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# Current Affairs (CONSOLIDATION)

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# Polity and Governance

## Highlights

- Marital Rape in India
- Obscenity Laws in India
- SC Plea for Lifetime Ban on Convicted Politicians
- Limits to the Right to Access Justice
- Shankari Prasad Case and the First Amendment Act
- Competitive and Cooperative Federalism
- Expenditure on Higher Education
- Restructuring Skill India Programme
- Bills on Parliamentary Sittings and POCSO Act, 2012
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- Empowering Minority Communities
- Domicile-Based PG Medical Admissions Unconstitutional
- Writ Jurisdiction and the State

## Marital Rape in India

### Why in News?

In the **Gorakhnath Sharma vs State of Chhattisgarh Case, 2019**, the Chhattisgarh **High Court (HC)** ruled that a husband cannot be charged with **rape** or **unnatural sex** with his wife if she is **above 15 years of age**, regardless of consent.

- It relied on **Exception 2 under Section 375 of IPC**, which **exempts a husband** from rape charges if the wife is not below 15 years.
- In another development, the **Supreme Court (SC)** is hearing petitions to **criminalize marital rape**, backed by women's rights activists.

### What is Marital Rape?

- **About:** Marital rape is a type of **intimate partner violence** that involves **forced sex** or sexual assault between spouses. It is not a crime in India.
  - However, If a couple is **married, but living separately**, then the husband is **guilty of rape** if his wife **does not consent** to sexual intercourse.
- **Legal Stance:**
  - **IPC: Section 375 (2)** states that **sexual intercourse or sexual acts** between a man and his wife who is **not under 15 years of age is not rape**.

- **BNS** retains **immunity** for husbands in cases of marital rape but the **age of consent has been increased from 15 to 18 years** complying with the SC judgement in the **Independent Thought vs Uol Case, 2017**.

- **Domestic Violence Act, 2005:** While marital rape is not a crime, a woman can **seek relief** under the **Domestic Violence Act, 2005** for **sexual abuse**, **humiliation**, or **violation of dignity**.
- **Judicial Rulings on Marital Rape:**
  - **Independent Thought vs Uol Case, 2017:** The SC struck down **Exception 2 to Section 375 IPC (Section 63 of BNS)** for **wives aged 15-18**, making intercourse with **minor wives (under 18) rape**.
    - It ruled the exception **arbitrary and unconstitutional**, violating **Articles 14 (equality), 15 (non-discrimination), and 21 (right to life and dignity)**.
    - The court ruled that the **POCSO Act, 2012** prevails over the **IPC**, making **sex with a minor (under 18) rape**, even if she is married.
  - **KS Puttaswamy Case, 2017:** It stressed the importance of **sexual autonomy for individuals** as an intrinsic part of privacy.

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### Other Important Rulings:

- In 2023, the **Bombay HC** ruled that **consensual sex** with a **minor wife** is **rape**, rejecting the defence of consent in such cases.
- In 2024, the **Madhya Pradesh HC** ruled that unnatural sex with a wife is **not rape** and that a **wife's consent** is **irrelevant** in such matters.

### Judicial Ruling on unnatural sex:

- Navtej Singh Johar Case, 2018:** The SC partially struck down **Section 377 IPC**, decriminalizing **consensual homosexuality**.

- Government's Stance:** The Ministry of Home affairs told the SC that while a **husband cannot violate his wife's consent**, calling it "rape" is **excessively harsh and disproportionate**.

## What are Arguments For and Against Criminalizing Marital Rape?

For Criminalization	Against Criminalization
<b>Violation of Autonomy:</b> Every individual has the <b>right to refuse sex</b> , even in marriage. The SC in the <b>Navtej Johar case, 2018</b> upheld <b>sexual autonomy</b> and it should extend to marriage.	<b>Threat to Marriage:</b> Criminalization may <b>destabilize marital relationships</b> .
<b>SC Stand: Independent Thought Case, 2017</b> recognized marital rape for minors, <b>reinforcing consent</b> .	<b>Existing Laws Sufficient:</b> <b>Domestic violence laws</b> already provide protection from sexual harassment.
<b>Equality Before Law:</b> Exempting husbands <b>violates</b> constitutional rights ( <b>Articles 14, 15, 21</b> ).	<b>Potential Misuse:</b> May lead to <b>false accusations</b> in divorce and custody cases.
<b>POCSO &amp; Child Protection:</b> Non-consensual sex is a <b>crime for minors</b> ; should <b>apply to married adults</b> .	<b>Social &amp; Cultural Norms:</b> Marriage <b>traditionally includes sexual relations</b> , making legal change complex.
<b>Legal Contradictions:</b> BNS <b>retains immunity</b> for husbands despite removing Section 377.	<b>Legislative Domain:</b> The government argues that the <b>legislature, not courts</b> , should decide.

## Criminalisation of Marital Rape Around the World

- Marital rape is **explicitly criminalized in 77 countries**, allowed **cases** against spouses under general provisions in **74**, and decriminalized or **granted immunity in 34**.
- Marital rape is illegal in 50 American States, 3 Australian States, **New Zealand, Canada, Israel, France**, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Soviet Union, Poland and Czechoslovakia and several others.
- The **UK**, from which the IPC is largely derived, **removed the marital rape exception in 1991**.

## What can be Done to Curb Marital Rape?

- Jaya Jaitley Committee Recommendations:** Raise the **minimum marriage age** for women from **18 to 21** to promote gender equality, improve **maternal health**, and reduce the **risk of non-consensual sex (marital rape)**.
- Legislative Reforms:** Amend the **BNS** to remove the **marital rape immunity** and recognize **spousal consent** as a legal necessity.
- Alternative Legal Frameworks:** Expand the **Domestic Violence Act, 2005** to explicitly **include marital sexual violence**, offering stronger civil remedies like restraining orders and compensation.
- Global Best Practices:** India can study **UK, Canada, and Australia's** laws to develop a culturally adaptive marital rape law, **aligning with global human rights** while considering socio-cultural realities.

## Obscenity Laws in India

### Why in News?

A YouTube influencer is under investigation for allegedly making **obscene comments** during a widely viewed show. A complaint has been filed under **Section 296 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS)** for "obscene acts".

- This raises questions about the **legal definition of obscenity**, particularly in the digital age.

## What are the Laws Governing Obscenity?

- Section 294 of BNS 2023:** Formerly **Indian Penal Code (IPC) Section 292**, it prohibits the sale, advertisement,

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or public display of obscene content, including digital media.

- Defines obscenity as material that is **sexually suggestive, meant to provoke sexual thoughts, or likely to harm people's morals or behavior**.
- First-time offenders face up to **2 years in jail and a ₹5,000 fine**. Repeat offenders may get **up to 5 years and a Rs 10,000 fine**.
- **Section 296 of the BNS:** It penalizes performing **obscene acts in public**, as well as singing, reciting, or uttering obscene songs, ballads, or words in public or doing so to the annoyance of others.
- By regulating public behavior that could offend **public morality or decency**, this section aims to uphold societal norms.
- **Section 67 of the Information Technology Act, 2000:** Punishes publishing or transmitting obscene material electronically.
- The definition of obscene material is identical to that provided under **Section 294 of the BNS**.
- Provides **harsher penalties** than BNS with **up to 3 years of imprisonment** and a fine of **Rs 5 lakh** for first-time offences.
- **Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986:** Prohibits **indecent depiction of women** that is derogatory, denigrating, or harms public morality.
- **POCSO Act, 2012 (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act):** Prohibits creating, storing, sharing, or accessing child sexual content online, with strict penalties for offenders.

### How Do Courts Determine What is 'Obscene'?

- **Hicklin Test:** In *Ranjit D Udeshi v. State of Maharashtra, 1964* the **Supreme Court of India** used the **Hicklin Test**, which was **adopted by the British in the case Queen v. Hicklin, 1868**.
- This test determined that material is **obscene** if it has the **tendency to deprave and corrupt** those people whose minds are **open to such immoral influences**.
  - The **lowest common denominator standard** was applied, meaning content was judged based

on its impact on **children or vulnerable adults**, not the average person.

- **Criticism:** Considered **outdated and overly restrictive**. The test focused on **isolated parts** of content rather than the work as a whole.
- **Community Standards Test:** In *Aveek Sarkar v. State of West Bengal, 2014* the **Indian Supreme Court** replaced the **Hicklin Test** with the **"community standards" test (CST)** to determine obscenity.
  - Courts now judge obscenity based on **contemporary societal norms**. They assess whether the overall theme of the content, taken **as a whole**, appeals to **prurient interests** (i.e., sexually arousing content without artistic, literary, or social value).
  - Courts strive to **balance fundamental rights (Article 19(1)(a) Free Speech) with reasonable restrictions (Article 19(2))**.
  - **Judicial Precedents:** *Boris Becker Nude Photo Case, 2014* the SC ruled that **nudity alone is not obscene** if it has **artistic or social merit**.
    - Courts take into account whether the work serves a literary, artistic, political, or scientific purpose before determining its obscenity.
    - In the 2024 College Romance Web Series case, the SC ruled that vulgar language isn't obscene unless it arouses sexual thoughts.
  - **Shortcomings:** CST is **subjective and varies by region** (based on geography, culture, and social norms), leading to inconsistent judgments. It struggles to keep up with **evolving social norms and lacks clear definitions**, causing ambiguity in legal interpretations.

#### Public Morality, Decency and Freedom of Expression

- **Morality:** It is the set of principles that define right and wrong behavior based on societal, cultural, or personal beliefs about ethics and justice.
  - In *Navtej Singh Johar vs. Union of India, 2018* the Supreme Court held that constitutional morality takes precedence over public morality, emphasizing justice over social norms.
- **Decency:** Avoids obscene language and gestures (*B. Manmohan And Ors. vs State Of Mysore And Ors, 1965*).

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- **Freedom of Expression and Obscenity:** Freedom of expression under **Article 19(1)(a)** of the Indian Constitution is subject to reasonable restrictions under **Article 19(2)**, including to **prevent obscenity and uphold societal morality**.

## SC Plea for Lifetime Ban on Convicted Politicians

### Why in News?

The **Supreme Court (SC)** is hearing petitions seeking a **lifetime ban on convicted persons** from contesting elections for **decriminalizing politics**.

- Petitions seek to amend the **Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RP Act, 1951)** that contains **legal provisions** for convicted persons from contesting elections.

### What are Legal Provisions and SC Judgements Related to Convicted Persons?

- **Legal Provisions:**
  - **Section 8(3):** It determines disqualification based on **sentence duration**.
    - If a person is convicted of a criminal offense and sentenced to **imprisonment for two years or more**, they are **disqualified** from contesting elections during the **period of imprisonment** and for **six years after release**.
  - **Section 8(1):** It determines disqualification for **specific offenses** that lead to **immediate disqualification**, irrespective of the **sentence duration and six years** after release.
    - Offences include **rape** and other heinous crimes, **untouchability**, **terror**, and **corruption** related offenses.
  - **Section 11:** The **Election Commission (EC)** can **remove or shorten** a convicted person's **disqualification period**.
    - E.g., In 2019, the EC controversially cut **Prem Singh Tamang's (Sikkim's CM)** disqualification from **6 years to 13 months**, enabling his election bid despite a corruption conviction.

### SC Judgements:

- **Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) Case, 2002:** It **mandated the disclosure of criminal records** of all candidates contesting elections.
- **CEC vs. Jan Chaukidar Case, 2013:** The SC upheld the **Patna High Court's** view that **jailed individuals** lose their 'elector' status under **Section 62(5)** of the **RP Act, 1951**, disqualifying **undertrial prisoners** from contesting elections.
  - However, the **Parliament** amended the **RP Act, 1951** in **2013** to overturn this judgment allowing under **trial prisoners to contest elections**.
- **Lily Thomas Case, 2013:** The SC struck down **Section 8(4)** of the **RP Act, 1951**, which earlier allowed convicted legislators to **remain in office** if they **filed an appeal**.
  - After this judgment, a **sitting MP/MLA** is **immediately disqualified** upon **conviction**.
- **Public Interest Foundation Case, 2018:** The SC mandated political parties to publish **candidates' criminal records** on their websites, social media, and newspapers.

