

The **District Flood Severity Index (DFSI)** is designed by researchers from **IITs and national institutions** in collaboration with **policy think tanks**.

- **Focus:** Measures **people-centric flood impact**, not just hydro-meteorological parameters.
- **Parameters Used:**
 - **Fatalities** and injuries
 - **Displacement** and relief camp population
 - **Crop area affected**
 - **Livelihood disruption**

TRAI Launches India's First Property Rating Framework for Digital Connectivity

What's the News?

- **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)** has introduced the country's first **Property Rating Framework** to assess **digital connectivity readiness** in buildings and commercial complexes.
- The framework provides a standardized method for rating real estate properties based on the quality, reliability, and accessibility of telecom and internet services available on the premises.

What Is the Property Rating Framework?

- Designed to evaluate and score buildings on **telecom infrastructure parameters** such as mobile network coverage, broadband access, internal wiring, and provision for future technology upgrades.
- **Objective:** Enable property buyers, tenants, and businesses to make informed decisions while encouraging real estate developers to integrate robust digital infrastructure.
- Framework includes:

- **Rating criteria** covering coverage, capacity, redundancy, and service provider diversity.
- Provision for **self-assessment and certification**.
- Encourages **fiber-ready** and **5G-ready** buildings.
- Intended for **residential, commercial, and mixed-use properties**.

Economic Significance

- **Improved Market Transparency:** Buyers and investors gain clear benchmarks for digital readiness, influencing property valuation.
- **Boost to Digital Economy:** Supports government vision for **Digital India** by ensuring last-mile connectivity in urban and semi-urban areas.
- **Developer Incentive:** Higher-rated properties may attract premium customers and rental values.

Additional Info

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)

- **Established:** 1997 under the **TRAI Act, 1997** to regulate telecom services, including fixation/revision of tariffs.
- Functions include:
 - Ensuring compliance with licensing terms.
 - Promoting fair competition and quality of service.
 - Facilitating growth of telecom services and protecting consumer interest.
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi.
- **Chairman:** Anil Kumar Lahoti (since January 2024).

RBI Unveils “FREE-AI” Framework With 7 Sutras for Ethical AI in Finance

What’s the News?

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) panel has released its **Framework for Responsible and Ethical Enablement of Artificial Intelligence (FREE-AI)** for the financial sector.
- Framework includes **seven guiding principles (“7 Sutras”)** and **26 recommendations** across six pillars: **infrastructure, capacity, policy, governance, protection, and assurance**.
- Proposes **AI innovation sandbox, indigenous AI model development, and integration with platforms like UPI**. Also recommends creation of a **multi-stakeholder standing committee** and a **dedicated AI fund**.

FREE-AI Framework

- **Seven Sutras (Principles):**
 1. **Trust is the foundation**
 2. **People first**
 3. **Innovation over restraint**
 4. **Fairness and equity**
 5. **Accountability**
 6. **Understandable by design**
 7. **Safety, resilience, and sustainability**
- **Key Recommendations:**
 - Build **digital infrastructure** for AI development and deployment
 - Set up **AI innovation sandbox** for experimentation

- Promote **indigenous AI models** tailored to India’s financial ecosystem
- Ensure **governance mechanisms and oversight** via multi-stakeholder committee
- Establish **AI-specific funding** to support innovation
- Integrate AI with existing digital systems like **UPI**
- Implement **audit and assurance frameworks** to manage risks

Additional Info

- **Historical Context:** The committee was formed in December 2024, following **RBI’s** announcement in its **Monetary Policy Statement** to address AI’s growing role in finance.
- **Related Initiatives:** The framework aligns with **IndiaAI Mission**, which aims to build indigenous AI capabilities, and complements **RBI’s** fintech sandbox initiatives.
- **Constitutional Relevance:** The **RBI’s** regulatory role is derived from **Article 112** (Annual Financial Statement) and the **Banking Regulation Act, 1949**, ensuring financial stability through innovative yet ethical practices.

Record Deep-Sea Dives by Indian Aquanauts

What’s the News?

- Two Indian **aquanauts** – **Commander (Retd) Jatinder Pal Singh and R Ramesh** – completed record-breaking dives in the **Atlantic Ocean**, reaching depths of **5,002 meters and 4,025 meters respectively**. This is the deepest any Indian team has ever gone underwater.
- The dives were conducted aboard the French submersible **Nautile** in collaboration with **IFREMER (French Oceanographic Institute)** and led by India’s **NIOT (National Institute of Ocean Technology), Chennai**. An Indian flag was unfurled at depth alongside the French flag, marking bilateral cooperation.
- These missions were part of training for India’s upcoming manned **Samudrayaan Mission** (Deep Ocean Mission). **Samudrayaan** aims to send three Indian aquanauts to **6,000 meters** in an indigenously developed submersible **MATSYA-6000** by 2027.
- Previous Indian dive records were much shallower (around 670 meters). The successful 9.5-hour dives provided crucial hands-on experience: aquanauts practiced vessel handling, manipulator arm operations, emergency drills, and communication procedures in an extreme environment.

Samudrayaan and Deep Ocean Capability

- **Training Collaboration:** France’s **Nautile** – one of few submersibles capable of 6,000m – gave India’s crew extensive training. This included full mission protocols, piloting and recovery operations. The experience is likened to astronaut training (e.g., **Axiom-4** mission preparing **Gaganyaan** crew).
- **Future Submersible (MATSYA-6000):** India is building **MATSYA-6000**, a titanium submersible designed for 12-hour missions (96-hour emergency endurance) at

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6,000m. It is a fourth-generation craft under development by MoES's Deep Ocean Mission.

- **Deep Ocean Mission:** Launched in 2021 by the Ministry of Earth Sciences, the mission has a budget ~₹4,077 crore (2021–26). Its goals include exploring deep-sea resources, advancing the blue economy (marine minerals, biodiversity, biotech), and climate research. Samudrayaan is a flagship component of this initiative.
- **Strategic Significance:** Mastery of deep-sea technology reduces dependency on foreign assets in the long run. It also opens possibilities for offshore resource exploration (e.g., minerals, oil & gas), and strengthens disaster preparedness by understanding the ocean environment.

Additional Info:

- The Deep Ocean Mission lists components like deep-sea mining, manned submersible development, and ocean climate services.
- The Samudrayaan target depth (6,000m) matches roughly the average thickness of the atmosphere, highlighting the mission's scale.

Additional Info

- **Institutional & policy context**
 - **Administrator:** Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications.
 - **Cloud & network:** Hosted on **MeghRaj** cloud; connectivity supported by **BSNL**.
 - **Linked initiatives:** **Digital India** and government cloud adoption programmes.
- **Technical/operational notes**
 - **User authentication:** **DigiPIN** and OTP replace manual signatures for most deliveries.
 - **Payments rails:** UPI and QR reduce dependency on cash and improve audit trails.
 - **Scalability:** Designed to handle national mail and parcel volumes through a unified backend.
- **Metrics to remember**
 - **Investment:** **₹5,800 crore** (APT / IT 2.0 rollout).
 - **Coverage:** **>1.6 lakh** post offices connected during initial rollout.

India Post Rolls Out IT 2.0 — Advanced Postal Technology

What's the News?

- **India Post** has rolled out **IT 2.0 / Advanced Postal Technology (APT)** nationally to modernise postal operations and customer interface.
- The programme is backed by an investment of **₹5,800 crore** and aims to make postal services mobile-first, faster and digitally auditable.
- Key customer-facing features include **OTP-based deliveries, real-time parcel tracking, QR/UPI payments**, and a 10-digit **DigiPIN** for secure delivery authentication.
- The platform is hosted on **MeghRaj (cloud)** with network support through **BSNL** and integration with postal banking services such as **India Post Payments Bank (IPPB)**.
- Initial rollout has connected **over 1.6 lakh** post offices and included large-scale staff training to operate the new system.

APT — Design, Objectives and Expected Impact

- **Overview**
 - **Purpose:** Transition India Post from legacy workflows to a unified digital logistics and payments platform.
- **Operational features**
 - **Delivery security:** OTP + **DigiPIN** to reduce failed or fraudulent handovers.
 - **Payments:** QR-code acceptance and **UPI** to cut cash handling and enable doorstep digital commerce.
 - **Visibility:** End-to-end electronic tracking to improve accountability and delivery timelines.
 - **Integration:** Single interface for mail, parcels, banking and insurance offered through post offices.

New Moon Discovered Orbiting Uranus (S/2025 U 1)

What's the News?

- **A new moon of Uranus**, provisionally designated **S/2025 U 1**, has been detected using the **James Webb Space Telescope (JWST)**. If confirmed, it becomes the **29th known Uranian moon**.
- The moon is **extremely small**—around **10 km (6 miles)** in diameter—and orbits just beyond Uranus's main ring system. Its discovery follows a series of **ten 40-minute near-infrared exposures** captured by JWST's **NIRCam**.

Discovery Details & Implications

- **Significance:**
 - This is the **first Uranian moon** discovered since 2003 (moon Margaret), underscoring JWST's superior detection capabilities beyond Hubble and Voyager 2.
 - The find suggests a more intricate and dynamic moon–ring system around Uranus.
- **Orbital & Physical Characteristics:**
 - **Diameter:** Estimated between **8–10 km**.
 - **Orbit:** Nearly circular, equatorial, located between the orbits of **Ophelia** and **Bianca** at approximately **56,000 km** from Uranus's center.
 - **Orbital Period:** About **0.402 days** (~9.6 hours).
 - **Reflectivity:** Very low brightness, with apparent magnitude near 25.5 in near-infrared (H-band), making it undetectable by earlier missions.
- **Naming:** The moon currently holds a **provisional designation**. It will receive an official name—following the tradition of using characters from Shakespeare or Alexander Pope—upon approval by the **International Astronomical Union (IAU)**.

Additional Info

- **James Webb Space Telescope (JWST)**

- Equipped with **near-infrared sensors** capable of detecting faint, distant objects like S/2025 U 1. Its performance surpassed previous missions in the outer solar system.
- **Uranus's Moon System**
 - Uranus now has **29 confirmed moons**: including **14 inner moons**, **5 major spherical moons**, and **10 irregular moons**. Inner moons are small, dark bodies closely linked with the ring system.
 - S/2025 U 1 joins the **inner moons**, which orbit entirely within the planet's densest ring zones and may interact dynamically with ring structures.

India Launches First Semiconductor OSAT Pilot Line in Gujarat

What's the News?

- India has launched its first Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test (**OSAT**) pilot line facility in Sanand, Gujarat.
- The facility is a joint venture by **CG Power and Industrial Solutions**, in partnership with Japan's **Renesas Electronics** and Thailand's **Stars Microelectronics**.
- This milestone is a major step in the country's semiconductor journey and its ambition to become a self-reliant global hub under the **India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)**.
- Chips produced at this pilot line will be used for customer qualification, paving the way for full-scale commercial production at other plants.

Key Details of the Facility

- **Location:** Sanand, Gujarat.
- **Investment:** The project is being developed with a total investment of over **₹7,600 crore** (approximately \$870 million).
- **Capacity:** The pilot facility will operate at a peak capacity of **0.5 million units per day**. A second, larger facility is under construction and is expected to scale up production to **14.5 million units per day**.
- **Job Creation:** The two facilities are projected to create over **5,000 direct and indirect jobs**.

Additional Info

- **India Semiconductor Mission (ISM):**
 - Launched by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, the **ISM** is a dedicated program to build a sustainable semiconductor and display manufacturing ecosystem in India.
 - It offers fiscal incentives for companies investing in semiconductor fabs, display fabs, and **OSAT** facilities.
- **What is an OSAT?:**
 - **OSAT** stands for Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test.
 - It refers to third-party providers that handle the post-fabrication processes of semiconductors, including assembly, packaging, and testing of chips.

- OSAT facilities are a critical link in the semiconductor supply chain, as they transform raw silicon wafers into finished, functional chips ready for use in electronic devices.

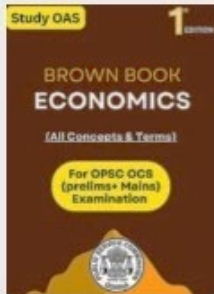
India Launches First National Biofoundry Network Under BioE3 Policy

What's the News?

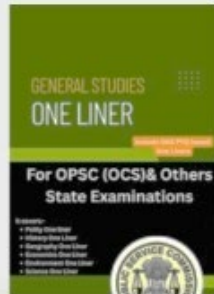
- The government has launched India's first **National Biofoundry Network**, a collaborative platform aimed at accelerating biotechnology innovation and biomanufacturing.
- The network was unveiled as a key initiative under the **Biotechnology for Economy, Environment, and Employment (BioE3) Policy**.
- This move is a significant step towards achieving India's ambitious bioeconomy target of **\$300 billion by 2030**.
- The network involves a collaboration among six leading institutions to scale up early-stage biotechnological ideas into market-ready products.

National Biofoundry Network: Structure and Objectives

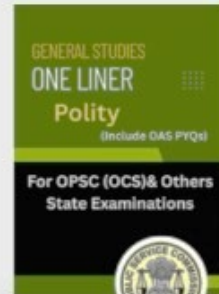
- **Overview:** The network is a collaborative platform of **six premier institutions** specializing in biotechnology research and development. It functions as an end-to-end ecosystem for designing, prototyping, testing, and scaling biotech solutions, leveraging automation, AI, and synthetic biology to expedite innovation.
- **Key Institutions:**
 - **International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB)**, New Delhi
 - **Biotechnology Research Innovation Council-National Agri-Food Biotechnology Institute (BRIC-NABI)**
 - **Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI)**
 - **National Centre for Cell Science (NCCS)**
 - **Institute of Pesticide Formulation Technology (IPFT)**
 - **Advanced Centre for Treatment, Research and Education in Cancer (ACTREC)**.
- **Objectives:**
 - Enhance **indigenous biomanufacturing** capacity to reduce import dependency.
 - Foster innovation in sectors like healthcare (e.g., precision biotherapeutics), agriculture (climate-resilient crops), and environment (carbon capture).
 - Generate employment and support startups through infrastructure access and funding.
- **Technological Focus:**
 - **Synthetic biology**, gene editing, and high-throughput testing to condense development timelines from months to weeks.
 - Integration with **Bio-Artificial Intelligence (AI) hubs** for data-driven solutions.



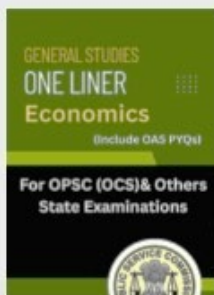
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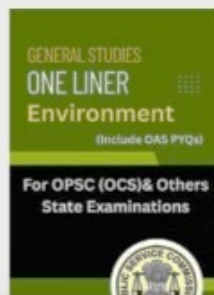
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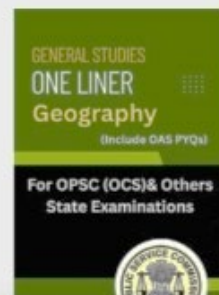
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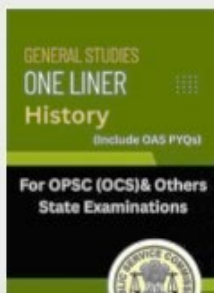
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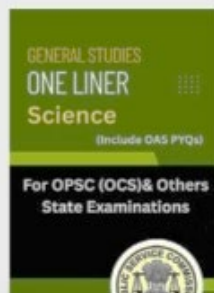
ENVIRONMENT ONE LINER



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Agriculture

Odisha Notifies SOP to Mainstream Landraces into Formal Seed Systems

What's the News?