### Status of Criminalization of Politics in India

- A report by **ADR** states that **251 (46%)** of the **543** elected MPs in **2024**, have **criminal cases** against them, and **171 (31%)** face serious criminal charges including **rape, murder, attempt to murder and kidnapping**.
- The **chances of winning** for a candidate with a criminal background was **15.4%** as against just **4.4%** for a candidate with a **clean background**.

### What are Arguments For and Against a Lifetime Ban on Convicted Politicians?

Arguments For	Arguments Against
➤ <b>Vohra Committee (1993)</b> recommended <b>strict background checks</b> and disqualifies candidates with <b>serious criminal charges</b> .	➤ Political rivals may file <b>false cases to disqualify opponents</b> , exploiting the judicial process.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Just like <b>government employees</b> are <b>dismissed upon conviction</b>, politicians should face <b>similar disqualification</b>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ MPs and MLAs <b>lack 'service conditions'</b> like government servants. A <b>six-year disqualification</b> after sentencing is <b>sufficient</b>.</li> <li>➤ Elected representatives differ from government employees as they are <b>chosen by the public</b> rather than appointed through service rules.</li> <li>➤ Unlike bureaucrats, MPs and MLAs have a <b>fixed 5-year tenure</b> and must seek <b>re-election</b>, making them <b>directly accountable to voters</b>.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Ignored</b> the possibility of <b>reformation</b> and <b>denies</b> individuals a <b>second chance</b> to serve. Measures such as <b>fast-tracking cases</b> against politicians may be more effective.</li> </ul>

- Ultimately, the Supreme Court dismissed his **petitions** and fined him for forum shopping.
- **SC Ruling:** The Supreme Court affirmed that while the **right to access justice is a fundamental right (Article 21)**, it is **not absolute**.
  - The SC stated that frivolous petitions waste judicial time, delay justice, and undermine the integrity of the legal system.
- **Judicial Rulings on Right to Access Justice:**
  - In **Anita Khushwa v. Pushpa Sadan, 2016**, the SC reaffirmed that **access to justice is a fundamental right** under Articles 21 and 14 and it **identified 4 key components** for access to justice:
    - Effective adjudicatory mechanisms.
    - Reasonable accessibility in terms of distance.
    - Speedy adjudication.
    - Affordable access to the judicial process.
  - In **Buddhi Kota Subbarao v. K. Parasaran, 1996** case, the SC dismissed petitions of a retired Navy captain prosecuted for espionage.
    - The SC **rejected his fraud claims for lack of evidence**, upholding judicial finality and ruling that **higher court decisions cannot be endlessly challenged** without new proof.

Read More: [SC Prioritising SLPs Disposal](#)

## Limits to the Right to Access Justice

### Why in News?

The **Supreme Court (SC) of India** fined a petitioner for **frivolous litigation** and **forum shopping**, citing misuse of **judicial time and resources**.

- The case highlights **legal misuse**, with the petitioner repeatedly filing meritless pleas to overturn a service dismissal.

### What is the Supreme Court Ruling on Right to Access Justice?

- **Case Background:** The petitioner challenged his **dismissal for misconduct** across multiple legal forums, including the **Industrial Tribunal, High Court, and Supreme Court**, despite **repeated rejections**.

### What are the Provisions Related to Right to Access to Justice?

- **Constitutional Provisions:**
  - **Article 14 (Right to Equality):** **Article 14** guarantees equality before the law and equal protection of the laws.
    - The SC has interpreted this to **include the right to access justice**, ensuring that all individuals have an **equal opportunity to seek legal redress without discrimination**.
  - **Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty):** Article 21 ensures that **individuals can seek judicial remedies for grievances**, thus protecting their personal liberty and rights.
  - **Article 39A (Free Legal Aid):** **Article 39A** provides **free legal aid to ensure that no citizen is denied justice** due to economic or other disabilities.

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- It aims to **promote justice on the basis of equal opportunity** and is particularly focused on marginalized sections of society.
- **Articles 32 and 226:** Articles 32 and 226 allows aggrieved parties to **enforce their right to access to justice** by approaching the **Supreme Court** or the **High Court**.
- **Legal Framework:**
  - The **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987**, established **NALSA** to provide **free legal aid to weaker sections of society**.
    - Under Section 12 of the Act, eligible groups include women, children, SCs/STs, disabled individuals, and low-income persons, ensuring legal representation for vulnerable populations.
  - **Lok Adalats** offer speedy, accessible dispute resolution under the Act.
    - **Tele-Law** provides legal advice to marginalized communities, while **E-Lok Adalats** ensure access for those unable to attend physical hearings.
- **Public Interest Litigation (PIL):**
  - **PIL** expanded the rule of *locus standi*, allowing public-spirited individuals or organizations to **file cases for enforcing rights**, not just the directly affected individuals.
  - **Ex: MC Mehta v. Union of India (1987)** was the first PIL filed on environmental pollution in Delhi.

## Shankari Prasad Case and the First Amendment Act

### Why in News?

The **Shankari Prasad Singh Deo v. Union of India, 1951** case was a key moment in Indian constitutional law, challenging the **First Amendment Act, 1951**, which curtailed the **Right to Property**.

### What was the First Amendment Act, 1951?

- **Key Provisions:**
  - **Ninth Schedule:** The **Ninth Schedule of the Indian Constitution**, was introduced by the **First Amendment Act, 1951**, lists laws that cannot be

challenged in courts, protecting them from **judicial review**, especially land reform laws. Initially, **13 laws** were added to the schedule.

- **Protection of Land Reforms:** Articles **31A** and **31B** were inserted into the Constitution, which **shielded land reform laws from judicial review**, particularly laws aimed at the **acquisition of estates**.
  - **Article 31A:** Stated that any law related to land reforms **could not be struck down for violating fundamental rights**, particularly **right to property (Article 31)**.
  - **Article 31B:** Ensures that the laws specified in the **Ninth Schedule**, even if they conflict with fundamental rights, will remain valid and enforceable.
- **Other Changes:** Restricted **free speech under Article 19**. Strengthened **caste-based reservations** by allowing laws for social and educational upliftment.
- **Need for Amendment:** This was crucial in the context of **India's post-independence land reform** efforts aimed at reducing the power of large landowners (**zamindars**) and redistributing land to the peasants.

### What was Shankari Prasad Singh Deo v. Union of India Case, 1951?

- **Case Background:** The case arose when **Sankari Prasad Singh Deo**, a zamindar (landowner) from West Bengal, challenged the **First Amendment Act, 1951**, which had curtailed the **Right to Property**.
  - The first amendment sought to give the government power to acquire land from **zamindars without compensation**, which was contrary to the **fundamental rights (Article 19(1)(f) and Article 31)** granted in the original Constitution.
- **Supreme Court Judgment:** A five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the government, upholding the First Amendment.
  - The Court distinguished between **Ordinary law** (which cannot violate fundamental rights) and **Constitutional amendments** (which can alter fundamental rights).
  - **Article 13(2)** states that **no "law" can take away fundamental rights**. The Court ruled that

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constitutional amendments are not ordinary "laws", so they are exempt from this restriction.

- **Significance:** The SC decision removed legal barriers to land reforms, allowing states to proceed with zamindari abolition.
- **Implications:**
  - **Continued Legal Challenges:** In *Sajjan Singh v. State of Rajasthan, 1964*, the Court upheld judgement of *Sankari Prasad Case* but two judges questioned whether fundamental rights should be amendable.
    - In *I.C. Golaknath v. State of Punjab, 1967* the Supreme Court reversed its stance, ruling that Parliament cannot amend fundamental rights.
    - In *Keshavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala, 1973* a larger Bench overruled Sankari Prasad and introduced the **Basic Structure Doctrine**.
      - The ruling held that while Parliament can amend the Constitution, it cannot alter its "basic structure", including fundamental rights.
      - However, the right to property was not considered part of the basic structure, allowing land reforms to continue.
  - **Right to Property as Legal Right:** The 44<sup>th</sup> Amendment Act of 1978 removed the Right to Property from the list of Fundamental Rights by repealing Article 19(1)(f) and Article 31.
    - Right to Property was then made a legal right under Article 300A (no one can be deprived of their property without the authority of law) of the Constitution.

#### What was the Zamindari System?

- **About:** The Zamindari System, institutionalized under British rule by Lord Cornwallis in 1793 through the **Permanent Settlement**, gave zamindars control over land and allowed them to collect rent from peasants.
  - By statutory backing, the British made Zamindari an **exploitative institution** through provisions like **rack-renting (excessive rent)**, causing economic inequality.
    - Land revenue was split, with the government getting 10/11<sup>th</sup> and zamindars the rest, leaving farmers in poverty.

- **Reasons for Abolishing:** The system led to **land concentration in a few hands**, leaving millions of peasants landless. The abolition aimed to **redistribute land** to cultivators and reduce feudal exploitation.
  - **Article 39(b) and (c)** of the Constitution emphasized equitable distribution of resources. The abolition was in line with India's goal of creating a **socialist-leaning economy**.
  - Breaking large estates into **smaller landholdings** was expected to improve productivity.
- **Partial Success:** Except in a few states like **West Bengal and Kerala**, Zamindari abolition failed to break the **feudal land monopoly** due to loopholes allowing **benami transactions**.

## Competitive and Cooperative Federalism

### Why in News?

The government has emphasized various initiatives to foster **competitive and cooperative federalism** and its benefits.

### What is Competitive and Cooperative Federalism?

- **Competitive Federalism:** It is a system of **horizontal (state-state) and vertical (Centre-state) competition** to attract **investment**, improve **governance**, and enhance services.
  - The 15<sup>th</sup> **Finance Commission (FC)** has introduced indicators like **tax & fiscal efforts** to **evaluate state performance**, that determines fund allocation.
  - **State-Level Reforms:** Examples of **state-specific welfare schemes** that operate alongside central schemes include:
    - **Rythu Bandhu (Telangana):** A direct income support scheme for farmers.
    - **KALIA (Odisha):** A farmer assistance scheme complementing the central **PM Kisan Yojana**.
    - **Vibrant Gujarat Summit:** Focused on attracting global investment.

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- **Cooperative Federalism:** It fosters **Centre-state collaboration** for effective governance, balanced development, and shared best practices.
  - FC's **performance-based fund allocation** encourages states to work in alignment with **national SDGs**.
    - Key examples include the **Goods and Services Tax (GST)**, **Ayushman Bharat**, and **PM-KISAN**, that require **Centre-state cooperation**.
    - The All India Services (**IAS** and **IPS**) enable a uniform governance structure across states.
    - The **States Reorganization Act, 1956** established five **Zonal Councils** for regional cooperation, facilitating discussions on inter-state issues.
- **Constitutional Provisions:**
  - **7<sup>th</sup> Schedule:** The **Seventh Schedule** of the Indian Constitution divides **legislative powers** between the Centre and states for effective governance.
  - **Full Faith and Credit Clause (Article 261):** It ensures recognition of **public acts, records, and judicial proceedings** across states, promoting legal and administrative uniformity.
  - **Inter-State Council (ISC):** The **ISC**, established under **Article 263**, resolves intergovernmental disputes and became a permanent body on **28<sup>th</sup> May 1990**, per **Sarkaria Commission** recommendations.
  - **Inter-State Water Disputes (Article 262):** Parliament has the power to adjudicate **inter-state water disputes**.

### What are the Benefits of Competitive and Cooperative Federalism?

- **Competitive Federalism:**
  - **Economic Efficiency:** It allows states to design policies **tailored to their local needs**, leading to increased investment, job creation, and overall economic growth.
  - **Policy Innovation:** States compete by experimenting with **governance models**, regulatory frameworks, and public service **delivery systems**, leading to innovative policy solutions and best practices.

- **Fiscal Discipline:** It strengthens **fiscal discipline**, as states must balance **revenue generation** with **expenditure management** to attract businesses and investors, ensuring responsible fiscal policies.
- **Public Service Quality:** Competition among states pushes them to **improve public service quality** like **infrastructure, education, healthcare**, and other essential services to retain skilled workers and businesses.
- **Cooperative Federalism:**
  - **Balanced Regional Development:** It helps in **reducing regional disparities** and ensuring equitable development across states by fostering collaboration between central and state governments.
  - **Facilitates Resource Sharing:** Joint initiatives in areas such as **infrastructure, disaster management, and environmental protection** ensure efficient resource utilization and prevent unnecessary duplication of efforts.

### What are the Challenges in Competitive and Cooperative Federalism in India?

- **Competitive Federalism:**
  - **Quasi-Federalism:** The Union holds **superior legislative powers** through residuary list and precedence in the concurrent list, often **overriding state authority** and creating **conflicting federalism**.
  - **Taxation Disputes:** Most taxation disputes have been resolved in **favor of the Centre** due to constitutional provisions that grant it **more control over revenue distribution**.
    - **GST** reduced state taxation powers, **surrendering octroi, entry, luxury, and entertainment taxes**.
  - **Unchecked Competition:** In India, competition often takes a **Tughlakian turn**, States **undercut each other with reckless subsidies** while **bureaucratic hurdles** remain firmly intact that **negates reforms benefits**.
    - Unchecked competition can lead to **excessive tax breaks, fiscal mismanagement**, and subsidy dependence, risking stability.
  - **Conflict Between FC and GST Council:** Article 269A(1) empowers the **GST Council** to recommend **tax-**

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sharing for inter-state trade, but **Articles 270(1A) and 270(2)** states that the taxes levied under the **GST** laws will be **shared** as per recommendation of the **FC**, not the **GST Council**.

- This **imbalances** both **cooperative federalism (GST)** and **competitive federalism (FC)**.

➤ **Cooperative Federalism:**

- **Inequitable Distribution of Central Tax Revenue:** States like **West Bengal, Assam, Bihar, and Odisha** argue that uniform funding ignores economic disparities and seek **special financial aid** for growth and investment.
- **Wealthier states** attract more investment due to **better infrastructure, skilled labor, and capital**, while weaker states lag behind.

### What are Various Initiatives to Promote Competitive and Cooperative Federalism?

- **Investment Friendliness Index (IFI):** IFI will be launched in **2025** to provide a transparent benchmark to **assess states'** investment attractiveness.
  - Public rankings and tying rankings to financial access will create **reputational incentives, electoral and economic pressure** to enhance governance.
- **PPP Project Pipelines:** **Budget 2025-26** requires ministries and states to **plan three-year PPP projects**, boosting competition to attract private sector investment efficiently for infrastructure.
- **Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP):** **BRAP** drives state-level business reforms through rankings and implementation.
  - The **2024 BRAP** will emphasize **compliance reduction, decriminalization**, and alignment with the **World Bank's B-READY program**.
- **Finance Commission (FC):** FC promotes cooperative and competitive federalism by ensuring **equitable financial distribution** while incentivizing **governance, fiscal discipline, and economic performance**.
- **National Manufacturing Mission (NMM):** **NMM** offers a unified **policy framework, execution roadmaps**, and

governance mechanisms to drive state competition in ease of doing business, infrastructure, and investment attraction.

- **India Infrastructure Project Development Fund (IIPDF):** The **IIPDF** promotes cooperative federalism by offering **financial and technical support**, ensuring states of all fiscal capacities can equitably contribute to national infrastructure development.

## Expenditure on Higher Education

### Why in News?

The **NITI Aayog** released a report titled '**Expanding Quality Higher Education through States and State Public Universities**'.

- It is a first-of-its kind policy document in the higher education sector focused specifically on **States and State Public Universities (SPUs)**.

### What are the Key Findings of the NITI Aayog Report on Higher Education?

➤ **Education Expenditure:**

- **Overall Expenditure:** **Jammu & Kashmir (8.11%)** leads in education spending, followed by **Manipur (7.25%)**, while **Delhi** allocates significantly less (**1.67%**).
- **Higher Education Expenditure:** **Bihar** ranks **highest** at **1.56%**, followed by **Jammu & Kashmir (1.53%)** and **Manipur (1.45%)** while **Telangana (0.18%)** has the lowest percentage.
- **Per Youth Education Spending:** **Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana** are among the top spenders on higher education, while **Rajasthan, Punjab, and Chhattisgarh** lag behind.
- **University Density:** The **national average university density (universities per 1 lakh eligible population (18-23 years of age) in a state)** is **0.8**.
  - **Sikkim** has the highest university density (**10.3**), followed by **Arunachal Pradesh, Ladakh, and Himachal Pradesh**, while **Bihar** has the lowest (**0.2**).

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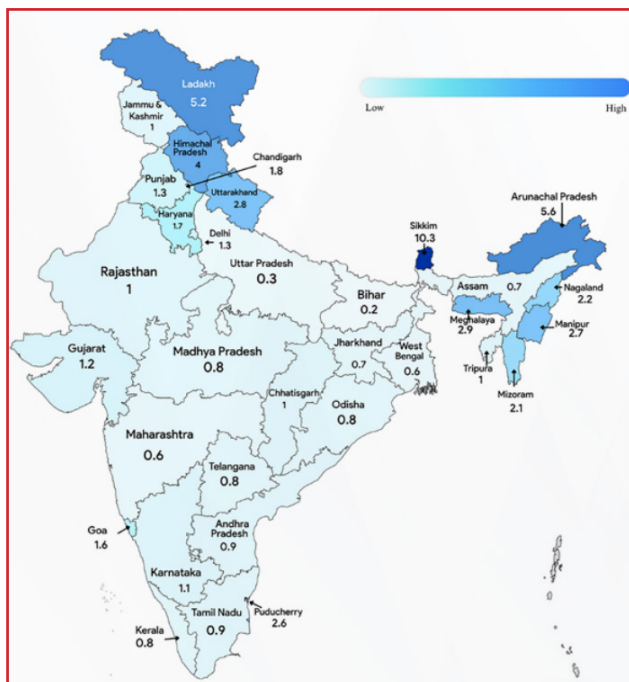
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- **Gender Parity:** Kerala, Chhattisgarh, and Himachal Pradesh have higher female enrolment, while Chandigarh, Mizoram, and Andaman & Nicobar Islands have balanced enrolments.

#### Note:

- According to the **Economic Survey 2024-25**, Education expenditure grew by 12% annually, reaching Rs 9.2 lakh crore in FY25.
  - Dropout rates fell to 1.9% (primary) and 14.1% (secondary), while higher education enrolment rose 26.5% (2014-2022), raising **Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER)** to 28.4%.
    - Higher education GER needs to reach 50% by 2035.
  - **Digital divide** persists, with lower internet access in rural areas (55%) compared to urban (69%).

## Restructuring Skill India Programme

### Why in News?

The Union Cabinet has approved the continuation and restructuring of the **Skill India Programme (SIP)** by

integrating 3 flagship schemes- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0 (PMKVY 4.0)**, **Pradhan Mantri National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (PM-NAPS)**, and **Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) Scheme** into a composite Central Sector Scheme till March 2026.

### What is the Skill India Programme?

#### ➤ About:

- The **Skill India Programme (SIP)** is a skill development initiative launched in 2015 under the **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship**.
- Over **2.27 crore people** have benefited so far from these schemes including rural **youth, women, and marginalized communities**.
- All the courses and certifications under the **Skill India Program** are aligned with the **National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF)** and integrated with **DigiLocker & National Credit Framework (NCrF)**, ensuring formal recognition and seamless transition into employment and higher education.

#### ➤ Objective:

- The programme aimed to train **40 crore individuals by 2022** across various skill sectors through key initiatives, including:

- **National Skill Development Mission (NSDM)**
- **National Policy for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (2015)**
- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)**
- **Skill Loan Scheme**

#### ➤ Key Components of Restructured SIP:

- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0 (PMKVY 4.0):**
  - It provides short-term training, reskilling, and upskilling.
  - **400+ new courses** introduced in emerging technologies like **AI, 5G, cybersecurity, green hydrogen, and drone technology**.
  - Focus on **international mobility** and **on-the-job training (OJT)** by recognition of prior learning and equipping Indian workers with **globally recognized skills**.
  - It aligns with **PM Vishwakarma, PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, National Green Hydrogen**

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**Mission**, and NAL JAL Mitra, ensuring cross-sector impact.

- **Target Beneficiaries:** Individuals aged 15-59 years.
- **Pradhan Mantri National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (PM-NAPS):**
  - PM-NAPS aims to enhance apprenticeship training across industries.
  - Provides 25% of the stipend (up to Rs 1,500 per apprentice per month) through **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** for apprentices.
  - Expands apprenticeship opportunities in AI, robotics, blockchain, green energy, Industry 4.0.
  - Special focus on small establishments, MSMEs, aspirational districts, and the North-East Region.
  - **Target Beneficiaries:** Individuals aged 14 to 35 years.
- **Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) Scheme:**
  - The JSS scheme is a community-driven vocational training initiative aimed at empowering women, rural youth, and economically weaker sections in the 15-45 age group through low-cost, flexible skilling programs.
  - It is linked with initiatives like **PM JANMAN** and **Understanding of Lifelong Learning for All in Society** for inclusive skilling.

#### Government Initiatives Related to Skill Development

- **SANKALP Scheme**
- **TEJAS Skilling Project**
- **Model Skill Loan Scheme**

## Bills on Parliamentary Sittings and POCSO Act, 2012

### Why in News?

**Private members' Bills** were introduced in the **Rajya Sabha**, focusing on mandating a minimum number of parliamentary sittings, and amending the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012**.

## What are the Two Bills Introduced in Parliament?

### On Parliamentary Sittings

- **Objective:** The two separate bills were proposed in **Rajya Sabha** to mandate a **minimum of 100-120 parliamentary sittings per year**, with **lost hours due to disruptions compensated in extended sessions** to **enhance productivity**, and improve government accountability.
  - The **General Purposes Committee** of the Lok Sabha, 1955 explored the idea of a fixed parliamentary calendar, while the **2002 National Commission on Constitutional Review** recommended **minimum sittings of 100 days for Rajya Sabha and 120 days for Lok Sabha**.
- **Current Scenario of Parliamentary Sittings:** The **first Lok Sabha (1952-1957)**, under **Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru**, had an average of **135 sittings per year**, whereas the **17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha (2019-2024)** sat for only **55 days annually**, the lowest in history.
- **Constitutional Provisions:** The **Constitution does not mandate a fixed number of sessions or sitting days**.
  - However, **Article 85 (Parliament)** the President summons each House as needed, ensuring no more than six months between sessions. The President can also prorogue or dissolve the Lok Sabha.
  - **Article 174 (State Legislatures)** the Governor has powers to summon, prorogue, and dissolve the Legislative Assembly, ensuring a maximum six-month gap between sessions.

### Bill Regarding Amending the POCSO Act, 2012

- **Objective:** The **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Amendment) Bill, 2024**, introduced, aims to make the POCSO Act **more victim-centric** and improve its implementation.
- **Provisions of Bill:** **POCSO (Amendment) Bill, 2024** mandates a **24-hour reporting rule**, requiring police or the special juvenile police unit to present the child before the **Child Welfare Committee** and report the case to the **Special Court** (or Sessions Court, if unavailable).