- The Government of Odisha, under its **Shree Anna Abhiyan (SAA)**, has issued a **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)** aimed at integrating traditional crop varieties—or **landraces**—into the formal seed system.
- This initiative focuses on conserving agrobiodiversity and empowering **smallholder and tribal farmers** through community-driven seed governance.

What Is the SOP About?

- Purpose & Context**
Bridges the divide between formal, certified high-yielding varieties and local, climate-adapted landraces preserved through farmer knowledge.
- Key details:**
 - Mapping & Documentation** of local landraces using both farmers' inputs and scientific methods.
 - Establishment of **Crop Diversity Blocks (CDBs)** and **Community-managed Seed Centres (CMSCs)** led by Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and women's SHGs.
 - A **Digital Landrace Registry** capturing geo-tagged traits, ethnobotanical uses, and traditional nomenclature.
 - Participatory varietal selection** through multi-site trials (PVTs, MLTs), with farmer involvement to assess adaptability, yield stability, pest resistance, and nutrition.
 - Formation of **Landrace Varietal Release Committee (LVRC)** to set seed standards and oversee release processes.
 - Legal recognition of community custodianship and protection under **PPVFRA**, preserving origin identities of landraces.

Additional Info

Background

- The SOP was developed by the **Working Group on Seeds** under the Odisha Millets Mission, led by experts from ICAR-IIMR, OUAT, and RRA/WASSAN. Its design builds on participatory frameworks initiated since 2016.

Progress & Outcomes

- Initially focused on millets, especially finger millet (ragi), the framework now includes pulses, cereals, tubers, and oilseeds.
- Odisha has already **released four traditional ragi landraces** by following the SOP pathway.
- As of recent reports, across multiple agro-ecological regions, there are over **33 Crop Diversity Blocks, 41 participatory trials**, and **16 seed production plots**, with community seed centres operational in multiple districts.

Kharif Sown Area Nears 996 Lakh Hectares Amid Good Monsoon

What's the News?

- India's **total kharif sowing area** has reached **995.63 lakh hectares**, marking an increase of **38.48 lakh hectares** over the same period last year (957.15 lakh hectares). This uptick is driven by favourable monsoon conditions.

Key Overview

Crop-wise Developments

- Rice:** Area under cultivation rose to **364.81 lakh hectares**, up by **39.45 lakh hectares**.
- Maize** (under coarse cereals): Strong growth; **8.74 lakh hectares** additional area. Overall coarse cereals increased by **7.77 lakh hectares**.
- Pulses:** Slight rise of **0.16 lakh hectares**. Mixed trends within varieties—Moong and Urad up, Tur (Arhar) down by ~2.02 lakh hectares.
- Oilseeds:** Decline of **6.82 lakh hectares**, with soybean alone contracting by **4.73 lakh hectares**.
- Cotton:** Reduced area by **3.53 lakh hectares**.
- Sugarcane:** Modest increase of **1.64 lakh hectares**.

Underlying Factor

- Monsoon:** Favorable rainfall enabled expansion, especially in **unirrigated regions**, which constitute nearly half of India's farmland.

Significance: Agricultural and Economic Implications

- Production Outlook:** Expanded sowing area suggests potential for higher output, supporting food supply stability and **farmer incomes**.
- Inflation Control:** Enhanced crop output may help moderate **food inflation**.
- Monsoon Dependency:** Report underscores reliance on rainfall; highlights need for strengthened irrigation and water management infrastructure.

Additional Info

- Season context:** Kharif crops are sown during the south-west monsoon (typically June to October) and harvested around autumn. Major crops include **rice, maize, pulses, oilseeds, sugarcane, and cotton**.

India's Milk Production Reaches 239.30 Million Tonnes

What's the News?

- India produced **239.30 million tonnes** of milk, reinforcing its position as the world's top milk producer.
- Uttar Pradesh** emerged as the leading state, followed by **Rajasthan** and **Madhya Pradesh**.
- Cow milk** contributed **53.12%** and **buffalo milk 43.62%** to the total production.

Milk Production Overview

- Overview:** The **Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics 2024** highlights **India's** robust dairy sector, driven by

strong state contributions and government support, maintaining its global leadership in milk production.

- **Key Details:**

- **Per capita milk availability** rose to **471 g/day**, up from 459 g/day.
- **Total Production: 239.30 million tonnes**, with **127.11 million tonnes** from cows and **104.39 million tonnes** from buffaloes.
- **State Contributions: Uttar Pradesh** produced **13.11 million tonnes** (cow) and **24.35 million tonnes** (buffalo), followed by **Rajasthan (14.81 million tonnes cow, 16.79 million tonnes buffalo)** and **Madhya Pradesh (10.09 million tonnes cow, 10.20 million tonnes buffalo)**.
- **Smallest Producer: Lakshadweep** recorded **0.07 thousand tonnes** of cow milk, with no buffalo milk production.
- **Support Scheme:** The **National Livestock Mission (NLM)** offers **50% capital subsidy** up to ₹50 lakh for establishing breeding farms, including for goats, poultry, and other livestock.

Additional Info

- **Historical Context:** Milk production grew from **146.3 million tonnes** in 2014-15 to **230.58 million tonnes** in 2022-23, reflecting a **5.62% compound annual growth rate**.
- **Historical push:** The **White Revolution (Operation Flood)**, launched in 1970, transformed India into a dairy superpower via cooperative models (Anand model).
- **Related Initiatives:** The **National Livestock Mission – Entrepreneurship Development Programme (NLM-EDP)** supports dairy infrastructure through subsidies via the **Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)**.
- **Constitutional Relevance:** Agriculture, including animal husbandry, is a **State List** subject (**Seventh Schedule, Entry 14**), but central schemes like **NLM** facilitate coordinated development.

systems into sustainable rural livelihoods and local value chains.

- **Key elements**

- **Community stewardship and seed-bank support** to preserve landraces and traditional crops.
- **Infrastructure and research** interventions to improve productivity and climate resilience (examples: padasekharam works and water-hyacinth ecological research in Kuttanad).
- **Market development** through branding, agri-tourism linkages and value-chain support for heritage products.

- **Why it matters for governance**

- Strengthens the intersection of **conservation policy** and **rural economic strategy**.
- Provides a model for integrating **FAO-led heritage frameworks** into national agricultural programmes.

Additional Info

- **India's GIAHS Sites:**

- **Koraput, Odisha:**
 - Recognized for its traditional, subsistence-based paddy cultivation on highland slopes.
 - It is a repository of a vast diversity of paddy landraces, farmer-developed crop varieties, and rich genetic resources of medicinal plants.
 - The conservation efforts here are deeply rooted in the practices of indigenous communities.
- **Kuttanad, Kerala:**
 - Features a unique below-sea-level farming system.
 - This intricate landscape includes wetlands for paddy cultivation and fish farming, garden lands for coconut and other food crops, and inland water bodies for fishing.
- **Saffron Heritage of Kashmir:**
 - Represents a rich agro-pastoral system centered around the traditional cultivation of saffron.
 - Characterized by intercropping and organic farming practices that contribute to the maintenance of local biodiversity and soil health.

National policy to promote GIAHS sites in India

What's the News?

- **Announcement:** Government has notified a national policy push to promote **Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)** in India.
- **Scope:** India currently hosts **three GIAHS** — **Koraput (Odisha)**, **Kuttanad (Kerala)** and **Saffron Park (Kashmir)**.
- **Immediate measures:** Existing central schemes such as **Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY)** and **Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)** are being used to support restoration, branding and infrastructure works at these sites.

Policy intent and significance

- **Objective:** Conserve **agro-biodiversity**, safeguard **farmer knowledge**, and integrate heritage

- **Government Support and Policy Integration**

- The Government of India is actively supporting these sites through various schemes, including the **Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY)** and the **Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)**.
- These initiatives aim to provide financial assistance, research support, and infrastructural development to bolster production, improve post-harvest management, and enhance branding and market access for the unique products from these heritage sites.

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Important Days

World Lung Cancer Day 2025: Focus on Early Detection and Equal Care

What's New?

- **World Lung Cancer Day**, observed annually on **August 1**, adopted the 2025 theme **"Breaking Barriers: Championing Early Detection and Equal Care"**, emphasizing **equitable access** to screening and treatment.
- The campaign aims to destigmatize lung cancer, raise awareness about **non-smoking risk factors**, and promote **early detection** to improve survival rates.
- Lung cancer remains the **leading cause of cancer deaths globally**, accounting for **20% of cancer mortality** (approximately **1.8 million deaths annually**).
- In India, it constitutes **10% of cancer deaths**, with rising cases among **non-smokers** due to **air pollution** and **occupational exposures**, per **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** data.

What is World Lung Cancer Day?

- **Overview:** An annual initiative to raise awareness about **lung cancer**, its **risk factors**, and the importance of **early detection** and **research funding**.
- First organized in **2012** by the **Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS)**, in collaboration with the **International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer (IASLC)** and the **American College of Chest Physicians**, it fosters global action against the disease.
- **Key objectives:**

- **Awareness:** Educate about risk factors beyond smoking, including **air pollution** (e.g., PM2.5), **secondhand smoke**, **radon gas**, and **occupational hazards** like asbestos and silica dust.
- **Early detection:** Promote **low-dose computed tomography (LDCT)** screenings for high-risk groups (e.g., long-term smokers, workers in mining/construction), as early diagnosis improves **5-year survival rates** from **10–15%** (late-stage) to **50–70%** (early-stage).
- **Equity:** Advocate for **universal access** to diagnostics and treatments like **stereotactic body radiotherapy (SBRT)** and **minimally invasive surgery**, addressing disparities in **rural** and **low-income areas**.

- **Significance:** With **2.2 million new cases annually**, lung cancer's global burden necessitates coordinated efforts. India's **urban air pollution** and **workplace exposures** drive rising cases, with **women** increasingly affected (e.g., **20% of cases** in non-smoking women).

Importance

- **Health impact:** Early detection via **LDCT** can reduce mortality by **20–30%**, per **WHO** estimates, while advanced treatments like **SBRT** improve outcomes for non-surgical patients. Awareness campaigns counter myths, such as "only smokers get lung cancer," which delay diagnosis.
- **India's context:** **Delhi's toxic air** (AQI often exceeding **300**) contributes to a **surge in non-smoker**

cases, necessitating **screening expansion** and **environmental regulations**. Programs like **Ayushman Bharat** aim to improve access to diagnostics.

- **Challenges:** Low **public awareness**, limited **rural healthcare infrastructure**, and **stigma** associating lung cancer with smoking hinder progress. Strengthening **FSSAI regulations** on occupational carcinogens and **air quality norms** is critical.

Additional Info

- **Risk factors:**
 - **Tobacco use** accounts for **85% of cases**, with **secondhand smoke** affecting children and non-smokers. **Radon gas**, a naturally occurring radioactive element, causes **10–15% of cases** in non-smokers globally.
 - **Occupational exposures** (e.g., asbestos, diesel exhaust) are linked to **20% of cases** in high-risk industries like construction and shipbuilding.
 - **Genetic predisposition** and **chronic lung diseases** (e.g., COPD) elevate risks by **5–10%**, per **ICMR** studies.
- **Indian statistics:** **70,000–80,000 new cases** are diagnosed annually, with **50% in advanced stages** due to delayed detection. **Mumbai, Delhi, and Kolkata** report the highest incidence, driven by **urban pollution** and **tobacco use** (e.g., **bidi smoking** prevalent in rural areas).
- **Global initiatives:**
 - The **World Conference on Lung Cancer (WCLC)**, organized by **IASLC**, drives research, with **2025 events** focusing on **immunotherapy** and **targeted therapies**.
 - The **WHO's Global Cancer Observatory** tracks rising cases, projecting a **30% increase** by **2030** without intervention.
- **Policy support:** India's **National Cancer Control Programme** funds **screening camps**, while **NGT regulations** target **PM2.5 reduction** to curb environmental risks. **FIRS** advocates for **vaccinations** (e.g., influenza, pneumonia) to protect lung health.

India Marks 15th Organ Donation Day with Record Transplants and Pledges

What's New?

- India has achieved a record of over **18,900 organ transplants** in 2024, the highest in a single year, alongside more than **3.30 lakh people** pledging their organs since the launch of the Aadhar-based **NOTTO** online pledge website in 2023.
- **Union Health Minister JP Nadda** stressed the importance of raising awareness and outlined government efforts to bolster organ transplantation, including financial aid for underprivileged patients.

Organ Donation in India

- Organ donation has gained significant momentum in India, with the country now ranking third globally in total organ transplants, trailing only the United States and China.
- The 15th **Organ Donation Day** highlights the critical role of public participation in bridging the gap between organ demand and supply.
- Key details:**
 - Over 18,900 transplants in 2024, including 13,476 kidney transplants.
 - More than 3.30 lakh organ donation pledges since 2023.
 - Financial assistance of up to ₹15 lakh provided under **Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi** for kidney, liver, heart, and lung transplants.
 - Kidney transplant package integrated into **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY)**.

Societal Significance

- The surge in organ transplants and pledges addresses a pressing healthcare need, with over 63,000 individuals awaiting kidney transplants and approximately 22,000 requiring liver transplants.
- A single donor can save up to eight lives, enhancing healthcare outcomes and offering a lifeline to patients in need.

Additional Info

In 2024, India conducted 13,476 kidney transplants, with Delhi at the forefront, followed by Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Kerala. The nation also excels globally in hand transplants, reflecting advanced medical expertise. Key government initiatives include:

- Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi:** Up to ₹15 lakh for transplantation and ₹10,000 monthly post-transplant support.
- Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY:** Covers kidney transplant packages for broader accessibility.
- Angdaan – Jeevan Sanjeevani Abhiyan:** A nationwide campaign to promote organ donation and tackle misconceptions.

- Recognizes the role of the **handloom sector** in India's **freedom struggle** and **self-reliance**.
- Encourages the purchase and promotion of **locally-made textiles** under initiatives like **Atmanirbhar Bharat** and **Vocal for Local**.
- Celebrates the contribution of **over 35 lakh handloom workers**, many of whom are women and members of marginalized communities.
- Highlights the **environment-friendly, low-carbon, and sustainable nature** of handloom production.

Cultural Significance

- Handloom weaving** is intrinsic to India's **diverse cultural identity**, with regional specialties such as **Pochampally Ikat**, **Banarasi**, **Kanjeevaram**, and **Phulkari**.
- Protecting traditional weaves also helps preserve **indigenous knowledge systems** and **artistic heritage**.

Additional Info

Handloom Sector in India

- Second-largest employment provider** in rural India after agriculture.
- Over **70% of handloom workers are women**, contributing to both **economic empowerment** and **gender inclusion**.
- Ministry of Textiles** implements key schemes such as:
 - National Handloom Development Programme (NHDP)** – marketing, design input, and infrastructure.
 - Handloom Weavers' Comprehensive Welfare Scheme** – health and life insurance.
 - Yarn Supply Scheme** – ensures subsidized yarn to handloom weavers.
- India Handloom Brand (IHB)** initiative launched to promote quality handloom products with a focus on authenticity and global marketing.