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- It **strengthens victim support** by ensuring timely compensation and structured procedures.
- It **calls for enhanced stakeholder training**, including **police, educational institutions, and child care personnel**, for better implementation.
- **Need for the Amendment:** According to **NCRB data**, POCSO cases have increased by **94% since 2017**, with over **2 lakh registered cases** as of May 2024.
- Lack of structured compensation procedures leads to **long delays for victims**.
  - There is a shortage of **Special Public Prosecutors** trained for POCSO cases, affecting the sensitivity and efficiency in handling child sexual abuse cases.
- Many cases are **not reported or delayed** due to **fear, stigma, or lack of awareness**.
- A key gap in the POCSO Act, 2012 is the lack of **"support persons"** for victims, with **96% of cases lacking necessary support**.
  - These support persons, either individuals or organizations, help guide survivors through the legal process and ensure their well-being.
  - Minors aged **16-18 engaging in consensual sexual activity** may be charged under POCSO, leading to legal consequences like prolonged detention and the potential denial of bail.
- Additionally, the **insufficient designation of POCSO courts further delays justice**, as not all districts have these specialized courts.

What is a Private Member Bill?

Click Here to Read: [Private Members Bill](#)

#### POCSO Act, 2012

- The POCSO Act, 2012 is a law aimed at addressing the **sexual exploitation and abuse of children**.
- The POCSO Act recognizes that **both boys and girls can be victims of sexual abuse**, and the **crime is punishable regardless of the gender** of the victim. It defines a **child as any person below the age of 18 years**.
- It mandates that the **identity of child victims must be kept confidential**, with no media disclosures about the victim's name, address, or family details.

- The Act mandates that individuals with knowledge of or reasonable suspicion of child abuse must report it to the relevant authorities.

## Balancing Freebies and Welfare

### Why in News?

There is a **rising trend** among the **political parties** to promise a barrage of **freebies** or **subsidies** to lure the electorate as seen in the **Delhi Assembly elections 2025**.

- **Electoral freebies** (or "revdi culture") are debated—some see them as **harmful to development**, while others view them as essential for **socio-economic progress**.
- The **RBI** defines 'freebies' as **"a public welfare measure that is provided free of charge."**

### How Freebies Help in Socio-economic Progress?

- **Women Empowerment:** Cash transfers to women boost **financial independence**, decision-making, and **reduce dependency** on family members for **immediate needs**.
- **Enhancing Human Capabilities:** Welfare schemes like **free food** and **health insurance** align with Amartya Sen's **"capability approach,"** enhancing **dignity, immunity**, and reducing healthcare burdens.
- **Boosting Consumer Spending:** **Direct cash transfers** boost demand, enhance **purchasing power**, and stimulate local economies through increased spending.
- **Poverty Alleviation:** Food security schemes, like the **Public Distribution System (PDS)** and **Mid-Day Meal**, ensure basic sustenance, **preventing extreme poverty**.
  - Targeted welfare measures help **bridge the gap between rich and poor**, fostering **inclusive growth**.
- **Long-Term Benefits:** Poor health causes personal suffering and strains public resources by raising healthcare demand. Early investment in nutrition brings **long-term benefits** for individuals and society.

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## How Can Freebies Be Harmful to Development?

- **Rising Revenue Deficit:** Freebie-driven spending increases the **fiscal burden**, leading to a decline in the revenue surplus of States.
  - E.g., Delhi's revenue surplus dropped by **35% between 2022-23 and 2024-25**.
- **Higher Subsidy Expenditure:** RBI warns that unchecked subsidies **divert funds** from infrastructure, healthcare, and education, with annual costs rising by **Rs 10,000-12,000 crore due to new freebies**.
- **Increased Tax Burden:** Governments may **raise taxes to cover rising government expenditure**, potentially reducing disposable income and **hurting middle-class consumption**.
- **Crowding Out Investments:** Excessive expenditure on freebies could **crowd out the resources** available

and hamper states' capacity to build critical social and economic infrastructure.

- **Potential Credit Default Risks:** Worsening fiscal health affects states' **ability to borrow** and **higher debt servicing costs** may increase credit default risks.
- **Distort Decision Making:** Some argue that freebies amount to **bribery** and discourage voters from making **informed choices**.

## What is the Judicial Stand on Freebies?

- **S. Subramaniam Balaji Case, 2013:** The **Supreme Court** ruled that freebies fall within **legislative policy** and are **beyond judicial scrutiny**. It emphasized that certain freebies align with the **Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP)**.
- While hearing a PIL in 2025, the Supreme Court condemned pre-election freebies, warning free ration and money discourage work and create a **"class of parasites"**.

### How Freebies Differ From Welfare Schemes?

Criteria	Freebies	Welfare Schemes
<b>Conceptual Distinction</b>	Goods or services provided free of charge, often for <b>political gain</b> .	Government initiatives for <b>social and economic upliftment</b> .
<b>Merit vs. Non-Merit Goods</b>	Non-merit goods like <b>TVs, laptops, mixer grinders</b> , and cash handouts.	Merit goods like <b>education, healthcare, food security</b> , and rural employment.
<b>Socio-Economic Impact</b>	Provides <b>short-term benefits</b> but lacks structural economic improvements.	Reduces poverty, improves living standards, and <b>enhances productivity</b> .
<b>Fiscal Sustainability</b>	Can lead to <b>excessive borrowing</b> and revenue deficits.	Budgeted with <b>policy backing</b> for economic inclusion.
<b>Political Motivations</b>	Often distributed before elections to <b>influence voters</b> .	Aimed at <b>structural development</b> with long-term policy planning.
<b>Implementation Challenges</b>	Distributed <b>indiscriminately</b> , sometimes benefiting <b>non-needy sections</b> .	Essential for <b>addressing inequalities</b> .
<b>Accountability and Governance</b>	<b>Lacks transparency</b> , leading to financial mismanagement.	Subject to <b>fiscal planning, coordination, and oversight</b> .

#### Note:

- **Merit goods** are goods and services that have **positive externalities**, meaning they benefit **not just individuals but society as a whole**. Education, Healthcare, Food Security etc.
- **Demerit goods** are goods and services whose **consumption leaves a negative impact** on its consumer and on others in the society. E.g., **alcohol**.

Click Here to Read: [What is the Ethical Perspective on Freebies?](#)

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## Swavalambini

### Why in News?

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), in collaboration with [NITI Aayog](#) launched “**Swavalambini**” in Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram.

### What is Swavalambini?

- **About:** Swavalambini is a women entrepreneurship program that aims to empower females in **Northeast Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)** with an entrepreneurial mindset, resources, and mentorship for business success.
- **Program Structure:** MSDE, in collaboration with **Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE)**, Guwahati and NITI Aayog, launched a **stage-wise entrepreneurial process** including **Entrepreneurship Awareness Programme (EAP)**, **Women Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP)**, **Faculty Development Programme (FDP)**, and funding.
  - Successful ventures will be **recognized and awarded**, inspiring others and establishing a clear framework to scale women-led enterprises in India.
- **Expected Outcomes:** **10% of EDP trainees** expected to launch successful businesses.
  - Strengthens entrepreneurial culture in HEIs, making business creation a viable career path for

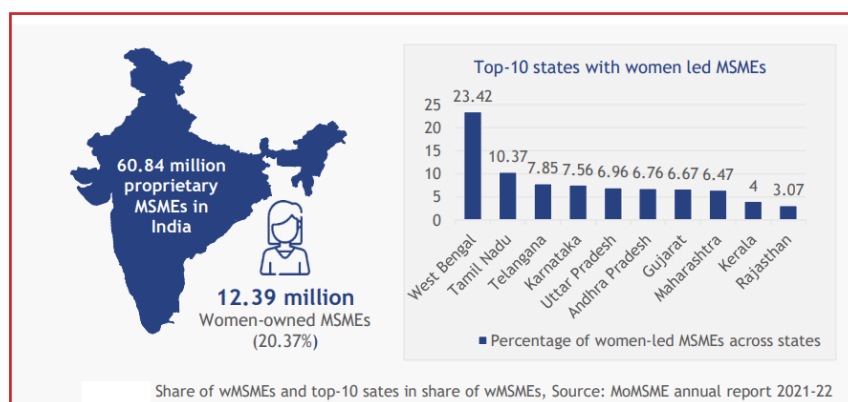
women. Promotes women-led enterprises as a key driver of India’s economic transformation.

### How Does Swavalambini Align with National Policies?

- **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** Promotes **skill integration**, industry collaboration, and entrepreneurship-driven education.
  - Swavalambini builds on this by ensuring **financial and mentorship support** for women entrepreneurs.
- **Women Entrepreneurship Schemes:** Swavalambini strengthens initiatives like **Start-Up India**, **Stand-Up India**, **PM Mudra Yojana**, and **Women Entrepreneurship Platform**.
  - Swavalambini aligns with the **Union Budget 2025**, which introduced a **Rs 10,000 crore start-up fund** and extended the **100% tax exemption on start-up profits for the first five years**, providing crucial financial support for emerging women-led enterprises.

### Women Entrepreneurship Landscape in India

- **Total MSMEs in India:** Over 63 million, **Women-Owned MSME** 20% (12.39 million).
- **Employment Contribution:** Women-led MSMEs employ 22-27 million people.
- **India’s Rank in Women Entrepreneurship:** India currently ranks 57<sup>th</sup> out of 65 nations, in the **Mastercard Index on Women Entrepreneurship (MIWE) 2021**.
  - India ranks **70<sup>th</sup> among 77 nations** in the **Global Female Entrepreneurship Index (FEI)** as estimated by the Global Entrepreneurship and Development Institute.
- **Top States with the Highest Share of Women-Led MSMEs:** West Bengal (23.42%), Tamil Nadu (10.37%), Telangana (7.85%), Karnataka (7.56%), Andhra Pradesh (6.96%), Gujarat (6.76%), Maharashtra (6.67%), Kerala (4%), and Rajasthan (3.07%).



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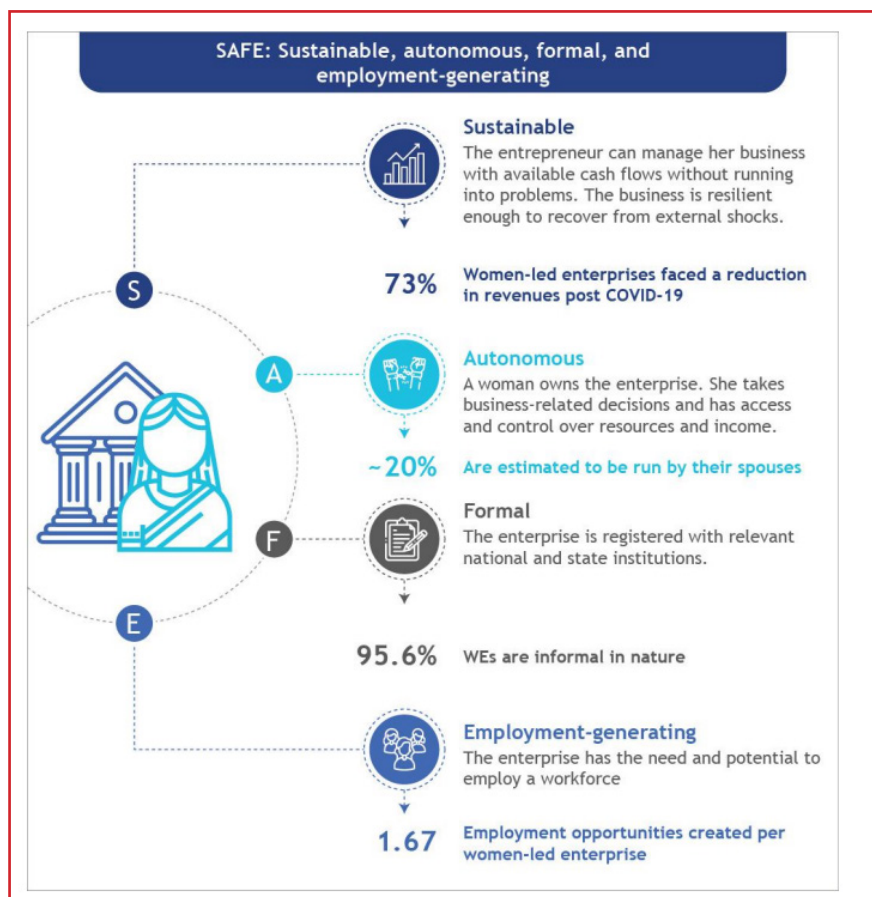


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## SC Slams Politicisation of Sports Administration

### Why in News?

The **Supreme Court of India** has directed the **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports** to ensure Indian kabaddi players participate in the **Asian Kabaddi Championship 2025**.

- The directive comes amid **Amateur Kabaddi Federation of India (AKFI's)** suspension by the **International Kabaddi Federation (IKF)**, with the court slamming political interference and bureaucratic control in sports administration.

### Why was the AKFI Suspended by IKF?

- **About:** The **AKFI** is the **apex governing body for Kabaddi** in India. It regulates all forms of Kabaddi, including **National, Indoor, Beach, and Circle Style**, and plays a key role in organizing tournaments, selecting teams, and overseeing the sport's development.

- **Headquarters:** Jaipur, Rajasthan
- **Affiliations:** **Indian Olympic Association (IOA)**, **Asian Kabaddi Federation (AKF)**, and **International Kabaddi Federation (IKF)**. AKFI follows guidelines received from the IKF and AKF.
- **Recognition:** Officially recognized by the **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India**.
- **Concerns Regarding AKFI:** AKFI faces allegations of **opaque elections, mismanagement**, and **monopolization** by politicians, raising concerns over **nepotism** and fair representation.
- **Delhi HC Intervention:** Amid AKFI management concerns, the Delhi High Court appointed Justice (Retd) S.P. Garg as administrator to oversee its affairs.
- **AKFI Suspension:** IKF suspended AKFI over governance issues, citing the **absence of an elected body**, jeopardizing India's international Kabaddi participation.

**Note:** The IKF, founded in 2004 and headquartered in Jaipur, is the global governing body of Kabaddi, with 24 affiliated countries (including India).

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### What Did the Supreme Court Order?

- The Supreme Court instructed **Justice (Retd.) S.P. Garg**, to **hand over charge to the newly elected body** from the **December 2023 elections**.
  - The Court stressed urgency due to the upcoming Asian Kabaddi Championship 2025, directing AKFI's Governing Body to immediately **select teams and arrange training camps**, and ensure India's participation in the tournament.
- The Court also clarified that the transfer of authority **does not imply endorsement** of the AKFI elections and that related issues remain open for adjudication.

### What are the SC's Concerns

#### Regarding Sports Administration?

- **Politicization:** Former politicians and bureaucrats dominate sports bodies, sidelining athletes.
  - SC acknowledges that sports associations improve when sportspersons take charge rather than political or bureaucratic appointees.
- **Mismanagement:** Allegations of **opaque election processes, financial irregularities, and monopolization** by certain individuals have surfaced.
  - Federations like AKFI operate without **properly elected governing bodies**, violating sports norms not aligning with the **National Sports Code of India 2011**.
- **No Checks and Balances:** With no clear oversight or accountability, sports bodies operate without transparency, as evident in the **2010 Commonwealth Games**, where the **Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)** reported financial irregularities in 14 projects.
- **Impact on Athletes:** Delays in team selection, training, and tournament participation due to administrative inefficiencies harm athletes.
  - Athletes face **sexual harassment**, but weak complaint systems and delayed action leave them vulnerable, demanding urgent reforms.
- **Sports Infrastructure:** As sports is a **State subject**, there is no uniform approach to infrastructure development across India.

What is the National Sports Code of India 2011?

Click Here to Read: [National Sports Code of India 2011](#)

## PM-JAY's Impact on Cancer Treatment

### Why in News?

A study published in *The Lancet* highlights a substantial **decrease in delays for initiating cancer treatment across India**, with a notable **90% improvement among beneficiaries** of the **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY)**.

### What are the Key Findings of the Study on Cancer?

- **Improved Timely Initiation of Treatment:** **36% overall improvement** in timely cancer treatment, with a **90% rise among AB PM-JAY beneficiaries post-2018**.
  - Treatment delays reduced significantly, especially for **reproductive, genitourinary, breast, and blood cancers**.
- **Demographic Insights:** Younger patients (**<30 years: 77%**) and those with **higher education (70.2%)** had better access to timely treatment.
  - **Insurance coverage (69%)** improved accessibility, while higher-income groups faced fewer delays.
- **Challenges:**
  - **Delayed Diagnosis and Treatment:** Study revealed that **treatment delays**, especially in **radiotherapy, chemotherapy, and surgery**, reduce survival rates.
  - **Limited Healthcare Infrastructure:** India has only **779 radiotherapy machines**, far below the **WHO-recommended 1,350–5,000**. **Shortage of oncologists and diagnostic centers**.
  - **High Financial Burden:** **High out-of-pocket (OOP) expenses** persist as **AB-PMJAY excludes diagnostics and follow-ups**. **Public health spending below 2% of GDP** worsens affordability.

#### Cancer

- **About:** **Cancer** refers to a group of diseases characterised by the **uncontrolled proliferation and spread of abnormal cells** in the body, which can infiltrate and harm healthy tissues and organs.

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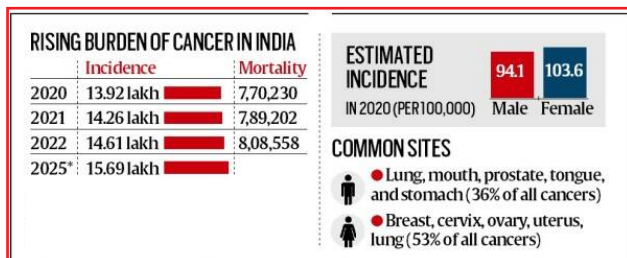
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Note:

- **State of Cancer Burden in India:** The cancer cases in the country are projected to increase from **14.6 lakh in 2022 to 15.7 lakh in 2025**, as per the **Indian Council of Medical Research**.

- **Breast cancer** was the most prevalent, representing **13.6%** of all cases and over **26%** among women.
- Globally, in 2022, there were an estimated 20 million new cancer cases and 9.7 million deaths.



Click Here to Read: [Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana \(AB PM-JAY\)](#)

## Revamping Digital Infrastructure in India

### Why in News?

India's digital infrastructure has evolved rapidly, contributing **11.74%** to **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** in 2022-23 and projected to reach **20% of GVA** by **2029-30**.

- To further accelerate this growth, **Union Budget 2025-26** has sanctioned **Rs 2,000 crore** for the **IndiaAI Mission** to develop AI infrastructure and skill-building programs.

### What are the Key Achievements in India's Digital Infrastructure Growth?

- **Unified Payments Interface (UPI):** **UPI** was launched in 2016, it now powers **49% of global real-time transactions** (ACI Worldwide Report 2024).
  - Digital transactions rose from **Rs 707.93 crore (2016) to Rs 23.24 lakh crore (2024)**, with participating banks increasing from **35 to 641**. It has expanded to **7 countries**, including the **UAE, Singapore, and France**.

### Internet Infrastructure:

- **Telephone connections** increased from 933 million (2014) to **1,188.70 million (2024)**.
  - **Internet connections** grew from 25.15 crore (2014) to **96.96 crore (2024)**, an increase of **285%**.
  - **Broadband penetration** rose by 1,452% from 6.1 crore (2014) to **94.92 crore (2024)**.
- **BharatNet**, launched in 2011 to provide **affordable high-speed internet to Gram Panchayats** has connected 2.14 lakh Gram Panchayats by 2025 with **6.92 lakh km of optical fiber cable** laid, and **1.04 lakh Wi-Fi hotspots** installed.
- **Aadhaar:** **Aadhaar**, launched in 2009, serves as a digital identity framework, linking biometric and demographic data. It has enabled **direct benefit transfers**, **financial inclusion**, and reduced **corruption**.
  - By **March 2023**, **136.65 crore Aadhaar cards** were issued. **Aadhaar face authentication** crossed **100 crore transactions** (Jan 2025), and **E-KYC transactions** grew from **0.01 crore (2014) to 1,470.22 crore (2023)**.
- **DigiLocker & UMANG:** **DigiLocker** launched in **2015**, provides secure access to digital documents, reducing reliance on physical records.
  - As of **February 2025**, it has **46.52 crore users**, with yearly signups rising from **9.98 lakh (2015) to 2025.07 lakh (2024)**.
  - **UMANG app**, launched to integrate e-Gov services, has **7.34 crore registered users in 2024**, up from **0.25 lakh (2017)**.
- **ONDC & GeM:** **ONDC** (launched in 2022) promotes fair e-commerce competition, benefiting **MSMEs**. By **December 2024**, it expanded to **616+ cities**, with **7.64 lakh sellers** and **154.4 million orders**.
  - **GeM**, launched in 2016, streamlines government procurement with **Rs 4.09 lakh crore GMV in FY 2024-25**, supporting **1.6 lakh buyers** and **22.5 lakh sellers**, fostering transparency and efficiency for small enterprises.
- **BHASHINI:** **BHASHINI** has enhanced digital access in **22+ Indian languages**, facilitating **100 million+ inferences** monthly and has over **500,000 app**

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downloads, promoting inclusive digital governance and bridging linguistic divides.

### What is IndiaAI Mission?

- **About:** The **IndiaAI Mission** is a flagship initiative launched by the Government of India aimed at creating a **comprehensive AI ecosystem** to foster innovation, research, and development in AI.
- **Objective:** It aims to **build a robust AI ecosystem** by establishing high-performance computing infrastructure, enhancing data quality and AI models, promoting indigenous AI technologies, and fostering innovation in sectors like healthcare, agriculture, and governance.
  - It also focuses on **supporting AI startups**, attracting talent, and ensuring ethical AI practices.
- **Budgetary Allocation:** Rs 2,000 crore has been allocated for 2025-26, which is nearly a fifth of the scheme's total outlay.
- **Key Components:**
  - **AI Center of Excellence:** It aims at **integrating AI technologies into the curriculum** to enhance educational outcomes. The **Union Budget 2024-25** allocates **Rs 500 crore** for this.
    - Additionally, **3 AI centers in agriculture, health, and sustainable cities**, announced in 2023, will continue to receive support.
  - **IndiaAI Innovation Centre**
  - **IndiaAI Datasets Platform**
  - **IndiaAI Application Development Initiative**
  - **IndiaAI FutureSkills**
  - **IndiaAI Startup Financing**
  - **Safe & Trusted AI**

## Health Initiatives in Union Budget 2025-26

### Why in News?

The **Union Budget 2025-26** has allocated around **Rs 1 lakh crore** for the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.

- The share of health in the FY26 budget increased marginally to **1.97% from 1.9%** in FY25 but overall health allocation remained **below 2% of the budget**.

- The **Economic Survey (ES) 2024-25** and **Union budget 2025-26** recommended and announced a number of measures to **promote health** in the country.
- Among several announcements, the major one is the establishment of **Daycare Cancer Centers**.

**Note:** The **National Health Policy 2017** recommends that the **health expenditure** be increased from **1.15% (2017) of the GDP to 2.5% of the GDP by 2025**.