Geographical Indications (GI)

- Several handloom products enjoy **GI tags**, which help preserve regional identities and protect traditional knowledge, e.g. **Chanderi**, **Baluchari**, **Muga Silk**, and **Patan Patola**.

National Handloom Day 2025 Celebrated to Honour India's Weaving Heritage

What's the News?

- India celebrated the **11th National Handloom Day**, reaffirming its commitment to safeguarding the country's rich **weaving traditions** and **handloom sector**.
- The day honours the **handloom weavers**, especially women, and emphasizes the sector's cultural, economic, and employment significance.
- Events were held across the country to showcase handloom products, promote indigenous crafts, and support local artisans.

Why National Handloom Day?

National Handloom Day is observed annually to commemorate the **Swadeshi Movement**, which began on **7 August 1905**.

India Reaffirms Global Leadership in Elephant Conservation on World Elephant Day

What's the News?

- India marked **World Elephant Day (August 12)** with national celebrations in **Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu**, emphasizing its leadership in elephant conservation.
- The event was led by Union MoS **Kirti Vardhan Singh**, who underscored the blend of **AI, remote sensing, geospatial mapping**, and traditional knowledge in safeguarding elephant habitats. India's efforts reflect not policy alone, but deep-rooted **civilizational values**.
- India is home to nearly **60% of the world's wild elephant population**, supported by **33 Elephant Reserves** and **150 scientifically identified corridors**.
- The MoS honoured frontline conservationists—**mahouts, forest guards, and related staff**—with **Gaj**

Gaurav Awards for exemplary service. A **nationwide campaign** engaged **12 lakh students** across 5,000 schools in awareness initiatives. A dedicated **workshop on human-elephant conflict (HEC)** brought together stakeholders to strategize mitigation.

Significance: Environmental & Socio-Ecological Impact

Cultural and Conservation Synergy

- Elephants are recognised as India's **National Heritage Animal**, emblematic of both **ecological importance** and **cultural reverence**. The initiative reflects how tradition, technology, and law intersect in conservation policy.

Institutional Strengthening

- Project Elephant (initiated 1992) underpins habitat protection, corridor maintenance, and mitigation of human-elephant conflict (HEC). The national event reinforced this framework at both policy and community levels.

Public Mobilisation and Education

- The engagement of **12 lakh students** reflects a strategic push for **public awareness** and long-term behavioural change. Recognition of conservation heroes strengthens morale and public trust.

Additional Info

- World Elephant Day:** Observed annually on **August 12**, initiated in 2012 to support elephant protection globally.
- State-level initiatives:**
 - At **Trichy (Tamil Nadu)**, rehabilitated elephants were treated to special meals, with infrastructure improvements emphasised for their well-being. Theme: conservation of female elephants.
 - At **Nandankanan Zoo (Odisha)**, elder elephants received tributes; interactive educational programmes engaged children.
 - At **Harangi Elephant Camp (Karnataka)**, State Wildlife Board highlighted Karnataka's highest elephant population (~6,395) and announced habitat expansion projects like the soft-release model in Kodagu.

emphasizing community and celebration. Families and communities also exchange gifts and visit each other in the spirit of camaraderie and renewal.

History and Cultural Significance

- Navroz (literally "new day" in Persian) has its roots in **Zoroastrianism**, one of the world's oldest monotheistic religions founded by Prophet Zarathushtra over 3,500 years ago. It was the official calendar New Year in ancient Persia (until the 7th century).
- When Islamic invasions swept Persia, many Zoroastrians (now called Parsis) migrated to India, carrying the Navroz tradition with them. Because the Parsi Shahenshahi calendar ignores leap years, Navroz in India shifts each year by ~5 days; hence it fell in mid-August in 2025.
- Symbolically, fire (a sacred element in Zoroastrianism) plays a central role. Parsis believe tending to the fire temple cleanses evil. Chanting of ancient prayers and acts of charity on Navroz reinforce values of renewal and community service.
- Cultural Diversity:** Navroz is a national marker of India's pluralism. Though Parsis are a small minority (~57,000 as per 2011 Census), their distinct customs (Navroz, Navjote, etc.) and contributions to Indian society (industry, arts, philanthropy) are celebrated. Government and media occasionally acknowledge Navroz in cultural segments.

Additional Info:

- Parsi New Year is sometimes confused with Iranian Nowruz (celebrated on March 21 globally). However, due to calendar differences, Parsis in India celebrate it in August.
- The Indian Constitution recognizes minority rights (Article 30), under which Zoroastrians maintain their cultural practices.
- Navroz emphasizes themes of renewal, gratitude, and harmony—common to many harvest and new-year festivals worldwide.

Parsi New Year (Navroz) Observed

What's the News?

- The Parsi community celebrated **Navroz (Parsi New Year)** on August 15, 2025. In India, Navroz falls later than in Iran due to the Parsis' use of the Shahenshahi calendar. This year's observance coincided with Independence Day.
- The festival theme is the "**Four Fs**": **Fire, Fragrance, Food, and Friendship**. These elements guide the day's rituals and feasting.
- Traditions include cleaning and decorating homes, wearing traditional attire, and visiting the fire temple (Agiary) to offer milk, fruits and incense to the sacred fire. Prayers focus on good health, prosperity, and forgiveness of past wrongs.
- Parsis prepare special meals featuring dishes like patrani macchi, dhansak, sev, lagan nu custard, etc.,

De Jure Transfer Day in Puducherry

What's the News?

- Puducherry observes **De Jure Transfer Day** each year on **16 August**, marking the **formal legal transfer** of the French territories—Puducherry, Karaikal, Mahe, and Yanam—to the Indian Union in 1962.
- Ceremonies include flag hoisting and tributes at the **Keezhur memorial**, attended by dignitaries such as the Assembly Speaker and freedom fighters.

Overview of the Event

- Called **De Jure Transfer Day**, it commemorates the **ratification** of the cession treaty by the French Parliament, with the formal legal merger executed via exchange of ratification instruments on **16 August 1962**.
- Preceding this, a **referendum** at Keezhur in **October 1954** resulted in 170 of 178 delegates voting in favour of merger. The **de facto transfer** occurred on **1 November 1954**.

- The territory was officially named the **State of Pondicherry**, later becoming a **Union Territory** with a legislative assembly on **1 July 1963**.

Additional Info

- **De Facto vs De Jure:**
 - *De facto* transfer (administrative control) occurred on **1 Nov 1954** and is observed as **Liberation Day**.
 - *De jure* transfer (legal integration) formalized on **16 Aug 1962**; declared a public holiday and officially celebrated since **2016**.
- **Keezhur:** Site of the pivotal **referendum** and location of the memorial where ceremonies now occur.
- **Governance Transition:** Following the treaty, the **Pondicherry Representative Assembly** functioned from 1955 to 1963. It was succeeded by the legislative assembly after the UT Act of 1963.

World Humanitarian Day 2025

What's the News?

- Annual observance honoring humanitarian workers, especially those who died in service. Established following the 2003 attack on UN aid workers in Baghdad.
- Theme this year: **"Strengthening Global Solidarity and Empowering Local Communities."** Emphasizes collaboration between international actors and local communities as co-creators of relief, not passive recipients.
- Aid workers face escalating danger: 816 were attacked in 2024; 383 killed—a sharp rise trending upward.

Humanitarian Crisis Landscape

- Humanitarian system under stress: underfunded, overwhelmed, increasingly targeted.
- Aid worker casualties: 383 killed globally in 2024, nearly half in Gaza; accompanying counts include 599 major attacks, 308 injuries, 125 kidnappings, 45 detentions.
- Ireland's humanitarian response: allocated **€310 million** to aid efforts, focusing on vulnerable populations in Gaza, Sudan, Yemen, Afghanistan, Ethiopia.

Additional Info

- **Origins:** World Humanitarian Day was declared by UN General Assembly to commemorate 2003 attack that killed Sérgio Vieira de Mello and 21 others. First observed in 2009.
- **Key Data Point:** Concern Worldwide reports nearly doubling of attacks on aid workers since 2018 (410), reflecting growing insecurity.
- **Local Empowerment:** Investment in disaster risk reduction yields high returns (e.g., \$1 in DRR saves \$15 in recovery).

International Day for Victims of Terrorism Observed

What's the News?

- The **International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism** is observed annually on **August 21st**.
- The day is dedicated to honoring and supporting the victims and survivors of terrorism across the globe.
- It serves as an occasion to promote and protect the full enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- The observance aims to amplify the voices of victims and survivors, recognizing their crucial role in preventing terrorism and building stronger, more resilient societies.

International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism

- **Establishment:** The **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)**, through its resolution 72/165, proclaimed **August 21st** as the International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism.
- **Objective:** The primary goal is to provide victims and survivors with long-term, multi-dimensional support, including physical, psychological, social, and financial assistance, to help them recover, rehabilitate, and reintegrate into society.
- **Significance:** The day acknowledges that victims of terrorism often feel forgotten once the immediate aftermath of an attack fades. It calls for international solidarity to ensure their needs are supported and their rights are upheld, transforming their experiences into a powerful force for positive change.

Additional Info

- **United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT)**
 - Established by a **UNGA resolution** to lead and coordinate a unified **"all-of-UN"** approach to counter-terrorism efforts.
 - Its mandate is derived from the **UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy**.
 - **Key Functions:**
 - Provide leadership on UN counter-terrorism mandates.
 - Enhance coordination and coherence among entities.
 - Strengthen the delivery of UN counter-terrorism capacity-building assistance to Member States.
 - Improve visibility and resource mobilization for UN's counter-terrorism work.
- **UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy**
 - A global instrument to enhance national, regional, and international efforts to counter terrorism.
 - Adopted by the **General Assembly** by consensus.
 - The strategy is based on four pillars:
 - Addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.
 - Measures to prevent and combat terrorism.

- Building states' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the **United Nations system**.
- Ensuring respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism.

India Elevates Its Reach: National Space Day Spotlights Deep Space Ambitions

What's the News?

- India observed its second **National Space Day**, commemorating its rise from early space ventures to deep space aspirations.
- Key leaders, including the Prime Minister, lauded strides in space technology, public engagement, and private sector contribution.
- The focus shifted to expanding missions—from Chandrayaan-3 to human spaceflight and beyond.

Deep Space Aspirations

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** urged scientists to prepare for deep space missions, stating that with Moon and Mars achieved, "our horizons lie beyond galaxies." He advocated building an astronaut pool and mobilizing youth into space roles.
- He challenged **space tech startups** to create **five unicorns in five years** and drive annual rocket launches to **50 per year**, confirming strong government backing.
- **ISRO's Chairman V. Narayanan** revealed plans for India's first **human spaceflight mission (Gaganyaan-1)**, a **Venus orbiter (Chandrayaan-4)**, and a **national space station** by 2035. He also projected a tripling of satellites serving India in coming years.
- ISRO unveiled a model of the **Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS)**, marking progress toward human-capable orbital infrastructure and future space tourism.

Additional Info

- **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO):** Established in 1969, **ISRO** is the national space agency of India. It has been the driving force behind the country's space program, achieving numerous milestones that have garnered global recognition.
 - **Historic Missions:**
 - **Aryabhata (1975):** India's first satellite, which marked its entry into the space age.
 - **Mangalyaan (2013):** The Mars Orbiter Mission made India the first Asian nation to reach Martian orbit and the first in the world to do so in its maiden attempt.
 - **Chandrayaan Missions:** A series of lunar exploration missions that have significantly contributed to our understanding of the Moon, including the discovery of water molecules and the unprecedented landing on the lunar south pole by **Chandrayaan-3**.
 - **Launch Vehicle Technology:**

- **Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV):** Often referred to as the workhorse of **ISRO**, the **PSLV** is a reliable and versatile launch vehicle used for delivering satellites to various orbits.
- **Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV):** This launch vehicle is used to place heavier satellites into Geostationary Transfer Orbit.

○ Satellite Navigation System:

- **Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC):** An independent regional navigation satellite system developed by India. It is designed to provide accurate real-time positioning and timing services over India and the region extending approximately 1,500 km around it.

World Lake Day — Protecting Freshwater Lakes

What's the News?

- **World Lake Day** designated by the **United Nations** to raise awareness on the importance of **lakes** and their ecosystems.
- Observance falls on **27 August** and calls for action on pollution, invasive species, water allocation and climate impacts.

Why this matters (Freshwater & Policy)

- **Role of lakes**
 - **Source of drinking water**, fisheries, irrigation and livelihoods.
 - **Biodiversity hotspots** and climate regulators.
- **Threats highlighted**
 - **Pollution**, eutrophication, invasive species, water over-extraction and climate change.
- **Policy intent**
 - UN observance aims to accelerate **sustainable lake management**, restoration and integrated governance across sectors.

Additional Info

- **India's Initiatives:**
 - **Mission Amrit Sarovar:** A nationwide initiative to rejuvenate and create over 75,000 water bodies across India, many of which are traditional ponds and lakes. Over 68,000 Amrit Sarovars have already been completed.
 - **Jal Shakti Abhiyan:** A mission focused on water conservation and water security through community participation.
 - **National Lake Conservation Plan (NLCP):** A scheme implemented by the Ministry of Environment and Forests to conserve and manage polluted and degraded lakes in urban and semi-urban areas.
- **Origin of World Lake Day:** The date, August 27, was chosen to commemorate the inaugural **World Lake Conference**, held on August 27, 1984, in Shiga

Prefecture, Japan. The resolution for the observance was spearheaded by Indonesia.

- **Relevant SDGs:** The day is closely linked to **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)** and **SDG 15 (Life on Land)**.

International Day Against Nuclear Tests

What's the News?

- The **International Day Against Nuclear Tests (IDANT)** is observed annually on August 29.
- This day, initiated by Kazakhstan, aims to raise global awareness about the devastating effects of nuclear weapon test explosions on human lives and the environment.
- It also serves as a call for a world free of nuclear weapons.

International Day Against Nuclear Tests?

- **Overview:**
 - The day commemorates the closure of the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site in Kazakhstan in 1991. The site, used by the Soviet Union, conducted over 450 tests.
 - Established in 2009 by the UN General Assembly, the day advocates for the cessation of nuclear tests and promotes global peace. It aligns with broader disarmament efforts, including the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).
- **Key Objectives:**
 - Educate the public about the humanitarian and environmental consequences of nuclear tests.
 - Mobilize international efforts to ratify the CTBT, which has been signed by 187 countries but awaits ratification by key states, including nuclear-capable nations.
- **Recent Developments:**
 - The CTBT Organization's International Monitoring System is now over 90% complete, with 306 stations operational worldwide to detect nuclear explosions.
 - The UN Secretary-General marked the 80th anniversary of the first nuclear test, stressing that nuclear testing "harms the environment,

undermines economic development, and has devastating effects on people's lives".

Additional Info

- **CTBT**
 - The treaty bans all nuclear explosions, whether for military or civilian purposes.
 - It has not yet entered into force as it requires ratification by 44 specific states listed in its Annex 2.
 - India is not a signatory to the treaty.
 - The treaty is monitored by the **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO)**, which uses a global network of over 300 monitoring stations (the **International Monitoring System**).
- **Nuclear Weapons in India**
 - India's nuclear program is based on a "no first use" policy.
 - The country's nuclear doctrine is one of credible minimum deterrence.
 - The **Department of Atomic Energy** is the nodal agency for all matters related to atomic energy in India.
- **Key Dates in Nuclear History**
 - **July 16, 1945:** The first nuclear test, known as the **Trinity Test**, was conducted by the United States.
 - **September 26:** The **UN International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons** is observed.
 - **1974:** India conducted its first nuclear test, code-named **Smiling Buddha**.
 - **1998:** India conducted a series of five nuclear tests, known as **Operation Shakti**.
- **Related Organizations**
 - **IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency):** The UN's central intergovernmental forum for scientific and technical cooperation in the nuclear field.
 - **NPT (Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons):** A landmark international treaty whose objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament.

Defence

India and Philippines Conduct First Joint Naval Exercise in South China Sea

What's New?

- India and the Philippines conducted their **first joint naval sail and exercises** in the disputed South China Sea, marking a milestone in their defense cooperation.
- The two-day exercise, starting on Sunday, involved Indian ships **INS Delhi** (destroyer), **INS Shakti** (tanker), and **INS Kiltan** (corvette), alongside Philippine frigates **BRP Miguel Malvar** and **BRP Jose Rizal**.
- Held within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone (EEZ), the exercise coincided with Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos's state visit to India to strengthen maritime and defense ties.
- Philippine officials reported their ships were "shadowed," likely by Chinese vessels, though no incidents disrupted the exercise.

Joint Naval Exercise in South China Sea

- Overview:** This inaugural exercise highlights growing India-Philippines defense collaboration amid tensions over China's claims in the South China Sea. It reinforces their support for a rules-based maritime order.
- Key Details:**
 - Conducted approximately **200 nautical miles** off Luzon, the exercise included formation sailing, communication drills, and search-and-rescue simulations.
 - It aligns with Marcos's India visit, focusing on defense, trade, and agriculture cooperation.
- Context:** China, which claims most of the South China Sea via its "nine-dash line," may view this as a challenge to its dominance, especially given its history of shadowing such exercises.

Geopolitical Significance

- Bilateral Ties:** The exercise strengthens India-Philippines relations, uniting two nations with shared concerns about China's assertiveness—India along the LAC and the Philippines in the South China Sea.
- Regional Dynamics:** It challenges China's territorial claims, supporting freedom of navigation and potentially encouraging other nations like Vietnam to join similar efforts.
- India's Strategy:** This aligns with India's **Act East Policy** and the **Quad**, enhancing its role as a security partner in the Indo-Pacific.

Additional Info

- South China Sea:** A vital trade route with **\$3 trillion** in annual commerce, contested by China and Southeast Asian nations. A 2016 tribunal ruling rejected China's claims, but Beijing dismissed it.
- Defense Ties:** India and the Philippines signed a defense logistics MoU in 2023, with India supplying **BrahMos** missiles to Manila.
- China's Stance:** Beijing opposes third-party involvement in regional disputes, likely viewing this exercise with suspicion.

Army Chief Inaugurates 'Agnishodh' Research Cell at IIT Madras

What's the News?

- The Chief of the Army Staff, **General Upendra Dwivedi**, has inaugurated '**Agnishodh**', a dedicated research and development cell at the **Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras)**.

About 'Agnishodh' - Centre of Excellence

'Agnishodh' (a combination of 'Agni' for fire and 'Shodh' for research) is established as a Centre of Excellence to drive indigenous military innovation.

- Objective:** To serve as a dedicated research facility to develop cutting-edge and tailored technological solutions for the Indian Army.
- Collaboration Model:** It establishes a formal partnership between the Army and IIT Madras, enabling seamless interaction between military personnel, faculty, and researchers.
- Focus Areas:** The cell will concentrate on pioneering research in emerging technologies, advanced materials, and novel propulsion systems to address the Army's specific operational challenges.
- Goal:** The primary aim is to translate state-of-the-art academic research into practical, field-deployable defence equipment, thereby strengthening the domestic defence industrial base.

Additional Info

Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX)

- Objective:** The **iDEX** scheme, launched by the Department of Defence Production, aims to foster innovation and technology development in the Defence and Aerospace sectors.
- Mechanism:** It engages and provides funding to MSMEs, startups, individual innovators, R&D institutes, and academia to develop innovative products with potential for adoption by the Indian military.
- Relevance:** The creation of dedicated research cells like '**Agnishodh**' complements the broader **iDEX** framework by building specialized, long-term institutional partnerships to tackle specific and complex technological challenges for the armed forces.

BSF Personnel Honoured with Gallantry Medals for Operation Sindoor on Independence Day

What's the News?

- Sixteen **Border Security Force (BSF)** personnel received **Gallantry Medals** for "conspicuous bravery" during **Operation Sindoor**, targeting terror and military threats in Pakistan and PoK in May.
- Sub-Inspector **Mohd Imteyaj** and Constable **Deepak Chingakham**, who were killed defending a sensitive outpost under intense shelling and drone attacks, were among those honoured posthumously.
- Additional acts of bravery include neutralizing drones, destroying surveillance devices, replenishing

ammunition under fire, and holding positions amid attacks.

- Also, **five BSF personnel** were awarded the **President's Medal for Distinguished Service (PSM)** and **46** received the **Medal for Meritorious Service (MSM)**.

Broader Awards Context

- The Ministry of Home Affairs conferred service medals on **1,090 personnel** across police, fire services, Home Guard, Civil Defence, Correctional Services, and CAPFs.
- Across Armed Forces and CAPFs, **127 Gallantry Awards**, **40 Distinguished Service awards**, and **290 Mention-in-Despatches** were approved. Honours include **Kirti Chakra**, **Vir Chakra**, **Shaurya Chakra**, **Sena Medals**, **Yudh Seva Medals**, among others.

Additional Info

- The awards span all categories of valor and service: **GM** for bravery, **PSM** for distinguished service, **MSM** for meritorious service.
- States and services honored include J&K (highest number of GMs), anti-Naxal regions, police, and CAPFs, showcasing coverage across varied security landscapes.
- Operation Sindoor was a coordinated offensive post the Pahalgam terror attack, exemplifying joint response readiness and maternal capability in cross-border theatres.
- Related Policies:** The awards align with the **Ministry of Home Affairs'** efforts to streamline the awards ecosystem, merging 16 medals into four categories: **President's Medal for Gallantry (PMG)**, **Medal for Gallantry (GM)**, **PSM**, and **MSM**.
- Constitutional Relevance:** The recognition of security personnel relates to **Article 355**, which mandates the Union to protect states against internal disturbances and external aggression.

(Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions).

Participants:

- Sri Lanka Navy:** Vessels include **SLNS Gajabahu**, **SLNS Vijayabahu**, and **SLNS Sayura**, plus **Special Forces** and **Sri Lanka Air Force helicopters**.

Additional Info

- Continuity:** SLINEX began in 2005. The previous edition (SLINEX-24) was held in **Visakhapatnam** (India) in **December 2024**.
- Ship Commanders:**
 - INS Rana:** 147 m long, crew ~300, commanded by Captain **KP Sreesan**.
 - INS Jyoti:** 180.16 m long, crew ~200, commanded by Captain **Chetan R Upadhyay**.

Agni-5 Successfully Test-Fired

What's the News?

- Agni-5** was successfully test-fired from the **Integrated Test Range, Chandipur**.
- The launch validated operational and technical parameters.
- The mission was conducted under the aegis of the **Strategic Forces Command**.

Missile Specs & Strategic Significance

- Overview:** Agni-5 is a long-range, nuclear-capable ballistic missile developed by **DRDO**.
- Key technical details**
 - Range:** reported in the 5,000–7,000 km class.
 - Propulsion & launch:** solid-fuel, multi-stage design; canister-launch capable.
 - Warhead:** designed for nuclear delivery; tests have demonstrated multiple re-entry vehicle tracking (MIRV capability reported in past tests).
- Strategic effects**
 - Deterrence:** strengthens India's long-range strike and credible minimum deterrent posture.
 - Operational readiness:** validation of parameters supports future induction decisions and force readiness.

Additional Info

- Programme context**
 - Developer:** Defence Research and Development Organisation (**DRDO**).
 - Operational authority:** **Strategic Forces Command** manages strategic assets.
- Agni family (comparative metrics)**
 - Agni-I:** short range.
 - Agni-II / III / IV:** progressively longer ranges.
 - Agni-V:** 5,000+ km class; expands strategic reach regionally and beyond.
- Policy & governance links**
 - Defence** is a **Union subject** under the **Seventh Schedule** (List I) of the **Constitution of India**.
 - Ministry of Defence** issues and vets strategic test releases and operational approvals.
- Technical metrics (concise)**

India–Sri Lanka Naval Exercise SLINEX-25 Begins

What's the News?

- India and Sri Lanka commenced the **12th edition of the Sri Lanka–India Naval Exercise (SLINEX-25)** in **Colombo**.
- Two **Indian Naval Ships**—**INS Rana** (guided-missile destroyer) and **INS Jyoti** (fleet tanker)—are participating.
- The exercise is structured in **two phases**:
 - Harbour Phase** in Colombo (e.g., expert exchanges, cultural and sports programs, yoga sessions, school tours).
 - Sea Phase** off the coast of Colombo, involving drills such as VBSS, gunnery firing, navigation, communication, vertical replenishment, and refuelling at sea.

Overview of the Exercise

- Origins:** Conceptualized in **2005**, SLINEX is a bilateral naval exercise to enhance maritime cooperation, interoperability, and mutual operational proficiency.
- Context:** The 2025 edition marks continued maritime engagement under India's **MAHASAGAR** framework

- **Range:** ~5,000–7,000 km.
- **Payload class:** designed for strategic nuclear payloads; MIRV capability reported in prior trials.

Exercise Samanvay Shakti 2025: Civil-Military Integration Strengthens Northeast Preparedness

What's the News?

- The Indian Army launched **Exercise Samanvay Shakti 2025**, a **10-day military–civil integration drill** in **Assam (Laipuli, Tinsukia district)** and **Manipur**, aimed at fostering joint action between security forces and civilian agencies.
- Key participants include the **Indian Army, Indian Air Force, district administration, police, intelligence agencies, NDRF, SDRF, BRO, GREF, Railways, medical personnel, educational institutions**, and industrial security teams from **OIL India, IOCL, Coal India**.

Aimed at Operational Readiness & Trust Building

- The exercise covers sectors such as **disaster management, healthcare, education, public works, forest management, narcotics control, irrigation, road safety, sports, and employment in the Armed Forces**.
- Objectives:
 - **Refine standard operating procedures (SOPs) and communication protocols** through practical drills.
 - **Enhance security preparedness** across diverse scenarios.
 - Build **community trust and institutional cohesion** via **Operation Sadbhavna**, reinforcing civil-military cooperation.

Additional Info

- **Military–Civil Fusion in Assam–Manipur:**
 - Reflects India's evolving “whole-of-nation” approach to security and development in sensitive regions.
 - Similar initiatives, like the earlier **Military–Civil Fusion Interaction Capsules**, have advanced inter-agency coordination in border areas.
- **Context in Manipur:**
 - The region remains under security constraints due to prolonged ethnic unrest.
 - Ongoing **joint operations** by the Indian Army, Assam Rifles, and local police since late July highlight the operational backdrop for Samanvay Shakti.
- **Operation Sadbhavna:**
 - As part of the exercise, infrastructure development projects are being undertaken through **Operation Sadbhavna**.
 - This long-standing Indian Army initiative focuses on winning the trust of local populations in conflict-affected areas by undertaking community-centric welfare projects.

India–France Engine Collaboration Elevates AMCA's Indigenous Capabilities

What's the News?

- India and France are set to begin joint development of a high-performance jet engine—around **120 kN thrust**—for India's indigenous fifth-generation **Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA)** and related future platforms.
- The agreement involves **DRDO** and **Safran**, with plans for full **technology transfer**, domestic design, testing, certification, and manufacturing.
- This follows Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's confirmation at a global forum on India's push for indigenous defence self-reliance.

Strategic Significance

- **Technological independence:** The project aims for full **in-country development** of jet engines, reducing reliance on imports and advancing self-sufficiency in defence aerospace.
- **Economic scale:** Estimated project value is ₹61,000 crore, reflecting significant capital investment in domestic defence infrastructure.
- **Long-term capability building:** The engine is expected to power the **AMCA Mk-II** and future platforms, with **~250 engines** required over the next decade.
- **Global defence diplomacy:** Reinforces Indo-French strategic ties, deepening collaboration in high-technology defence domains.

Additional Info

- **Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA):**
 - The **AMCA** is a fifth-generation stealth, multi-role combat aircraft currently under development by the **Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA)** in collaboration with **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)**.
 - It is designed to have advanced features such as stealth, supercruise, and superior maneuverability.
- **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO):**
 - **DRDO** is the premier agency under the **Ministry of Defence** of the Government of India, responsible for the military's research and development.
- **Safran S.A.**
 - **Safran** is a major French multinational aerospace and defence company, known for its expertise in aircraft engine manufacturing.
 - The company has a long-standing relationship with India, supplying engines for several Indian military and civilian aircraft.

India, Thailand to Hold 14th Edition of MAITREE Military Exercise in India

What's the News?

- **India and Thailand** will conduct the 14th edition of the bilateral military exercise **MAITREE** on Indian soil.

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- The exercise will focus on **company-level counter-terrorism operations** in semi-urban terrain and on enhancing **interoperability** under a **UN** mandate framework.
- Immediate effects include deepened defence cooperation, tactical exchange on urban counter-terror tactics, and reinforcement of bilateral strategic ties.

Exercise Maitree?

- **Overview:**
 - An annual joint military exercise between the **Indian Army** and the **Royal Thai Army**, launched in 2006.
 - Alternates between India and Thailand, focusing on tactical drills, interoperability, and shared best practices.
- **Key Objectives:**
 - Sharpen **company-level counter-terrorism skills** in complex semi-urban and jungle environments.
 - Enhance coordination for **peacekeeping and security operations** under UN mandates.
 - Foster camaraderie and mutual understanding between troops.
- **Operational Details:**
 - Each contingent comprises **76 personnel** (e.g., India's **Ladakh Scouts** and Thailand's **1st Battalion, 14 Infantry Regiment**).
 - Focus areas include **counter-insurgency tactics**, hostage rescue, and rapid response simulations.

India-Thailand Defence Cooperation:

- **Strategic Context:** India's "**Act East Policy**" is complemented by Thailand's "**Act West Policy**," providing a strong foundation for their strategic partnership.
- **Institutional Framework:** A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Defence Cooperation was signed in 2012.
- **Other Joint Exercises:**
 - **Exercise Siam Bharat:** A joint exercise between the Indian Air Force and the Royal Thai Air Force.
 - **Exercise Ayutthaya:** The first joint naval exercise between the Indian and Royal Thai navies, commenced recently.
- **Maritime Patrols:** Both navies conduct bi-annual joint maritime patrols near the international maritime boundary to counter piracy, smuggling, and other illegal activities.
- **Multilateral Engagement:** India participates as an "Observer Plus" in **Exercise Cobra Gold**, the largest multinational military exercise in the Asia-Pacific region, hosted by Thailand.

Exercise Bright Star 2025: India Deploys Over 700 Personnel

What's the News?

- **Over 700** personnel from the **Indian Army**, **Indian Navy**, **Indian Air Force** and **Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff** will participate in **Exercise Bright Star 2025**, a multilateral **tri-service** drill hosted by **Egypt** in partnership with the **United States**.
- The Indian contingent will take part in **live-firing**, a **Command Post Exercise (CPX)**, short training drills and **Subject Matter Expert (SME)** interactions to strengthen joint operational skills.