### What are the Measures Recommended and Announced to Promote Health?

- **Taxing UPFs:** The **ES 2024-25** proposed a 'health tax' on **ultra-processed foods (UPFs)** to curb their consumption, citing links to **obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer**.
  - The **high consumption of UPF** is a key reason for India being the **diabetic capital of the world**, with over **101 million** affected.
- **Cancer Care Expansion:** The government plans **cancer care centers** in every district by **FY 2026** and **200 new Daycare Cancer Centers** by **FY 2025-26** for localized chemotherapy and treatment.
- **Life-Saving Drug Exemptions:** The budget exempts **36 life-saving drugs** from **Basic Customs Duty (BCD)**, reducing costs, while **Patient Assistance Programmes (PAPs)** run by pharma firms will continue providing free medicines duty-free.
  - BCD is an **indirect tax** levied on **all the goods and commodities** imported to India.
  - PAPs assist those **without health insurance** by covering full **medication costs** or offering **discounts** on medicines.
- **AB PM-JAY for Gig Workers:** AB PM-JAY has been **expanded** to cover nearly **1 crore gig workers**, who will be registered on the **e-Shram portal** with ID cards for healthcare access.
- **Health Infrastructure and Manpower:** The budget allocated Rs 4,200 crore for **Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM)** to enhance healthcare facilities and set up **five skill centers to train 3,00,000 healthcare professionals** annually to meet global healthcare demands.

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- **Women and Child Healthcare:** PM Matru Vandana Yojana will expand maternal health programs, with increased funding for child nutrition and vaccinations.
  - More Anganwadi centers will be upgraded with digital tracking systems.
- **Pharmaceutical Research:** The government allocated **Rs 2,445 crore** for the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme to boost pharmaceutical manufacturing.
- **Mental Health and Telemedicine:** The National Tele Mental Health Programme received funding to expand mental healthcare services across India.
- **Medical Tourism:** The government plans to simplify **visa procedures** for medical tourists to boost India's medical tourism market that is valued at **USD 7.56–USD 10.4 billion in 2024**.
  - The **"Heal in India"** initiative was launched in **2023** to promote medical tourism.

#### Note:

- A 2023 WHO report showed India's UPF spending surged from **USD 900 million in 2006 to USD 37.9 billion in 2019**, with a **13.7% growth** in retail sales (2011–2021).
- The Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) 2022-23 found UPFs make up **9.6% of rural and 10.64% of urban** household food budgets.
- Countries like Brazil, Canada, Chile, France, Mexico, Israel, Peru, the UK, and Uruguay use the **Nutrient Profile Model** for labeling and marketing restrictions of UPFs.
  - The **NPM rates foods** based on their nutrients to **identify healthy options** and those that may **harm health**.
- **Denmark** introduced a **tax on saturated fats** as early as **2011**, while **Mexico** levied surcharges on sugary drinks and junk food.

Click to Read: [What are Ultra-Processed Foods and their Negative Impacts?](#)

### What ES 2024-25 Recommended to Reduce Consumption of UPFs?

- **Clear Regulations:** It recommended **stricter FSSAI regulations**, including clear **UPF definitions**, and labeling standards.

- **Stronger Monitoring:** Implement **stricter monitoring** of branded products to ensure compliance with health standards and **prevent misleading claims**.
- **Enhanced Consumer Protection:** Strengthen laws to address **aggressive marketing**, particularly **targeting children and adolescents**.
- **Higher Taxation:** Consider imposing **higher taxes on heavily marketed UPFs** to discourage consumption and fund public health initiatives.
- **Consumer Awareness:** Launch **educational campaigns**, especially for children, about the health risks of UPFs, including **obesity, diabetes, and other metabolic diseases**.

### What is a Daycare Cancer Center?

- **About:** A Daycare Cancer Center is a cancer clinic offering chemotherapy in a **day facility** for patients who need **quick treatments** and **don't** require **overnight hospital stays**.
  - The government plans to establish **200 centers by 2025-26** across India's **759 district hospitals**.
- **Objective:** It aims to enhance **district-level cancer care**, easing the **burden** on **metropolitan hospitals**, and is vital for rural populations facing **high treatment costs and long travel distances**.
- **Significance:** The centers will offer **chemotherapy, medications, biopsies, and complication management** to improve cancer care accessibility.
- **Concerns:**
  - **Lack of Service Clarity:** Concerns exist about the absence of advanced treatments like **radiotherapy**, which requires **high investment in equipment**.
  - **Infrastructure Issues:** Many district hospitals **lack biopsy services**, and some medical colleges **don't offer cancer treatment**, raising doubts about their ability to manage these centers.
  - **Trust Issues:** Patients may be **reluctant to trust district-level centers** for cancer treatment, preferring established hospitals like **AIIMS**.
  - **Workforce Shortages:** Concerns exist about attracting **trained oncologists** to smaller districts, which may require **competitive salaries and incentives**.
- **Public Health Impact:** Cancer cases are **rising in India**, with **one in nine** people expected to develop it.

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- The centers will ease the growing patient load and improve treatment accessibility, particularly in rural areas.

## Maharashtra Mandates Marathi Language Use

### Why in News?

Maharashtra has mandated the use of Marathi language in all official communication across government, semi-government, local self-government bodies, and government-aided offices.

- The **Marathi Language Policy**, approved in **2024**, recommends the use of Marathi in all public affairs.

#### Note:

- **Marathi** was designated as the **official language of Maharashtra in 1960**.
- In 2024, **Marathi** achieved the status of a **classical language**.
- India has **2 official Languages (Hindi and English)** and **22 Scheduled Languages** as per the **Eighth Schedule** to the Constitution of India.
  - It includes **Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Santali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu**.
  - **Part XVII** of the Indian constitution deals with the official languages in **Articles 343 to 351**.

#### Mandatory Regional Languages in Other Indian States

- **Tamil Nadu:** Tamil is **mandatory for government communication**, and passing a Class 10 Tamil exam is required for government jobs.
- **Karnataka:** Kannada is **compulsory in government offices and business signboards**, with a law mandating 60% of signboard space in Kannada.
- **Jharkhand:** Jharkhand mandated knowledge of **regional and tribal languages** for government jobs, requiring candidates to score **at least 30% in languages like Mundari, Santhali, Ho, or Kurukh**.
- **West Bengal:** Encourages hiring candidates **fluent in Bengali** for government jobs.

## What are the Key Constitutional Provisions Related to Official Language?

- **Article 345:** Article 345 of the Constitution states that a state legislature can choose one or more languages to be used for official purposes.
  - This includes the **language or languages already spoken in the state, or Hindi**.
- **Article 347:** Article 347 of the Constitution deals with the **recognition of languages spoken by a section of a state's population**.
  - It allows the **President to officially recognize such languages** if a **substantial portion of the state's population requests it**.
  - This provision allows the **inclusion of regional languages into the official framework of the state**, ensuring linguistic inclusivity.
- **Article 350A:** Article 350A of the Constitution requires states to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue for children from linguistic minority groups. This applies to **primary education**.
- **Article 351:** Article 351 of the Constitution provides for the **promotion of the spread of Hindi as a link language without overriding the linguistic rights of states to promote their official languages**.

#### Committees and Commissions Related to Languages of Union

- **The Official Languages Commission (1955):** It was established under the Chairmanship of **B.G. Kher**, that **examined the issue of the use of Hindi and English as the official language of the Union** and made recommendations for the transition to Hindi.
- **Parliamentary Committee of Official Language (1976):** The **Parliamentary Committee of Official Language (1976)** recommends **replacing English with Hindi in institutions and Central services exams**.
  - However, these proposals have not been fully implemented due to resistance, especially from non-Hindi speaking states.

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# SCHEDULES IN THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION

*Originally (1949), the Constitution had 8 schedules. Now, it comprises 12 Schedules; various amendments carried out since 1951 have added 4 Schedules (9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>).*

<b>First Schedule</b> Articles: 1 & 4 States and Union Territories with their territorial jurisdiction	<b>Seventh Schedule</b> Article: 246 Union List (98 subjects), State List (59 subjects), & Concurrent List (52 subjects)
<b>Second Schedule</b> Articles: 59, 65, 75, 97, 125, 148, 158, 164, 186 & 221 Emoluments, allowances and privileges of various constitutional posts (President, Governor, Judges of the SC & High Courts, CAG etc.)	<b>Eighth Schedule</b> Articles: 344 & 351 22 recognised languages by the Constitution
<b>Third Schedule</b> Articles: 75, 84, 99, 124, 146, 173, 188 & 219 Forms of oaths or affirmations (Union ministers, MPs, Judges of the SC & High Courts, CAG etc.)	<b>Ninth Schedule (1<sup>st</sup> Amendment Act, 1951)</b> Article: 31-B Validation of certain acts and regulations
<b>Fourth Schedule</b> Articles: 4 & 80 Allocation of seats in the Rajya Sabha	<b>Tenth Schedule (52<sup>nd</sup> Amendment Act, 1985)</b> Articles: 102 & 191 Anti-defection law
<b>Fifth Schedule</b> Article: 244 Administration and Control of scheduled areas and scheduled tribes	<b>Eleventh Schedule (73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment Act, 1992)</b> Article: 243-G Powers, authority and responsibilities of Panchayats
<b>Sixth Schedule</b> Articles: 244 & 275 Administration of tribal areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura & Mizoram	<b>Twelfth Schedule (74<sup>th</sup> Amendment Act, 1992)</b> Article: 243-W Powers, authority and responsibilities of Municipalities

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## Empowering Minority Communities

### Why in News?

The Ministry of Minority Affairs (MoMA) shed light on India's ongoing efforts to empower minority communities.

### What are the Highlighted Initiatives Related to Minority Communities?

- **Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme (2007):** Provides scholarships to meritorious students from **economically weaker sections of minority communities** to enhance higher education and employability.
  - Allocation increased from Rs 70.63 crores in 2008-09 to Rs 1000 crores in 2023-24.
- **Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme (2008):** Encourages **parents to send children from minority communities to school** and lightens financial burdens for school education.
  - Allocation increased from Rs 62.21 crores in 2008-09 to Rs 400 crores in 2023-24.

- **National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (NMDFC) (1994):** Provides concessional **credit for self-employment and income-generating activities** for the socio-economic development of backward sections of minorities.
  - Allocation rose from Rs 2 crores in 2014-15 to Rs 3 crores in 2023-24.
- **Haj Pilgrimage Support (2016):** Facilitates Haj pilgrimage (to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia) for low-income individuals.
  - Expenditure increased from Rs 9.75 crores in 2014-15 to Rs 83.51 crores in 2023-24.
- **Jiyo Parsi Scheme (2013):** Aims to reverse the declining Parsi population through scientific interventions.
  - As of March 2024, the scheme has enabled the birth of over 400 Parsi children since its inception, with Rs 3 crores allocated in 2023-24.
- **Pradhan Mantri Virasat Ka Samvardhan (PM VIKAS):** The PM VIKAS combining 5 existing schemes of MoMA like USTTAD (Upgrading the Skills & Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development), Nai Manzil, Nai Roshni, and Hamari Dharohar to empower minorities through skill development and cultural preservation.
- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK):** The PMJVK focuses on developing community **infrastructure in minority-concentrated areas**, covering health, skill development, women's projects, water supply, sanitation, and sports.

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### India's Minority Communities

- **Minority Communities:** The **Central Government** determines minority status under the **National Commission for Minorities Act (NCMA), 1992**, officially recognizing **Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Jains (added in 2014), and Zoroastrians (Parsis)** as minority communities.
  - Together, they constitute around **19.3% of India's total population (Census 2011)**.
  - While most states follow the central list, some, like **Maharashtra**, may have their own (e.g., Jews are a notified minority in Maharashtra).
- **Constitutional Provisions:**
  - **Article 29** protects minorities' rights to preserve their distinct language, script, and culture, and prohibits discrimination based on religion, race, caste, or language.
  - **Article 30** grants minorities the right to establish and manage educational institutions.
- **Institutions to Protect Minority Rights:**
  - **Ministry of Minority Affairs:** Established in 2006, carved out from the **Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment**, coordinates programs for the socio-economic development of minority communities in India.
  - **National Commission for Minorities (NCM):** Created under the NCMA 1992, the **NCM** safeguards the interests of minority groups in line with the Constitution and laws enacted by the **Parliament**.
  - **Waqf Act, 1995:** Governs the management and development of **Waqf properties**.
    - The **Central Waqf Council (CWC)** implements schemes for the modernization and digitalization of Waqf properties, supporting state-level Waqf boards.