Exercise Bright Star 2025

- **Overview:**
 - One of the **largest and longest-running** multilateral military exercises in the **Middle East-North Africa (MENA)** region, initiated in 1980 as a bilateral US-Egypt drill and expanded to include global partners.
 - Aims to enhance **joint operational capabilities, counterterrorism efforts, and regional stability** through diversified training scenarios.
- **Key Activities:**
 - **Live-fire exercises** demonstrating tri-service operational prowess.
 - **Command Post Exercise (CPX)** focusing on joint planning, decision-making, and multinational coordination.
 - **Short training modules** on modern warfare, including cyber operations, maritime security, and urban combat.
 - **Subject Matter Expert (SME) exchanges** on emerging military domains like electronic warfare and humanitarian assistance.

Additional Info

- **India-Egypt Military Exercises:** In addition to Exercise Bright Star, India and Egypt also conduct the bilateral military exercise '**Exercise Cyclone**'. The third edition, '**Cyclone-III**', was held in February 2025 in Rajasthan, India.
- **Major Indian Multilateral Exercises:** India participates in several other key multilateral military exercises, including:
 - **Malabar:** A naval exercise involving the Quad nations (**India, the United States, Japan, and Australia**).
 - **RIMPAC (Rim of the Pacific Exercise):** The world's largest international maritime warfare exercise, hosted by the US.
 - **Cobra Gold:** A joint military exercise held in Thailand, primarily with the US, Thailand, and other partner nations.
 - **Desert Knight:** A bilateral air exercise with France, now evolving into a trilateral drill with the UAE.

International Relations

US Imposes 25% Tariff on Indian Imports with Additional Penalty

What's New?

- **US President Donald Trump** announced a **25% tariff** on all **Indian imports**, effective from **August 1**, along with an **unspecified penalty** due to India's continued purchases of **Russian oil** and **military equipment**, high tariffs, and **non-monetary trade barriers**.
- This follows failed negotiations for a **Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA)** and a proposed **mini-deal** to avoid retaliatory tariffs, initiated after a joint statement by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** and Trump targeting a deal by fall 2025.
- The **Ministry of Commerce and Industry** responded by stating it is **studying the implications** and will take **all necessary steps** to protect India's national interest, emphasizing the welfare of **farmers, entrepreneurs, and MSMEs**.
- The tariff is slightly lower than the previously threatened **26%**, but the **penalty** remains undefined, creating uncertainty.
- Industry leaders, including **FICCI President Harsha Vardhan Agarwal**, expressed disappointment, warning of impacts on **export competitiveness**, while **ICRA's Aditi Nayar** projected a **0.5% GDP reduction** in FY2026 due to weaker exports and delayed private investment.

US Tariffs and Penalties

- **Overview:**
 - The **25% tariff** applies to all Indian goods exported to the US, India's **largest trading partner** with **\$190 billion** in bilateral trade in 2024.
 - The **penalty** targets India's **energy and defense ties** with Russia, particularly its role as a major buyer of **Russian oil** (35% of India's crude imports) and equipment like **S-400 missile systems**.
- **Key details:**
 - **Reasons:** Trump cited India's **high tariffs** (among the world's highest, averaging **13.8%**), **non-tariff barriers** (e.g., regulatory restrictions), and **Russia ties**, especially amid the **Ukraine conflict**, where the US seeks to isolate Russia economically.
 - **Economic impact:** Affects **\$25.52 billion** in Indian exports (April–May 2025), including **textiles, engineering goods, auto components, pharmaceuticals, and gems and jewelry**. **MSMEs** face reduced orders and compressed margins, per **India SME Forum's Vinod Kumar**.
 - **Comparison:** Other nations like the **UK** (10% tariff on cars), **Japan**, and **EU** (15%), and **Indonesia** and **Philippines** (19%) secured lower tariffs through concessions like **zero tariffs on US farm goods** and **investment pledges**, which India has not offered.
- **Significance:** The tariffs disrupt India's **export-driven sectors**, risking a **\$45.8 billion trade deficit** with the US,

while the penalty escalates **geopolitical tensions** over India's neutral stance on Ukraine.

Strategic Concerns

- **Economic consequences:**
 - **Goldman Sachs** predicts **rupee depreciation** against the US dollar, with **Macquarie** estimating a **50 basis point GDP hit**.
 - The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** is unlikely to intervene heavily, per analysts.
- **Trade negotiations:**
 - A **sixth round of talks** is scheduled for **late August** in **New Delhi**, with optimism for a deal by **September or October**.
 - India prioritizes **national interest**, resisting concessions on **agriculture** and **dairy**, per **Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal**.
- **Geopolitical context:** India's **Russia ties**, including **\$13 billion** in annual oil imports and **S-400 purchases**, align with its strategic autonomy but strain **US-India relations**, critical for **Indo-Pacific cooperation** like the **Quad**.
- **Challenges:** Balancing **export competitiveness**, protecting **MSMEs**, and navigating **US pressure** to reduce Russia ties while maintaining **strategic autonomy**.

Additional Info

- **Trade context:**
 - India's **\$25.52 billion** exports to the US (April–May 2025) grew from **\$20.89 billion** in the same period last year, driven by **pharmaceuticals** (25% of exports), **textiles** (15%), and **engineering goods** (20%).
 - A **25% tariff** risks a **30–40% cost increase** for US importers, potentially reducing demand.
- **Russian imports:**
 - India imports **1.4 million barrels/day** of Russian crude (2024), saving **\$7 billion** annually compared to other sources, per **Ministry of Petroleum** data.
 - Defense deals include **\$5.5 billion** for **S-400 systems**, with deliveries ongoing despite US sanctions threats under **CAATSA**.
- **US trade policy:**
 - Trump's **"America First"** approach includes **50% tariffs on steel**, **25% on automobiles**, and a **10% baseline tariff** globally.
 - The **Sanctioning Russia Act, 2025**, proposes up to **500% tariffs** on countries buying Russian energy, though not yet enacted.
- **Indian response:** The **Global Trade Research Initiative** noted India's tariff rate is comparable to **Vietnam** (20%) and **Indonesia** (19%), suggesting a **strategic opportunity** for India to leverage its **democratic** and **scalable** market to attract global buyers diversifying from China.

- **Industry concerns:** The **Apparel Export Promotion Council** expected a **20% tariff** without penalties, but the **25% rate** plus Russia-related sanctions disrupts trade equations, particularly for **textiles** competing with **Bangladesh** and **Vietnam**.

India Rejects UK Parliamentary Committee Report on Transnational Repression

What's New?

- India has outright rejected a UK parliamentary report accusing it of "transnational repression" on British soil.
- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) labeled the allegations "baseless," criticizing the report's reliance on "unverified" and "dubious sources."
- The UK report listed India among several nations allegedly intimidating or silencing individuals abroad.

Transnational Repression Report?

- **Overview:**
 - The UK Parliament's Joint Committee on Human Rights released a report claiming multiple countries, including India, engage in transnational repression in the UK.
 - It relies on evidence like personal accounts and submissions from diaspora groups, though India contests its validity.
- **Key Details:**
 - **Countries Named:** India, China, Russia, Iran, and others (total 12).
 - **Evidence Source:** Includes groups like Sikhs for Justice, banned in India as a pro-Khalistan outfit.
 - **MEA Response:** Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal called the report's sources unreliable and biased against India.
- **Objective:**
 - The report seeks to expose state-sponsored suppression abroad, but India's rebuttal challenges its credibility.

Diplomatic Significance

- India's rejection reflects its strong commitment to sovereignty and resistance to external interference.
- It raises questions about the reliability of international reports, critical for diplomatic credibility.
- This could impact India-UK ties, especially amid ongoing trade and strategic discussions.

Additional Info

- **Report Details:**
 - Released by the Joint Committee on Human Rights, it cites alleged misuse of Interpol by India, a claim India refutes.
 - Based on submissions from diaspora and activist groups, including banned entities.
- **India's Position:**
 - The MEA asserts the allegations fit a pattern of anti-India narratives lacking evidence.
- **Context:**

- Transnational repression involves state actions to curb dissent overseas, a growing global concern.

India Defends Russian Oil Imports Amid US-EU Criticism and Tariff Threats

What's the News?

- India has strongly defended its decision to import oil from Russia, labeling criticism from the **United States** and the **European Union** as "unjustified and unreasonable."
- This follows **Donald Trump's** threat to impose tariffs on India due to its ongoing trade with Russia.
- The **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** stressed that these imports are critical for ensuring **energy security** and maintaining affordable energy prices for Indian citizens.

India's Stance on Russian Oil Imports

India has ramped up its oil imports from Russia since the Ukraine conflict disrupted global energy markets, capitalizing on discounted rates to meet its growing energy demands. The MEA has underscored this as a pragmatic move in a challenging international environment.

Key details:

- India imported approximately **1.75 million barrels per day** of Russian oil from January to June 2025, making up about **35%** of its total oil imports.
- The MEA justifies this by highlighting the need for **predictable** and **affordable** energy costs amid global supply chain disruptions caused by the **Ukraine** conflict.
- India has called out Western hypocrisy, noting that the EU's trade with Russia in 2023 far exceeded India's, while the US continues to import materials like **uranium** and **palladium** from Russia.
- **Context:** The Ukraine conflict shifted global energy dynamics, prompting India to diversify its oil sources and strengthen ties with Russia.
- **Significance:** This move reflects India's focus on safeguarding its economic interests and asserting autonomy in its foreign policy.

Additional Info

- **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA):**
 - Founded in **1948**, it oversees India's foreign policy and international relations.
 - Led by the Minister of External Affairs, currently **S. Jaishankar**.
 - Central to shaping India's response to global trade and energy challenges.
- **India's Energy Security:**
 - As the world's **third-largest oil importer**, India depends on imports for around **85%** of its oil requirements.
 - Key suppliers include **Iraq**, **Saudi Arabia**, and now prominently **Russia**.
 - Efforts to diversify energy sources include renewable initiatives like the **International Solar Alliance**.

India Launches Projects with UN under Global Capacity Building Initiative

What's the News?

- India has launched the first phase of **four projects** in **nine partner countries** under the **India-UN Global Capacity Building Initiative**.
- The projects focus on **food security, health, vocational training, and census preparedness**.
- The launch event was attended by **Secretary (West) Tanmaya Lal, UN Resident Coordinator Shombi Sharp**, and other diplomats and officials.

India-UN Global Capacity Building Initiative

The **India-UN Global Capacity Building Initiative** is a collaborative effort between India and the United Nations to promote **South-South cooperation** and achieve the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. Announced by External Affairs Minister **S. Jaishankar** in **September 2023**, it was developed with the UN team in India. The projects are executed through training by **ITEC-affiliated institutions**.

- Key Details:**
 - Targets countries in **Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean**.
 - First phase includes **four projects** across **nine countries**.
 - Focuses on critical developmental areas like food security and health.

Additional Info

- Ministry of External Affairs (MEA):**
 - Established: **1948**
 - Role: Manages India's foreign relations
 - Current Minister: **S. Jaishankar**
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):**
 - Adopted: **2015** by the UN
 - Number: **17 goals**
 - Target Year: **2030**
- Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC):**
 - Launched: **1964**
 - Purpose: Capacity building for developing countries
 - Reach: Over **200,000** officials from **160** countries trained

Strengthening Health Research Systems

- Objective:** Build a regional network for **evidence-based policies**, better preparedness, and faster response to health crises.
- Key Elements:**
 - Promoting **multi-country research partnerships**.
 - Sharing **data, best practices, and capacity-building efforts**.
 - Strengthening research on **public health priorities** such as maternal and child health, nutrition, and emerging diseases.
- Key Focus Areas:**
 - Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)**
 - Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)**
 - One Health** approach
 - Medical technology innovation
 - Field epidemiology training
- Significance:**
 - Region faces common threats like **pandemics, climate-linked health issues, and antimicrobial resistance**.
 - Collective action reduces duplication and ensures **efficient use of resources**.

Additional Info

- Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**
 - Apex body for **biomedical research** in India.
 - Established in **1911** as **IRFA (Indian Research Fund Association)**; renamed ICMR in **1949**.
 - Functions under **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare**.
 - Key role in **COVID-19 testing protocols and vaccine research**.
- Regional Cooperation on Health**
 - SAARC:** Has a **Technical Committee on Health and Population Activities**.
 - ASEAN:** Focuses on **health security, disease surveillance, and universal health coverage**.
 - SDG 3:** "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages."
- India's Initiatives in Health Research**
 - National Health Policy 2017:** Emphasizes health research as a priority.
 - India TB Elimination Goal 2025** (ahead of global 2030 target).
 - National Digital Health Mission (NDHM)** for integrated digital health ecosystem.

South & Southeast Asian Nations Push for Stronger Health Research Collaboration

What's the News?

- South and Southeast Asian nations** have agreed to enhance collaboration in **health research systems**.
- The focus is on **joint solutions** to tackle regional health challenges like infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases, and health emergencies.
- The initiative was emphasized by the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**, which called for pooling expertise, resources, and infrastructure.

India Leads Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Forum as AIBD Executive Board Chair

What's the News?

- India secured the **Chairmanship of the Executive Board of the Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD)**, winning the **highest number of votes** at the 23rd AIBD General Conference in Phuket, Thailand.
- India previously held this position in 2016 and continues to serve as **President of the AIBD General Conference** until August 2025.

- Shri **Gaurav Dwivedi**, CEO of **Prasar Bharati** and President of AIBD General Conference, expressed gratitude for the trust shown by member countries and reaffirmed India's intent to further collaborative media initiatives.

Strategic Implications

- This development is a testament to the international community's confidence in India's dynamic and independent media environment. India's leadership is poised to be pivotal in shaping the strategic direction of the AIBD, an organisation crucial for media development in the Asia-Pacific.
- As Chairman, India is expected to spearhead initiatives aimed at:
 - Fostering a collaborative ecosystem for broadcasters to navigate the challenges of the digital era.
 - Championing the principles of balanced, ethical, and responsible media content.
 - Promoting capacity building and knowledge sharing, particularly in areas of technological innovation and sustainable broadcasting models.
 - Strengthening the collective voice of the Asia-Pacific region on global media and broadcasting platforms.

Additional Info

- **Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD):**
 - **Establishment:** Founded in 1977 under the aegis of the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**.
 - **Nature:** It is a unique regional inter-governmental organisation serving countries of the **United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP)**.
 - **Mandate:** To achieve a vibrant and cohesive electronic media environment in the Asia-Pacific region through policy formulation and resource development.
 - **Secretariat:** Hosted by the Government of Malaysia and located in Kuala Lumpur.
- **Prasar Bharati:**
 - **Status:** India's statutory autonomous public service broadcaster, established by an Act of Parliament.
 - **Constituents:** It comprises the **Doordarshan Television Network** and **All India Radio (AIR)**.
 - **Mission:** To inform, educate, and entertain the public while upholding democratic values, national integration, and promoting social development.

Broadcasting Development (AIBD), securing the highest number of votes at its 23rd General Conference.

- The achievement marks a significant strengthening of India's leadership role in the regional media landscape. **Prasar Bharati**, India's public service broadcaster, serves as the country's representative body within the AIBD.

Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD)?

- **Formation:** Established in 1977 under the auspices of **UNESCO**.
 - **Nature:** It is a unique regional inter-governmental organisation focused on electronic media development.
 - **Secretariat:** Located in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
 - **Founding Members:** **UNESCO**, the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**, and the **International Telecommunication Union (ITU)** are founding, non-voting members.
 - **Mandate:** AIBD's primary objective is to create a vibrant and cohesive electronic media environment in the Asia-Pacific through policy formulation and resource sharing.
 - **Membership:** It has 26 full member countries and 38 affiliate members, with a total of 92 member organizations from 45 countries.
- **Previous Indian Chairmanship:** India last held the position of AIBD Executive Council Chairman in 2016.
- **23rd AIBD General Conference:**
 - **Venue:** Phuket, Thailand.
 - **Theme:** "Media for People, Peace & Prosperity."

Additional Info

- **Related Organizations:**
 - **Prasar Bharati:** India's autonomous public service broadcaster, representing the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting in AIBD.
 - **UNESCO:** Founding organization of AIBD, focusing on promoting peace and sustainable development through media.
- **Governance Structure:**
 - **Executive Board (EXBO):** Responsible for financial management, administrative policy, and program development.
 - **General Conference (GC):** Annual gathering to review projects and strategize future initiatives.

India Assumes Chairmanship of AIBD Executive Board

What's the News?

- India has been elected as the Chairman of the Executive Board of the **Asia-Pacific Institute for**

Analysis of Trump's Tariffs and Their Economic Impact

What's the News?

- Recent economic analysis indicates that the tariffs imposed by the Trump administration on imports have had significant, complex, and often detrimental effects on the U.S. economy.

- While intended to shield domestic industries and reduce the trade deficit, these measures have largely resulted in higher costs for American consumers and businesses, retaliatory actions from trading partners, and minimal impact on the trade deficit.

50% Tariffs on Indian Exports Over Russian Oil Purchases

- This measure targets India's purchase of Russian oil, which the U.S. claims indirectly funds the Ukraine conflict²³⁷. The tariffs, among the highest globally, apply to key export sectors like **textiles, gems, jewelry, footwear, and chemicals**, affecting nearly **55% of India's \$87 billion exports to the U.S.**
- India has rejected the accusations as "double standards" and affirmed its commitment to energy security, vowing to cushion the economic impact through domestic reforms and export diversification.

Macroeconomic Impact on the U.S. Economy?

- **Overview:** The tariffs are part of a broader U.S. trade policy shift under the Trump administration, which has escalated global trade tensions. While aimed at penalizing geopolitical actions, these measures have significant domestic repercussions for the U.S. economy, including higher consumer prices, supply chain disruptions, and inflationary pressures.
- **Key Impacts:**
 - **Inflation and Consumer Costs:** Tariffs have contributed to rising inflation, with **U.S. core PCE inflation projected at 3.6% in 2025**. Consumer goods, including apparel and electronics, face price hikes due to increased import costs.
 - **Economic Growth:** Deloitte's baseline forecast predicts U.S. GDP growth to slow to **1.4% in 2025 and 1.5% in 2026**, citing reduced business investment and trade volumes.
 - **Sectoral Vulnerabilities:** Labor-intensive sectors like manufacturing and retail may suffer job losses, while industries reliant on Indian imports (e.g., pharmaceuticals) face supply constraints.
 - **Global Trade Dynamics:** The U.S. trade deficit with India (\$45.8 billion in 2024) could widen further if retaliation occurs, disrupting supply chains and benefiting competitors like Vietnam and Bangladesh.

Additional Info

- **What is a Tariff?**
 - A tariff is a tax imposed by a government on imported goods and services.
 - It serves two primary purposes: to raise government revenue and to protect domestic industries from foreign competition by making imports more expensive.
 - Tariffs can be **ad valorem** (a percentage of the import's value) or **specific** (a fixed amount per unit).
- **Historical Context of U.S. Trade Policy:**

- **18th-19th Century:** Tariffs were a major source of government revenue. Protectionism was common to foster domestic industries.
- **Post-WWII Era:** The U.S. spearheaded efforts to liberalize global trade through agreements like the **General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)**, a precursor to the **World Trade Organization (WTO)**. This period saw a significant and steady decline in average tariff rates.
- **Recent Shift:** The Trump administration's use of tariffs marked a major departure from decades of a generally pro-free trade policy, signaling a return to more protectionist measures.

Nepal Joins International Big Cat Alliance What's the News?

- **Nepal** has officially become a member of the **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)**, an India-led initiative.
- The alliance aims at collaborative conservation of **seven big cat species**: tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, puma, jaguar, and cheetah.
- Nepal's membership strengthens regional cooperation, especially in the conservation of **tigers and snow leopards**, which are significant to its Himalayan ecosystem.

International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)

- **Launched** by India to mobilize global resources and expertise for big cat conservation.
- **Objectives:**
 - Strengthen conservation strategies for big cats and their habitats.
 - Enhance research, capacity building, and knowledge sharing across countries.
 - Mobilize financial and technical support for range countries.
- **Relevance for Nepal:**
 - Nepal hosts **tigers (*Panthera tigris*)** in Terai grasslands and **snow leopards (*Panthera uncia*)** in high-altitude Himalayan regions.
 - Nepal achieved the **tiger population doubling goal (Tx2)** ahead of the global deadline.

Additional Info

- **Tiger Conservation in Nepal:**
 - Tiger population doubled between 2009–2022, reaching over **350 individuals**.
 - Major habitats: **Chitwan, Bardiya, Banke, Shuklaphanta National Parks**.
- **Snow Leopard Conservation:**
 - Found in Himalayan ranges such as **Mustang, Dolpo, Manang**.
 - Estimated population: around **300–400**.
- **International Big Cat Alliance:**
 - Proposed by **India** during its **G20 presidency (2023)**.
 - Headquarters: **India**.

- Membership open to all 97 range countries of big cats.
- **Related Indian Initiatives:**
 - **Project Tiger (1973)** under **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
 - **Project Snow Leopard (2009)**.
 - India hosts **70% of the world's wild tiger population**.

India-Africa Trade Crosses USD 100 Billion

What's the News?

- **India-Africa trade** exceeded **USD 100 billion** in **2024-25**.
- **India** is now among the **top-five investors** in Africa.
- **Concessional loans** totalling over **USD 12 billion** and **grants** of about **USD 700 million** were extended.
- **50,000 scholarships** were offered to African youth, with over **42,000** utilised.
- Announcement made at the **CII India-Africa Business Conclave** by Union Minister **Kirti Vardhan Singh**.

Deepening India-Africa Partnership

- **Trade Growth:** Bilateral trade surged by **over 78%** in five years, reflecting strengthened economic engagement. Key sectors include **minerals, agriculture, technology, and healthcare**.
- **Investment and Assistance:** India has extended:
 - **USD 12 billion** in concessional loans
 - **USD 700 million** in grants for African projects
 - **50,000 scholarships** for African youth, with over 42,000 already utilized
- **Strategic Focus:** Future collaboration will prioritize:
 - **Critical minerals** (e.g., cobalt, copper for battery manufacturing)
 - Climate resilience through initiatives like the **International Solar Alliance**
 - Capacity building in education, healthcare, and infrastructure
- **Trade trajectory**
 - **USD 56 billion** in **FY 2019-20**.
 - **USD 100+ billion** in **2024-25**.
- **Investment timeline**
 - **Cumulative investments ~USD 75 billion** from **1996–2024**.

Additional Info

- **Historical Context:**
 - The India-Africa relationship has ancient roots, with historical trade routes across the Indian Ocean.
 - Post-independence, India was a leading voice against colonialism and apartheid in Africa, fostering a strong political and ideological bond.
- **Major Initiatives & Organisations:**
 - **India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS):** The official platform for India-Africa relations, first held in 2008. It institutionalized high-level political dialogue and cooperation.
 - **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme:** Launched in 1964, it

provides capacity building and technical assistance to developing countries, with Africa being its largest beneficiary.

- **Pan-African e-Network Project:** A flagship grant project announced in 2005 to provide tele-education and telemedicine services across the continent.
- **Kampala Principles:** In 2018, Prime Minister Narendra Modi outlined 10 principles to guide India's Africa policy, emphasizing a partnership based on Africa's priorities and local ownership.
- **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA):** India aims to align its policies to support the implementation of AfCFTA, which will create a unified market across the continent.
- **G20 Membership:** India played a leading role in advocating for the permanent membership of the **African Union** in the **G20** during its 2023 presidency, enhancing Africa's voice in global governance.

Constitutional / governance note

- **Directive Principles** (e.g., **Article 51**) encourages promotion of international peace and cooperation and informs foreign policy orientation.
- **Parliamentary oversight** via budget, EXIM Bank approvals and treaties is relevant for accountability of development finance.

Tariff shock: India's headline 50% US tariff ≈ 33.6% effective burden

What's the News?

- **US** announced extra tariffs that raise headline duties on many Indian exports to **50%**.
- **Nomura** and market analysts estimate the **effective** tariff faced by Indian exports is about **33.6%** after exemptions and sectoral carve-outs.
- Immediate impact: competitive pressure on labour-intensive sectors such as **textiles** and **gems & jewellery**, risks to exports (~\$87 billion market) and downside to GDP growth forecasts.

Why 33.6% and not 50%?

- **Mechanics**
 - The **headline 50%** applies only to a share of items; large portions of Indian exports are exempt or face lower rates.
 - **Nomura's** breakdown: roughly **60%** of US imports from India face the full 50% levy. That weighted exposure yields an **aggregate effective rate ≈ 33.6%**.
- **Key carve-outs and differentials**
 - Items covered by **Section 232** or other exemptions (e.g., certain semiconductors, pharma and strategic items) avoid the additional levy.
 - Differential treatment by sector means finished autos and some capital goods face lower effective increases.
- **Macro and sectoral implications**



- Export competitiveness falls relative to peers. Nomura and others warn of GDP growth downgrades and concentrated job losses in labour-intensive clusters.

Additional Info

• Types of Tariffs

- **Ad Valorem Tariff:** A tariff levied as a percentage of the value of the imported good. The 50% headline duty is an example of an ad valorem tariff.
- **Specific Tariff:** A tariff levied as a fixed charge for each unit of an imported good.
- **Effective Rate of Protection (ERP):** The rate of tariff on a finished good after accounting for the tariffs on the imported raw materials and components used to produce it. The article's concept of "effective duty" is similar to ERP, showing the actual protection or burden on a particular industry.

• Key International Trade Concepts & Organizations

- **World Trade Organization (WTO):** The global organization that deals with the rules of trade between nations. Its main goal is to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably, and freely as possible.
- **Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) Principle:** A core principle of the WTO, where any advantage, favor, or privilege granted by one member to a product of another country must be immediately and unconditionally extended to the like product originating in all other WTO members.

• India's Trade Policy

- India is increasingly focusing on bilateral trade agreements (**Free Trade Agreements - FTAs**) to secure market access for its goods and services.
- The **Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT)**, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, is the government body responsible for formulating and implementing the foreign trade policy of India.

• Key details

- **Consistent stance:** India described its posture as steadfast and consistent in favour of peaceful settlement.
- **Practical engagement:** Offer to extend all possible support and deepen cooperation across sectors of mutual interest.
- **Strategic context:** The conversation forms part of India's broader diplomatic outreach while engaging other stakeholders in multilateral forums.

Additional Info

• India's Foreign Policy Principles:

- India's foreign policy is guided by principles of strategic autonomy and a multi-aligned approach.
- India maintains diplomatic relations with a wide range of countries, including those involved in geopolitical conflicts.
- This policy allows India to engage with all parties to promote peace and stability.

• Humanitarian Assistance:

- Since the beginning of the conflict, India has extended humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, including medical supplies and other essential relief materials.
- This assistance is a part of India's commitment to supporting the people of Ukraine in their time of need.

• Constitutional Article:

- Article 51 of the Indian Constitution directs the state to "promote international peace and security."
- This directive principle of state policy serves as a constitutional underpinning for India's diplomatic efforts to resolve international disputes peacefully.

PM Modi, Zelenskyy Discuss Ukraine Conflict; India Reaffirms Push for Peace

What's the News?

- Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** held a telephone conversation with **President Volodymyr Zelenskyy**.
- India reaffirmed its consistent position for a peaceful settlement of the Ukraine conflict and offered support for efforts to restore peace at the earliest.
- The leaders reviewed **India-Ukraine bilateral ties** and agreed to remain in regular contact to advance cooperation.

India's Diplomatic Position

• Overview

- India emphasised **dialogue and diplomacy** as the route to resolution and signalled readiness to support peace efforts while continuing bilateral engagement with Ukraine.

India-Japan Strategic Partnership Expands Across Key Sectors

What's the News?

- Indian Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** and Japanese Prime Minister **Shigeru Ishiba** concluded the **India-Japan Annual Summit 2025** in Tokyo, unveiling a comprehensive roadmap for bilateral cooperation over the next decade.
- Key outcomes include a **\$68 billion investment target** from Japan to India by 2035, enhanced collaboration in semiconductors, clean energy, and critical minerals, and a new **defence technology partnership**.
- The leaders also set an ambitious target of **5 lakh personnel exchanges** over five years to address Japan's workforce shortages and boost India's skill development.

Key Areas of Cooperation

• Economic & Technology Cooperation:

- A **\$65 billion private investment** target from Japan to India has been set for the next

decade, with a focus on technology and innovation.

- Cooperation in **semiconductor supply chains** will be deepened, with joint projects and partnerships between private companies and academic institutions.
- Agreements on **clean energy** will promote collaboration in hydrogen, ammonia, and biofuels, supporting India's net-zero emission targets.
- A **Digital Partnership 2.0** and a new **AI Cooperation Initiative** will advance joint research and development in emerging technologies.
- **Strategic and Security Cooperation:**
 - A **Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation** was adopted, aimed at enhancing collaboration in defense, maritime security, and counter-terrorism.
 - A new pact on **critical minerals** will help build and diversify supply chains, ensuring resource security for both countries.
 - The two nations will explore opportunities for **co-development and co-production** of defense equipment.
- **People-to-People Exchange:**
 - An **Action Plan for Human Resource Exchange and Cooperation** has been finalized.

- It aims to facilitate the movement of over **5 lakh personnel** within five years, including 50,000 skilled professionals from India to Japan to address Japan's talent needs.

Additional Info

- **Strategic Alignment:**
 - India and Japan are both key members of the **Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue)**, which also includes the USA and Australia.
 - Both countries share a vision of a "**Free and Open Indo-Pacific**" and cooperate to maintain a rules-based order in the region.
- **Bilateral Projects:**
 - The **Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail** project is a flagship collaboration, showcasing Japanese technology and financial assistance.
 - Both countries are engaged in a **Logistics Agreement (ACSA)**, which allows their armed forces to use each other's bases for supplies and services.
- **Diplomatic Forums:**
 - The **India-Japan Annual Summit** is the highest-level bilateral dialogue, held regularly to review and advance the partnership.
 - They also hold a "**2+2 Dialogue**" involving their foreign and defense ministers.



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International

UN Women Marks 15th Anniversary Amid Gender Equality Challenges

What's New?

- **UN Women**, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, celebrated its **15th anniversary** in 2025, reflecting on its role in advancing **women's rights** across **109 countries**.
- Established in **2010**, the agency highlighted its efforts to drive **policy changes**, **economic empowerment**, and **protection against violence**, despite global setbacks like a **60% rise in concerns** over lagging gender equality, per a **March 2025 survey**.
- The anniversary coincided with the **Beijing+30 Action Agenda**, marking 30 years since the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)**, emphasizing accelerated action to meet **SDG 5 (Gender Equality)**.
- Former **Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf** called for sustained global support, citing challenges like **Afghanistan's ban on women's education** and a **25% global backlash** against women's rights in 2024.