## Domicile-Based PG Medical Admissions Unconstitutional

### Why in News?

The **Supreme Court (SC) of India** in the case "**Tanvi Behl v. Shrey Goel and others, 2025**", declared

**domicile-based reservation** for **Post-Graduate (PG)** medical admissions unconstitutional.

- This decision came after appeals against a **Punjab and Haryana High Court** ruling that had already scrapped such reservations.

**Note:** The **domicile quota** refers to a **reservation system** where states allocate a portion of PG medical seats to candidates who are residents of that state.

- For PG medical seats, the Centre conducts counseling for 50% of the total intake, while the remaining 50% is filled by state counseling bodies. Within this 50%, states set aside a quota for domicile candidates.

### What Did the SC Rule on Domicile-Based PG Admission Reservation?

- **Violation of Equality:** The Court emphasized that providing **residence-based or domicile-based reservations** for PG medical courses is constitutionally impermissible, as it creates **inequality among students** based on their state of residence.
  - This is a violation of the **Right to Equality (Article 14 of the Indian Constitution)**.
  - As per the ruling, Indian citizens have the right to **reside and practice their profession anywhere in the country**.
    - Restricting PG admissions based on state domicile creates unnecessary barriers to professional mobility.
- **Merit-Based Admissions:** The Court ruled that PG medical admissions must be merit-based, determined by the **National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET)**, with **state quota seats**, aside from institution-based reservations, must adhere to merit-based selection.
- **No Impact on Past Admissions:** The ruling will not affect admissions that have already been granted based on domicile-based reservations.
- **Domicile vs. Residence:** The Court clarified that "**domicile**" refers to a person's legal home, and not the place of residence, as commonly understood.
  - Legally, there is only one domicile in India "the **India** has only one domicile, the "**Domicile of India**," as defined under **Article 5**, and all Indians share this

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single domicile, and the concept of state-specific domicile is not valid under the Indian legal system.

- **Historical Precedent:** The Bench also referred to the *1984 Dr. Pradeep Jain vs Union of India case*, where the SC allowed **residence-based reservation in MBBS courses**.
  - This was justified on the grounds that the **state invests in infrastructure and running costs for medical colleges**, making it reasonable to reserve some seats for local residents.
  - However, this reasoning does not apply to PG medical courses, where such reservations are deemed unconstitutional.

**Note:** Article 15 and Article 16 of the Indian Constitution allow for **reservations in educational institutions and public services** for backward classes or underprivileged groups.

- While these articles **do not explicitly mention domicile**, they permit reservations for socially and economically backward classes, which some states interpret as including local residents.

### What are the Pros and Cons of Domicile-Based Reservation in Education?

- **Pros:**
  - **Local Opportunities:** Ensures that local students receive adequate representation and opportunities in educational institutions, especially in public sector institutions.
    - Acts as a form of affirmative action for disadvantaged communities.
  - **Economic Empowerment:** Helps improve the **social and economic status of local communities** by providing them with better access to higher education.
  - **Boost to Local Development:** Reservation laws can contribute to creating an educated workforce that benefits the local economy and supports regional development.

#### ➤ Cons:

- **Violation of Fundamental Rights:** It may infringe upon the **right to move freely** and seek education anywhere in the country, as guaranteed by Article 19 of the Constitution.
- **Impact on National Integration:** Domicile-based quotas can divide the nation and hinder the idea of a **unified educational and professional space**, where all citizens have equal opportunities.
- **Economic Inefficiency:** These laws may harm the **private sector by restricting access to top talent**, hindering innovation, and discouraging investment.
- **Addressing Root Causes:** These laws overlook critical issues like inadequate education infrastructure, insufficient guidance for exams like **NEET** and **Joint Entrance Examination**, and a mismatch between academic curricula and industry skill requirements.

## Writ Jurisdiction and the State

### Why in News?

In *S. Shobha vs. Muthoot Finance Ltd Case, 2025*, the Supreme Court (SC) ruled that **private companies**, including scheduled banks and NBFCs, are **not** subject to writ jurisdiction as they **do not perform public functions or duties**.

- The SC held that **NBFCs are not a "State"** under Article 12 and '**function**' test should decide the **maintainability of a writ application**.

### What are the Key Highlights of the Case?

- **Case Background:** The appellant argued that though NBFCs are not a "State" under Article 12, NBFCs violating RBI rules should be **subject to writ jurisdiction**.
- **Supreme Court Verdict:** Being subject to **regulatory guidelines** under a statute **does not** automatically make an entity subject to **writ jurisdiction**.

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- **Function Test:** Writ jurisdiction applies only if an entity performs public duties such as **governmental or essential public functions imposed by a statute** or statutory rule.
  - Writ jurisdiction applies to **state authorities, statutory bodies, state-owned or funded private bodies**, and private entities performing **public duties**.
  - NBFCs duties are confined to **account holders and borrowers**, not the general public.
- **Public Law Element Requirement:** If a private body **denies rights** concerning a public duty imposed on it, a writ can be enforced.

### What are Writs?

- **About:** A writ is a **legal order** issued by **Constitutional courts** under **Articles 32 and 226** of the Indian Constitution to **protect citizens' rights**. It is adopted from English "**prerogative writs**."
- **Authority to Issue Writs:**
  - **Supreme Court (Article 32):** Can issue writs only for the enforcement of **Fundamental Rights (FRs)**.
  - **High Courts (Article 226):** Can issue writs for the enforcement of **FRs** and **other legal rights**.
  - **Before 1950:** Only the High Courts of **Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras** had the power to issue writs.
  - **Parliament (Under Article 32):** Can empower **any other court to issue writs**, but **no such provision** has been made yet.

Types of Writs and Their Scope:

Writ	Purpose	Issued To	Court's Role	Not Issued If	Example
<b>Habeas Corpus</b>	<b>"To Have the Body"</b> - Protects individuals from illegal detention.	Any public authority or private individual responsible for <b>unlawful detention</b> .	Examines the <b>legality of detention</b> and orders release if unlawful.	Detention is lawful, detention due to contempt of court or legislature, detention ordered by a competent court, outside jurisdiction of the court.	If a person is detained without legal justification, a Habeas Corpus writ can secure their release.
<b>Mandamus</b>	<b>"We Command"</b> - Directs a public official, body, corporation, tribunal, or government to perform a duty they have failed to fulfill.	Government officials, public corporations, tribunals, and courts.	Directs the <b>performance of a duty</b> that has been neglected.	Private individuals/ organizations, discretionary duties, duties with no statutory backing, against President/ Governors, Chief Justice acting judicially.	If a government official refuses to issue a passport despite fulfilling all legal requirements, a Mandamus writ can be issued.

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<b>Prohibition</b>	<b>"To Forbid"</b> - Prevents lower courts or tribunals from exceeding their jurisdiction or acting illegally.	Higher courts (Supreme Court or High Courts).	Prevents <b>unlawful actions or excess jurisdiction</b> .	Administrative authorities, legislative bodies, private individuals/organizations.	If a district court takes up a case beyond its legal authority, the High Court can issue a Prohibition writ.
<b>Certiorari</b>	<b>"To Be Certified"</b> - Transfers a case or quashes an illegal or unconstitutional order of a lower court/tribunal.	<b>Judicial or quasi-judicial bodies</b> , administrative authorities (after 1991 SC ruling).	Quashes <b>illegal or unconstitutional orders</b> , or transfers cases.	Legislative bodies, private individuals/organizations.	If a tribunal passes an unlawful order violating natural justice, the High Court can quash it using Certiorari.
<b>Quo Warranto</b>	<b>"By What Authority"</b> - Prevents illegal occupation of a public office by a person not entitled to hold it.	Any person wrongly occupying a <b>substantive public office</b> .	Challenges <b>unlawful occupation</b> of public offices.	Private offices, ministerial (non-substantive) offices.	If a person is appointed as a Minister without meeting the legal requirements, a <b>Quo Warranto writ</b> can be issued.

#### Differences in Writ Jurisdiction of SC and HC:

Aspect	Supreme Court	High Court
<b>Scope of Enforcement</b>	Can issue writs <b>only for FRs violations</b> .	Can issue writs for <b>FRs and other legal rights (broader scope)</b> .
<b>Territorial Jurisdiction</b>	Can issue writs <b>throughout India</b> .	Can issue writs only within its <b>territorial jurisdiction</b> , except when the <b>cause of action</b> arises within its jurisdiction.
<b>Nature of the Right</b>	Writ jurisdiction is a <b>FRs itself</b> (Article 32), so the <b>court cannot refuse to exercise it</b> .	Writ jurisdiction is <b>discretionary (Article 226)</b> , meaning the <b>High Court</b> may refuse to issue a writ.

#### What is the Definition of a State under Article 12?

- **About:** **Article 12** has defined the term "State" for the purposes of **Part III (FRs)** that has been used in **different provisions** concerning **fundamental rights**.
- **Scope of 'State':** According to Article 12, the State includes the following:
  - **Government and Parliament** of India, and **Government and legislature of states** (i.e., executive and legislative organs of the government).
  - All **local authorities**, that is, **municipalities, panchayats**, district boards, improvement trusts, etc.
  - All other authorities, that is, **statutory or non-statutory authorities** like **LIC, ONGC, SAIL**, etc.
  - Thus, the State has been defined in a **wider sense** so as to include **all its agencies**. It is the actions of these agencies that can be challenged in the courts as violating the Fundamental Rights.
- **Judicial Stand:** The **SC** in the **Binny Ltd Case, 2005** held that even a **private body or an agency** working as an **instrument of the State** falls within the meaning of the 'State' under **Article 12**.

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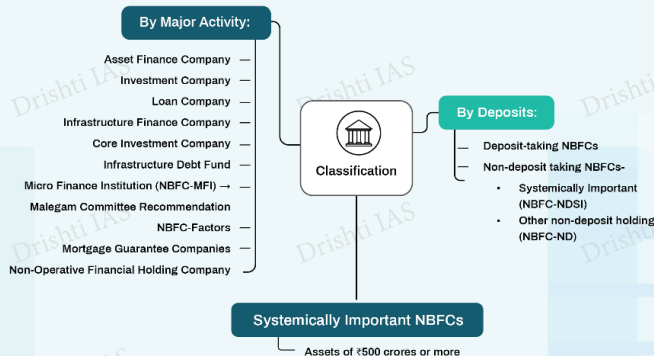
## Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)

A Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) provides loans, acquires financial securities, and offers leasing & insurance services. However, it excludes companies primarily engaged in agriculture, industrial activities, trading, or real estate.

### About:

- Do not have a banking license; not part of the payment system; cannot issue cheques
- Insurance by Deposit Insurance & Credit Guarantee Corporation → not available for NBFC depositors
- Can accept public deposits for 12-90 months (no demand deposits)
- NBFCs require an investment-grade credit rating
- Registration → Companies Act, 1956
- Key Services Offered- Personal loans, Home loans, Vehicle Financing, Gold Loans, Microfinance, Infrastructure Financing, Insurance Services, Investment Management

### Classification:



### Regulation:

Type of Institution	Regulatory Authority
NBFCs registered with RBI	RBI
Housing Finance Institutions	National Housing Bank
Merchant Banking Companies, Venture Capital Fund Companies, Stock Broking, Collective Investment Schemes (CIS)	SEBI
Nidhi Companies, Mutual Benefit Companies	Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA)
Chit Fund Companies	State Government
Insurance Companies	IRDAI
Non-Banking Non-Financial Companies	Statute- Companies Act 1956 Regulator- Ministry of Corporate Affairs Enforcement Agency- State Governments

### Benefits of NBFCs:

- Financial Inclusion
- Innovative Products
- Liquidity
- Support for MSMEs

### Challenges of NBFCs:

- Funding Constraints
- Asset Quality & Credit Risk
- Regulatory Compliance
- Corporate Governance



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Note:

# Economic Scenario

## Highlights

- Economic Survey 2024-25
- Union Budget 2025-26
- Gender Budget 2025-26
- Union Budget 2025-26 Measures to Boost MSMEs
- Asian Fisheries and Aquaculture Forum
- Economic Dynamics of Southern Indian States
- Edible Oil Imports and SAFTA Agreement
- CSS and Fiscal Federalism
- Repo Rate Cut and its Implications
- Agricultural Initiatives and their Implementation
- State of India's Digital Economy (SIDE) Report 2024
- Agriculture Development in India
- Infrastructure Development in India
- Balancing Energy Transition & Security
- Strengthening Regulatory Bodies
- Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs
- Injecting Liquidity in Economy

## Economic Survey 2024-25

### Why in News?

The Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman tabled the **Economic Survey 2024-25** in **Parliament**. It provides a roadmap for reforms and growth, setting the stage for the **Union Budget 2025**.