UN Women's 15th Anniversary Focus

- **Overview:**
 - Founded in **2010** through the merger of four UN entities, UN Women works to promote **gender equality** and **women's empowerment**, supporting **SDG 5** and the **2030 Agenda**.
 - Its **Strategic Plan 2022–2025** focuses on **policy advocacy**, **economic inclusion**, and combating **gender-based violence**.
- **Key achievements:**
 - **Economic empowerment:** Supported **4 million women entrepreneurs** globally through programs like **Women's Empowerment Principles**, adopted by **8,000+ companies**.
 - **Political participation:** Increased women's representation in **national parliaments** to **27.2%** in 2025, up from **22.3%** in 2015, though progress slowed (only **0.3%** from 2024).
 - **Violence reduction:** Backed **legal reforms** in **70 countries** to address **domestic violence** and **human trafficking**, per the **UN Women Transparency Portal (2022)**.
 - **Regional efforts:** In East and Southern Africa, a **two-year initiative (2023–2025)** with the **African Development Bank** produced a **technical guide** for integrating gender into **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** and climate strategies, supporting **19 countries**.
- **Significance:** UN Women's work is critical amid setbacks like **Afghanistan's 2021 Taliban ban** on women's education and **global gender-based violence**, with **1 in 3 women** experiencing violence, per **WHO** data.

Broader Implications

- **Global relevance:**

- Gender equality is essential for **sustainable development**, impacting **SDG 1 (No Poverty)**, **SDG 3 (Health)**, and **SDG 8 (Decent Work)**.
- UN Women's efforts in **109 countries** drive cross-cutting progress, from **climate policy** in Africa to **political inclusion** in Pakistan's Baluchistan.
- **India's context:** UN Women supports India's **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao** and **Mahila Shakti Kendra** schemes, boosting **female literacy** (from **64.6% in 2011** to **77% in 2024**) and **workforce participation** (**32% in 2025**, per **PLFS**).
- **Challenges:** Addressing **systemic barriers** (e.g., unpaid care work, **26% of women's time** globally), countering **global backlash** against women's rights, and securing **funding** for grassroots initiatives.

Additional Info

- **UN Women's structure:**
 - Headquartered in **New York**, it operates in **109 countries** with **3,500 staff**, led by **Executive Director Sima Bahous**.
 - It collaborates with **UN entities** like **UNICEF**, **UNDP**, and **UNFPA**, and partners with **civil society** and **private sectors**.
 - Its **2024 budget** was **\$1.2 billion**, with **60%** from voluntary contributions.
- **Beijing+30:**
 - Launched in **March 2025**, this agenda reviews progress since the **1995 Beijing Declaration**, setting priorities like **ending child marriage** (affecting **12% of girls** globally) and valuing **unpaid care work** (**\$10.8 trillion** annually).
 - India's **VNR 2025** highlighted **Mudra Yojana's 70%** female beneficiaries.
- **Regional programs:**
 - In **Palestine**, UN Women has supported **economic rights** since **1997**, providing **microfinance** to **10,000 women** in 2024.
 - In **Haiti**, the **Nou Pap Dòmi** initiative, backed by **UNDEF**, empowers youth to address **gender-based corruption**.
- **Data insights:**
 - **26% of women** globally face **legal discrimination**, per **UN Women's 2024 report**. **Child marriage** declined from **21% in 2000** to **12% in 2024**, but progress is uneven, with **South Asia** (including India) accounting for **50% of cases**.
 - **Climate policies** in **19 African countries** now integrate gender, per the **RCC EASA guide**.
- **India-specific efforts:**
 - UN Women collaborates with **NITI Aayog** to align **SDG 5** with schemes like **POSHAN Abhiyaan**, reducing **female anemia** from **53% in 2016** to **30.7% in 2023**.

- It also supports **SHGs** in **Uttar Pradesh** and **Odisha**, impacting **2 million women** with microcredit.

especially given the junta's history of **suppressing dissent** (e.g., **15,000 arrests**, **3,000 deaths** since 2021, per **UN data**).

Geopolitical Significance

- **Regional dynamics:**
 - Myanmar's shift aligns with **ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus** (2021), urging an end to violence and inclusive dialogue, though progress remains limited.
 - The elections are seen as a response to **China** and **India's** calls for stability, given Myanmar's strategic role in **Belt and Road** projects and **India's Northeast connectivity**.
- **Global scrutiny:**
 - The **UN** and **Western nations** question the junta's commitment to **free elections**, citing restricted **media freedom** and **detained opposition leaders**, including Aung San Suu Kyi.
 - The **US** and **EU** maintain sanctions on junta leaders, impacting Myanmar's **\$60 billion economy**.
- **Challenges:** Ensuring **credible elections** amid **ethnic conflicts** in **Shan** and **Rakhine** states, restoring **investor confidence** (FDI dropped **20%** since 2021), and addressing **humanitarian crises** (2.5 million displaced, per **UNHCR**).

Additional Info

- **Myanmar's political context:**
 - The **2021 coup** followed the **National League for Democracy's (NLD)** landslide win in **2020 elections**, which the military claimed was fraudulent.
 - The **NDSC**, comprising military and civilian leaders, has constitutional authority to declare emergencies and form interim governments, per the **2008 Constitution**.
- **U Nyo Saw's profile:**
 - A retired general and head of the **Myanmar Economic Corporation**, he oversees military-linked businesses like **mining** and **telecom** (e.g., **Mytel**), generating **\$1 billion annually**, per **Irrawaddy** reports.
 - His appointment signals military control over economic policy.
- **Election plans:** The junta's **Union Election Commission** aims to update **40 million voter records** and redraw constituencies, but **ethnic armed groups** controlling **30% of Myanmar's territory** may disrupt polling, per **International Crisis Group** estimates.
- **International response:** **China** supports the transition to protect **\$2.5 billion** in investments (e.g., **Kyaukphyu Port**), while **India** balances support for stability with concerns over **Rohingya refugees** (40,000 in India, per **UNHCR**). **ASEAN** has barred junta leaders from summits, demanding progress on peace.
- **Economic impact:**

Myanmar Forms New Union Government Ahead of Planned Elections

What's New?

- Myanmar's **National Defence and Security Council (NDSC)** announced the formation of a new **Union Government** led by **Prime Minister U Nyo Saw** and a **State Security and Peace Commission** chaired by **Senior General Min Aung Hlaing**, the military junta leader who also serves as **acting president**.
- The move follows the dissolution of the **State Administration Council (SAC)** and the lifting of a **state of emergency** in place since the **February 2021 military coup**.
- The **NDSC** annulled the order transferring sovereign power to the **Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services**, signaling preparations for **general elections** planned for **December 2025 or January 2026**.
- **Zaw Min Tun**, spokesperson for the former SAC, stated the junta aims to ensure **free and fair elections**, though skepticism persists due to ongoing **civil conflict** and **ethnic tensions**.

New Union Government?

- **Overview:**
 - The **Union Government**, a 30-member interim body, replaces the **SAC**, which ruled Myanmar since the **2021 coup** that ousted **Aung San Suu Kyi's** government.
 - Led by **U Nyo Saw**, a military business advisor and ally of Min Aung Hlaing, it aims to stabilize governance until elections form a new parliament.
 - The **State Security and Peace Commission**, led by Min Aung Hlaing, includes former SAC members like **Deputy Commander-in-Chief Soe Win**, maintaining military influence.
- **Key details:**
 - **Leadership:** **U Nyo Saw**, previously a key figure in the military's economic ventures (e.g., **Myanmar Economic Corporation**), was appointed prime minister, while Min Aung Hlaing retains control as **acting president** and commission chair.
 - **Objective:** The interim government prioritizes **election preparations**, including voter list updates and constituency delimitation, as stated in its first meeting led by U Nyo Saw.
 - **Context:** The **2021 coup** triggered a **state of emergency**, extended multiple times, amid **civil war** with ethnic armed groups and the **People's Defence Force (PDF)**. The transition follows pressure from **ASEAN** and international calls for democratic restoration.
- **Significance:** The restructuring aims to project a **civilian-led transition**, but Min Aung Hlaing's dual role raises doubts about genuine power transfer,

- Myanmar's **GDP** contracted **18%** in 2021–22, with **inflation** at **20%** in 2024 due to conflict and sanctions.
- The **kyat** depreciated **30%** since 2021, per **World Bank**, complicating election logistics and public trust.

World Bank Updates Country Income Classifications for 2025-2026

What's the News?

- The **World Bank** has released its annual update to the country income classification system for the fiscal year 2026 (July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026).
- Based on 2024 **Gross National Income (GNI) per capita** data, countries are classified into four groups: **low**, **lower-middle**, **upper-middle**, and **high-income**.
- This classification can influence countries' access to development aid and concessional financing.

Income Classification System?

The **World Bank's** income classification system categorizes countries based on their economic development using fixed **GNI per capita** thresholds, updated annually for inflation.

- **Key details:**
 - Groups include **low-income**, **lower-middle-income**, **upper-middle-income**, and **high-income**, each defined by specific thresholds.
 - **GNI per capita** is calculated as total gross national income divided by population, converted to US dollars using the **Atlas method**.
 - Thresholds are adjusted yearly using the **Special Drawing Rights (SDR) deflator** and remain fixed until the next update.
 - Primarily for analytical purposes, it helps understand global economic diversity and can impact aid eligibility.

Additional Info

World Bank

- Established in **1944** as part of the Bretton Woods Conference.
- Headquartered in **Washington, D.C., USA**.
- Comprises **189 member countries**, fostering global cooperation.
- Provides **financial assistance** (loans, grants) and technical support to developing nations.
- Aims to **reduce poverty** and promote sustainable economic growth.
- Governed by a **Board of Governors** (member country representatives) and a **Board of Executive Directors**.
- Part of the **World Bank Group**, which includes institutions like the International Finance Corporation (IFC).

GNI per capita

- Measures the **average income** earned per person in a country annually.
- Calculated by dividing a country's **total Gross National Income** by its population.

- Converted to **US dollars** using the World Bank's **Atlas method** for consistency.
- Reflects a nation's **economic development level**, but not wealth distribution.
- Excludes **informal economies** and non-monetary contributions to welfare.
- Updated annually with data from **national accounts** and population estimates.
- Used globally to compare economic performance across countries.

Russia Formally Withdraws from INF Nuclear Arms Treaty

What's the News?

- Russia has officially ended its commitment to the **Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty**, a landmark Cold War-era arms control agreement.
- This move finalizes the collapse of the treaty, following a similar withdrawal by the **United States**, which cited alleged Russian violations.

What was the INF Treaty?

The **INF Treaty**, signed in 1987 by U.S. President **Ronald Reagan** and Soviet leader **Mikhail Gorbachev**, was a cornerstone of nuclear disarmament efforts.

- **Objective:** It aimed to eliminate and permanently ban all land-based ballistic and cruise missiles, both nuclear and conventional, with ranges between **500 and 5,500 kilometers**.
- **Impact:** The treaty led to the destruction of approximately 2,700 short- and medium-range missiles by both superpowers, significantly reducing the risk of a swift nuclear strike in Europe.
- **Verification:** It included robust on-site inspection and verification protocols, which was unprecedented at the time.
- **Context of Collapse:** The US suspended its obligations, accusing Russia of developing the **9M729 (SSC-8) missile**, which it claimed violated the treaty's range limits. Russia denied the allegations and made counterclaims regarding US missile defense systems in Europe.

Geopolitical Significance

The dissolution of the INF Treaty carries significant implications for global security and strategic stability.

- **End of an Arms Control Era:** It marks the formal end of a critical pillar of the post-Cold War arms control architecture, eroding decades of trust-building measures.
- **Risk of a New Arms Race:** The absence of range limitations could trigger a new and destabilizing arms race in intermediate-range missiles among major powers, including the US, Russia, and China (which was never a party to the treaty).
- **European Security:** European nations face heightened security risks as they fall directly within the range of the now-unrestricted missiles, potentially leading to the redeployment of such weapons on the continent.
- **Pressure on Other Agreements:** It places greater strain on the remaining arms control frameworks, particularly

the **New START Treaty**, which limits long-range strategic nuclear weapons.

Additional Info

- **New START Treaty:** The last remaining major nuclear arms control pact between the US and Russia. It limits the number of deployed strategic nuclear warheads and bombs. Although it was extended, its long-term future remains uncertain amid deteriorating bilateral relations. Russia has currently suspended its participation in the treaty's verification mechanisms.

Australia and Japan Sign Landmark Defence Deal for Advanced Frigates

What's the News?

- Australia and Japan have signed their largest-ever defence deal, under which Australia will acquire 11 advanced stealth frigates.
- The agreement, valued at approximately **6.5 billion (A10 billion)**, marks a significant milestone in the bilateral security partnership between the two nations.
- The warships will be supplied by Japan's **Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI)**.

Details of the Frigate Deal

- **Technology:** The new frigates will be based on the advanced design of Japan's **Mogami-class** multi-mission stealth frigates, known for their modern combat systems and reduced radar signature.
- **Objective:** The acquisition is part of Australia's broader military modernization program aimed at enhancing its naval capabilities and replacing its aging Anzac-class frigates.
- **Economic Impact:** This is Japan's most significant defense export since it eased its post-World War II arms export restrictions, positioning it as a key player in the global defense industry.

Geopolitical Significance

This deal significantly deepens the "**Special Strategic Partnership**" between Australia and Japan, two key allies of the United States in the Indo-Pacific.

- **Regional Security:** The collaboration is viewed as a strategic move to enhance interoperability and present a united front to counter the growing military assertiveness of China in the region.
- **Japan's Evolving Defence Posture:** The deal underscores a major shift in Japan's foreign and security policy. After easing its self-imposed ban on military exports in 2014, Japan is now actively pursuing a more robust role in global security and defense trade.
- **Strengthening Alliances:** This bilateral agreement complements wider regional security frameworks like the **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)** and **AUKUS**, reinforcing a network of alliances aimed at maintaining a stable and open Indo-Pacific.

Additional Info

- **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad):** An informal strategic forum comprising **Australia, Japan, India, and the United States**. It focuses on enhancing cooperation on various fronts, including maritime security, to ensure a "free and open Indo-Pacific."

- **AUKUS:** A trilateral security pact between **Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States**. Its primary objective is to help Australia acquire nuclear-powered submarine technology, representing another pillar of Australia's defense modernization efforts.

Wildfires Devastate Southern Europe Amid Severe Heatwave

What's the News?

- Southern Europe is facing widespread wildfires, intensified by **extreme heat** and **strong winds**, destroying **homes, farms, factories**, and forcing mass evacuations.
- The **eurozone** has seen nearly **440,000 hectares** burned in 2025—**double the average** for this period since 2006.
- In **Greece**, fires near **Patras** have engulfed olive groves and industrial facilities, prompting evacuation of around 7,700 residents and warning on islands **Chios** and **Cephalonia**.
- **Spain** reports multiple firefighter fatalities and injuries, widespread hospitalizations, and investigations into suspected arson.
- The heatwave has driven temperatures to or above **45 °C** in Spain, prompting emergency requests including **EU support** and **Canadair planes**.
- Neighboring regions—**Portugal, Albania, Turkey**—also battling blazes, with firefighters and emergencies deployed across borders.

Overview of the Crisis

- **Geographic Spread:** Fires span Greece, Spain, Portugal, Albania, Turkey, and Balkan areas.
- **Human Toll:** At least **three deaths** reported (firefighters and civilians), countless injuries, thousands displaced. Evacuations include tourist areas.
- **Emergency Response:** Greece deployed over **200 firefighters** and **11 aircraft**. Spain sought aerial firefighting support and mutual aid from EU partners.
- **Environmental Context:** Climate scientists and officials call this a "clear warning" of **climate emergency**, urging better forest management and preventive infrastructure.

Additional Info

- The EU's **Joint Research Centre** data confirms burned area has doubled seasonal average—evidence of shifting climate baselines.
- **Expert Callouts:** Authorities and environmentalists recommend **€1 billion annual investment** in forest management to offset **€99 billion in firefighting and restoration costs**.

Trump-Putin Summit Ends with No Ceasefire Deal

What's the News?

- U.S. President **Donald Trump** and Russian President **Vladimir Putin** met in Alaska, reporting

“some headway” but announcing no concrete agreement to end or pause Russia’s war in Ukraine.

- After their meeting, Trump said “there’s no deal until there’s a deal”. Both leaders praised each other but offered no details, ignoring media questions.
- Ukraine’s President **Zelenskiy** was not present; Trump suggested a future three-way meeting with Putin and Zelenskiy might be organized. Kyiv remains skeptical and demands a ceasefire first.
- In unrelated comments, Trump said he would delay tariffs on China’s purchase of Russian oil due to summit “progress”, and noted India was also targeted for tariffs.
- The summit was symbolic: the first meeting of a U.S. president with Putin since the 2022 invasion. Putin, long isolated by the West, gained diplomatic exposure.

Summit Highlights and Context

- Both leaders met at Elmendorf-Richardson Air Force Base, greeted warmly on arrival, but ultimately made no ceasefire or territory agreement. Trump had hoped to halt fighting; no such deal emerged.
- Trump declared he had “made some great progress” but gave no specifics. He pledged to update Zelenskiy and NATO leaders on talks. Putin said Ukraine and its allies should accept any outcomes, repeating Russia’s line that “root causes” of conflict must be addressed.
- Analysts note that Russia already **controls ~20%** of Ukraine. Zelenskiy refused to cede more land and insists on U.S. support for peace. Trump urged Ukraine to “make a deal” with Russia, a departure from Kyiv’s demand for an immediate ceasefire.
- The war has been devastating: over one million people killed or injured on both sides, including thousands of civilians. Western allies will likely maintain economic and military pressure on Russia despite the summit.

Geopolitical Significance

- The Alaska talks underscored shifting U.S. policy under Trump. Unlike his earlier stance, Trump downplayed preconditions like a ceasefire, echoing Putin that a peace treaty (not just a ceasefire) is needed.
- Putin’s meeting with a U.S. president at Red Fort’s height of power was seen as a diplomatic win for Moscow, though he made no concessions. The meeting’s publicity allows Russia to claim legitimacy for its positions.
- For Europe and India, the outcome is concerning: U.S. tariffs and talks with Russia signal realignments. India and China, as major buyers of Russian oil, may face U.S. trade pressure tied to these talks.
- The absence of a ceasefire deal means the humanitarian crisis and proxy dynamics (NATO support for Ukraine vs. Russia’s actions) continue without relief.

Additional Info:

- Historically, U.S.-Russia summits on Ukraine have been rare.
- Since Putin’s 2022 full-scale invasion, Western nations largely cut ties with Russia, making this meeting notable.
- The International Criminal Court has indicted Putin for war crimes, but this did not deter the summit, reflecting realpolitik considerations.

- U.S. Constitution’s foreign policy and international law frameworks remain challenged by such engagements.

Global Plastic Treaty Talks Collapse in Geneva

What’s the News?

- Global negotiations in Geneva failed to produce a legally binding **global plastic pollution treaty** aimed at curbing plastic pollution. Talks ended without agreement.
- Disagreement centred on whether to **cap virgin plastic production**, regulate chemicals, and fund developing nations—measures opposed by a bloc of petrochemical-producing countries including the U.S., Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait.
- The **consensus-based decision-making model** stalled progress, enabling a few states to block even modest compromises.
- The session was chaired by Ecuador’s Luis Vayas Valdivieso, who circulated two draft texts; neither gained sufficient support.
- Over 1,000 delegates from roughly 180–184 countries participated. Negotiators worked into the night but adjourned without a deal.

Treaty Breakdown

- **Objective:** Secure the world’s first legally binding treaty addressing the full life cycle of plastics—from production to disposal.
- **Key Issues:**
 - **Limiting virgin plastic production:** Advocated by EU, island states, and Global South; opposed by petro-states.
 - **Chemical regulation:** Ambitious states pushed for bans on harmful additives; petro-states resisted.
 - **Financing:** Developing countries demanded support; unresolved due to disagreements.
 - **Decision-making reform:** Chair’s draft allowed a future COP to act by three-quarters vote, but consensus rule remained intact.
- **Diplomatic gridlock:** Delegates from frustrated countries expressed anger and disappointment at procedural failures.

Additional Info

- **Mandate:** UNEA Resolution 5/14 tasked an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) with completing a treaty by end of 2024. INC has held six sessions since 2022, including Geneva (INC-5.2).
- **Process fatigue:** The Geneva talks extended beyond the original schedule. Previous rounds, like INC-5.1 in Busan, also failed to reach agreement.
- **Procedural reform proposals:** Some multilateral treaties permit voting when consensus fails. That option was proposed but not adopted.
- **Baseline context:** The **Basel Convention** covers hazardous plastic waste; new treaty aims to regulate the entire plastic life cycle pre-emptively.

World Humanoid Robot Games Debut in Beijing

What's the News?

- Beijing hosted the inaugural **World Humanoid Robot Games**. Over **500 humanoid robots** across **280 teams** from **16 countries** participated.
- Competitions ranged from **sports** (soccer, running, boxing, hurdles, kung fu) to **non-sport tasks** like medicine sorting and cleaning.
- Venue: **National Speed Skating Oval** in Beijing, originally built for the 2022 Winter Olympics.
- Opening featured robots **dancing**, performing **martial arts**, playing **instruments**, and executing **backflips**. Some also modeled fashion, though mishaps—like a robot falling—showcased fragility.

Overview of the Event

- Performance Highlights:**
 - Unitree Robotics** won **11 medals** (4 golds) across track events (100 m hurdles, 400 m, 1500 m, 4×100 m relay).
 - X-Humanoid** secured **10 medals** (2 golds) in 100 m and materials handling tasks.

Observations & Limitations

- Robots exhibited both **promise and fragility**: they stumbled, tumbled, needed human assistance, and their batteries or limbs required frequent adjustments.
- The fastest robot finished the 1500 m in about **6 minutes 29 seconds**, significantly slower than human world records.
- Audience engagement mirrored sports enthusiasm. Cheers erupted when robots scored, punched, or recovered.
- Intended as a **research and development platform**, the event aimed to gather data for real-world applications—from collaborative factory operations to coordinated robotic movement.

Additional Info

- The Games featured **26 events** spanning both athletic and industrial task domains.
- Scheduled to become an **annual fixture**, the next edition is planned for **August 2026** in Beijing.
- Attendance involved **ticketed audiences**, reflecting public interest and contributing to popularizing robotics.

- The **U.S. East Coast**, especially North Carolina's **Outer Banks**, is under threat from **life-threatening surf, rip currents**, and coastal flooding, prompting **mandatory evacuations** in vulnerable zones.

Storm Overview

- Rapid Intensification**: Erin reached Category 5 status in under 24 hours—a historical jump rarely seen.
- Although downgraded to Category 4, it remains **large and powerful**, with a broad wind field impacting regions without direct landfall.

Antarctic Sea-Ice Loss Signals a Possible Climate Tipping Point

What's the News?

- Study finding**: A major scientific study warns that the **rapid loss of Antarctic sea ice** may constitute a **climate tipping point** with self-reinforcing feedbacks that can lock in long-term change.
- Immediate impacts**: Reduced ice increases ocean warming via **ice–albedo feedback**, threatens marine food webs (krill, penguins), and risks weakening the **Antarctic Overturning Circulation**, with knock-on effects for global weather and sea levels.
- Scope**: The study synthesises palaeoclimate records and modern observations to show that recent decline is unprecedented in speed and scale.

Tipping Mechanisms and Consequences

- Mechanisms**
 - Ice–albedo feedback**: Less ice means less sunlight reflected. Ocean absorbs more heat. Warming accelerates further ice loss.
 - Ocean-driven melt**: Warmer subsurface waters can erode ice shelves from below and hasten collapse.
- Consequences**
 - Sea-level rise** risk from accelerated Antarctic melt.
 - Disruption of ocean circulation** with potential to alter regional weather patterns, including monsoon variability.
 - Ecosystem collapse** risks for krill and dependent species, with economic implications for fisheries and food security.
- Key metric** (contextual)
 - Antarctica stores ~90% of the world's land ice and ~70% of its fresh water**, making its stability central to global sea-level outcomes.

Additional Info

- Climate Tipping Points**
 - A **tipping point** in the climate system is a critical threshold that, when crossed, leads to large-scale, and often irreversible, changes.
 - The system shifts to a new state, even if the initial drivers of the change are reduced.
 - Other examples include:**
 - The dieback of the Amazon rainforest.
 - The thawing of Arctic permafrost, releasing vast amounts of methane.

Hurricane Erin Intensifies as First Major Storm of the 2025 Atlantic Season

What's the News?

- Hurricane Erin** rapidly strengthened from a tropical storm to a **Category 5 hurricane**—the first major storm of the 2025 Atlantic season—before slightly weakening to **Category 4**. Its sustained winds peaked near **160 mph**.
- It remains **offshore** but poses serious risks: the **northern Leeward Islands, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Bahamas, and Turks and Caicos** are experiencing heavy rains, flash flooding, power outages, evacuation orders, and surging seas.

- Widespread coral reef bleaching.
- **The Antarctic Continent**
 - **Ice Sheets:** Antarctica is covered by two major ice sheets:
 - **East Antarctic Ice Sheet (EAIS):** The larger and more stable of the two.
 - **West Antarctic Ice Sheet (WAIS):** Considered more vulnerable to collapse as a significant portion of its base lies below sea level, making it susceptible to erosion by warm ocean currents.
 - **The Antarctic Treaty System:**
 - An international agreement established in **1959** that governs the continent.
 - It designates Antarctica as a scientific preserve, establishes freedom of scientific investigation, and bans military activity.
 - **India is a Consultative Party** to the treaty and actively participates in its governance.
 - **India's Antarctic Programme:**
 - India maintains two operational research stations in Antarctica: **Maitri** (commissioned in 1989) and **Bharati** (commissioned in 2012).
 - The first station, **Dakshin Gangotri** (1983), was buried in ice and is now used as a supply base.

shortages, high acute malnutrition among children, and elevated mortality rates.

- **Humanitarian and Legal Stakes**
 - UN describes this as a **humanitarian failure**.
 - Experts underscore famine is **reversible with timely aid**, but urgent international intervention is required.
 - Legal scrutiny intensifies: some allege **starvation as war crime**, invoking **responsibilities under international law** for occupying powers.

Additional Info

- **Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)**
 - Combines data on food consumption, nutrition, and mortality to classify food crises globally.
 - Famine (Phase 5) is defined by:
 - $\geq 20\%$ of households with extreme food shortages;
 - $\geq 30\%$ of children with acute malnutrition;
 - ≥ 2 adults or ≥ 4 children per 10,000 dying per day from hunger.
- **Geopolitical Context**
 - The Israeli blockade, formalized in **2023**, has severely limited food, water, medicine, and fuel into Gaza. Restrictions tightened further in **March 2025**, severely hampering humanitarian access.
 - Food infrastructure—bakeries, mills, markets—have been largely destroyed or shut down.
- **Health Impact Snapshot**
 - As of mid-August, **251+ individuals** are reported to have died from starvation, including over **100 children**.
 - Over **12,000 children** were reported acutely malnourished in July, by WHO.
- **Legal and Historical Notes**
 - **International Criminal Court (ICC)** has previously issued arrest warrants for Israeli leaders for **using starvation as warfare**, signaling legal accountability.
- **Key UN Agencies Involved:**
 - **World Food Programme (WFP):** The food-assistance branch of the United Nations, responsible for delivering food aid to affected populations.
 - **UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA):** A UN agency that supports the relief and human development of Palestinian refugees.

N Confirms Famine in Gaza as Over Half-Million Face Catastrophe

What's the News?

- The **Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)**, backed by the UN, has confirmed **famine (IPC Phase 5)** in the **Gaza Governorate**, marking the **first such instance in the Middle East**. Over **500,000 people** are in **catastrophic hunger**, with warning that the crisis may soon affect **up to 640,000**.
- This famine occurs in the context of **prolonged conflict, displacement, and stringent aid restrictions**, reported by UN agencies to have caused widespread collapse of food access, health, and market systems.
- Israel has **rejected the famine report**, calling it **biased or false**, while UN and humanitarian organisations describe the famine as **man-made and preventable**.

A Man-Made Crisis of Hunger

- **Geographical and Human Scope**
 - Affects **Gaza City Governorate**; nearing spillover to **Deir al-Balah** and **Khan Younis**, potentially reaching **640,000+ individuals**.
- **Drivers and Systemic Breakdown**
 - Result of a **22-month military offensive**, sustained **aid blockade**, and destruction of food infrastructure.
 - Conditions meet IPC's formal famine thresholds: extreme household food

Nepal Verified for Rubella Elimination

What's the News?

- The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has officially verified that **Nepal** has eliminated endemic rubella, a significant public health achievement.

- This milestone makes Nepal the sixth country in the **WHO South-East Asia Region** to achieve rubella elimination.
- The verification was confirmed by the Regional Verification Commission for Measles and Rubella Elimination after reviewing Nepal's surveillance data and immunization coverage.

Rubella Elimination Strategy

- Nepal's success is the result of sustained political commitment and robust public health strategies implemented over several years.
- **Key efforts included:**
 - Introduction of the **rubella-containing vaccine (RCV)** into the national immunization program.
 - Conducting nationwide vaccination campaigns, achieving over 95% coverage with at least one dose of the vaccine.
 - Establishing a sensitive, case-based surveillance system to promptly detect and respond to any potential cases.
 - Innovative strategies such as observing an 'immunization month' and outreach programs to vaccinate missed children played a crucial role.

Additional Info


- **About Rubella:**
 - Rubella, also known as **German Measles**, is a contagious viral infection.
 - While it often causes mild illness in children and adults, it can have devastating consequences if a woman is infected during pregnancy.
- **Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS):**
 - Infection during early pregnancy can lead to **CRS** in newborns, which is a primary cause of preventable birth defects.
 - **CRS** can result in severe, lifelong conditions, including deafness, cataracts, heart defects, and developmental disabilities.
- **Regional Goals:**
 - The **WHO South-East Asia Region** has a collective goal to eliminate both measles and rubella by **2026**.
 - Countries that have already eliminated rubella in the region include **Bhutan, DPR Korea, Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Timor-Leste**.

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