#### Economic Survey

- The Economic Survey is an annual report presented by the government before the **Union Budget** to assess India's economic condition.
- Prepared by the **Economic Division of the Ministry of Finance** under the **Chief Economic Adviser's** supervision, it is tabled in both houses of **Parliament** by the Union Finance Minister.
  - The survey **assesses economic performance**, **highlights sectoral developments**, outlines challenges and provides an economic outlook for the coming year.
  - The Economic Survey was first presented in **1950-51 as part of the budget** and became a separate document from the **Union Budget in 1964**, tabled a day before the budget.

### What are the Key Highlights of the Economic Survey 2024-25?

- **State of the Economy:**
  - **Global Economy:** The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** projected **3.2% global growth in 2024 (3.3% in 2025)**, with manufacturing slowing due to supply chain **disruptions**, while services remain strong.
    - **Inflation** eased globally, yet **services inflation remained persistent**, leading to **divergent monetary policies** across central banks.
  - **Geopolitical Uncertainties:** **Russia-Ukraine war** and **Israel-Hamas conflict** have impacted trade, energy security, and inflation.
    - **Suez Canal disruptions** forced ships to reroute via the **Cape of Good Hope**, increasing freight costs and delivery times.
  - **India's Economy:** India's **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** is projected to grow between **6.3-6.8% in FY26 (2025-26)**, with real **Gross Value Added (GVA)** estimated at **6.4% in FY25 (2024-25)**.
    - **Sector-Wise Performance:**
      - **Agriculture: 3.8% growth** in FY25, driven by record **Kharif production** and strong rural demand.

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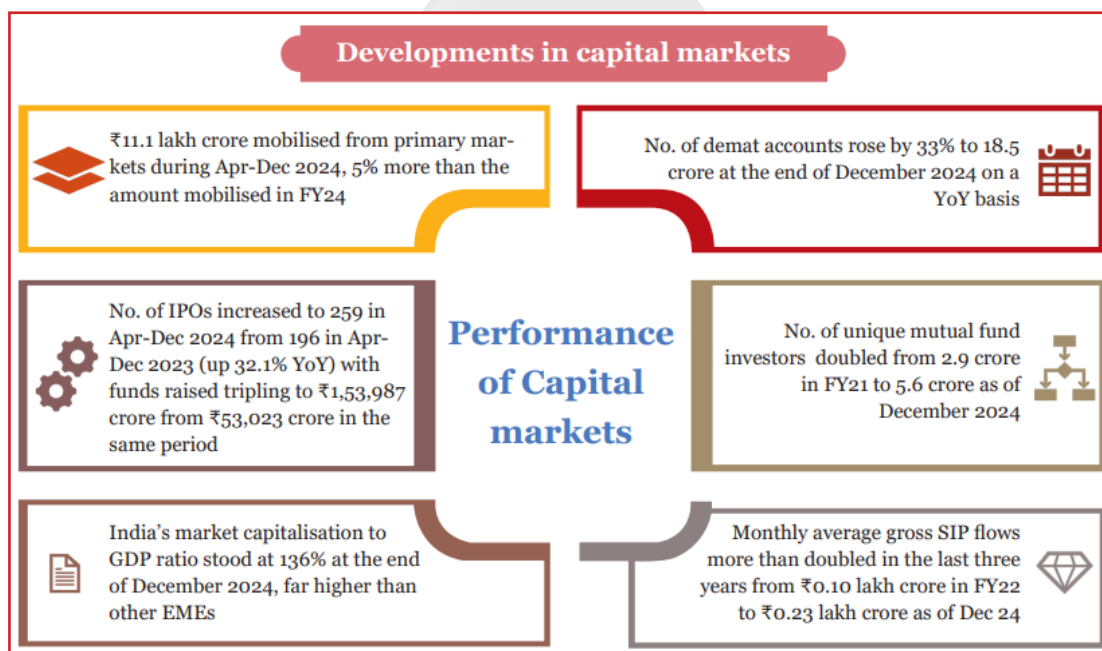


- **Industry & Manufacturing:** 6.2% growth in FY25, with manufacturing slowing due to weak global demand.
- **Services:** Fastest-growing sector at 7.2% in FY25, led by Information technology (IT), finance, and hospitality.
- **External Sector:** Overall exports (merchandise+services) grew by 6% (YOY) in the first nine months of FY25. Services sector by 11.6% during the same time.
- **Merchandise exports** grew 1.6%, while imports rose 5.2%, widening the trade deficit.
- India remained the **top global recipient of remittances**, helping contain the Current account deficit (CAD) at 1.2% of GDP.

➤ **Monetary and Financial Sector Developments:**  
Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA) of Scheduled

Commercial Banks (SCBs) dropped to a 12-year low of 2.6% in 2024, with net NPAs at 0.6%.

- Return on Assets (RoA) rose to 1.4%, and Return on Equity (RoE) improved to 14.1% (Sep 2024).
- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Financial Inclusion Index increased from 53.9 (2021) to 64.2 (2024), supported by Regional Rural Banks (RRBs).
  - RBI maintained the repo rate at 6.5%, while reducing the CRR to 4%, injecting Rs 1.16 lakh crore into the system.
  - The **money multiplier** rose to 5.7, reflecting increased liquidity.
- Capital markets mobilized Rs 11.1 lakh crore in primary markets (Apr–Dec 2024), a 5% increase over FY24. Initial Public Offerings (IPO) tripled their fundraising to Rs 1.53 lakh crore.



- **Development Financial Institutions (DFIs)** like National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID) and India Infrastructure Finance Company Limited (IIFCL) financed infrastructure projects, with NaBFID sanctioning Rs 1.3 lakh crore in loans.

➤ **External Sector:** India's external sector remained resilient. Total exports (merchandise + services) grew by 6%, reaching USD 602.6 billion.

- Imports also increased by 6.9% to USD 682.2 billion, reflecting strong domestic demand.
- Global trade faced challenges due to rising trade policy uncertainty and disruptions in key shipping routes, such as the Red Sea and the Panama Canal drought, leading to higher costs and longer delivery times.

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Note:

- A shift towards **friend-shoring** and **near-shoring** was observed, as countries **prioritized trade within geopolitical alliances**.
- **Foreign Portfolio Investments (FPIs):** The **FPIs** **fluctuated** due to global uncertainties, though India's **strong economic fundamentals** kept overall **inflows positive**.
- **Foreign Exchange Reserves:** **USD 640.3 billion** (Dec 2024), **covering 90% of external debt** (USD 711.8 billion as of Sep 2024), ensuring **macroeconomic stability** and resilience against external shocks.
- **Prices and Inflation:**
  - **Global Inflation Trends:** Inflation peaked at **8.7% in 2022**, driven by **supply chain disruptions**, but fell to **5.7% in 2024** due to **monetary tightening**.
  - **Domestic Inflation Trends:** **Retail inflation** eased from 5.4% in FY24 to **4.9% in FY25**, but **food inflation** rose from 7.5% to 8.4%, driven by vegetables (tomatoes, onions) and pulses, despite price stabilization efforts.
    - Supply chain issues and **weather disruptions** kept **Consumer Price Index (CPI)** volatility high.
    - **Core inflation** hit a 10-year low, with declining service and fuel price inflation.
  - The RBI revised FY25 inflation from 4.5% to 4.8%, expecting **4.2% in FY26**, while the IMF forecasts **4.4% in FY25** and **4.1% in FY26**, assuming stable conditions.
- **Medium-Term Outlook:** The IMF projects India to become a **USD 5 trillion economy** by FY28 and **USD 6.3 trillion** by FY30, with a **nominal GDP growth rate of 10.2% (FY25-FY30)**.
  - To reach its **Viksit Bharat 2047** goal, India must grow at **8% annually** for the next two decades.
  - However, global challenges such as **geo-economic fragmentation**, **trade restrictions**, and **China's dominance** in manufacturing and energy transition pose risks to supply chains and investment flows.
  - The IMF forecasts India's real GDP growth at **6.5% annually (FY26-FY30)**, with the **CAD** expected to rise to **2.2% of GDP** by FY30.
- The **rupee is projected to depreciate** mildly at **0.5% per year**, indicating improved economic stability compared to previous decades.
- **Investment and Infrastructure:** The **capital expenditure (Capex)** growing at **38.8% Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) (FY20-FY24)**.
  - The government has launched multiple initiatives, including the **National Infrastructure Pipeline**, and the **National Monetisation Pipeline**.
  - **Key Developments:**
    - **Railway connectivity:** **2031 km** of railway network commissioned (Apr-Nov 2024), **17 new Vande Bharat trains** introduced.
    - **Infrastructure:** National Highway construction reached **6,215 km (Bharatmala)**, 619 UDAN air routes (**Regional Connectivity Scheme**).
      - Port capacity grew under **Sagarmala**, with the launch of projects like **Vadhavan Mega Port**.
    - **Energy:** Total installed **power capacity** reached **456.7 GW (renewables at 209.4 GW (47% share))**.
    - **Connectivity:** **5G** covers **779 districts**, and **BharatNet** expanded fiber to **2.14 lakh Gram Panchayats**.
    - **Rural and Urban Development:** **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)** sanctioned **1.18 crore** houses, and **Jal Jeevan Mission** reached **15.3 crore households (79.1%)**.
      - **18,374** villages electrified and **2.9 crore** households connected under **Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY)** and **SAUBHAGYA**.
      - Under **Swachh Bharat Mission (Phase II)** in **2024**, **1.92 lakh** villages declared **ODF Plus**, making a total of **3.64 lakh ODF Plus** villages by 2024.
    - **Space assets:** India operates **56 active space assets**, with **Space Vision 2047** targeting missions like **Gaganyaan** and **Chandrayaan-4**.
- **Industry & Manufacturing:** The **industrial sector** expected to grow by **6.2% in FY-25** (first advance estimates), driven by robust growth in electricity and construction.

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Note:

- The government has been actively promoting **Smart Manufacturing** and **Industry 4.0**, supporting the establishment of **SAMARTH Udyog centres**.

- Key sectors saw growth, with **steel production** up 3.3% (Apr–Nov FY25) and **electronics output** reaching Rs 9.52 lakh crore, with 99% of **smartphones** made domestically, drastically reducing India's dependence on imports.

- As per the **WIPO Report 2022**, India ranks sixth among the top 10 patent filing offices globally, with **resident filings** accounting for over half of all submissions (55.2%)—a first for the country.

- The **MSME sector** employs 23.24 crore people, with 2.39 crore businesses formalized under **Udyam Assist**.

- To provide equity funding to MSMEs with the potential to scale up, the government launched the **Self-Reliant India Fund**.

- **Services:** India's services sector contributes 55% to GVA in FY25, up from 50.6% in FY14, employing 30% of the workforce and driving manufacturing growth through servicification.

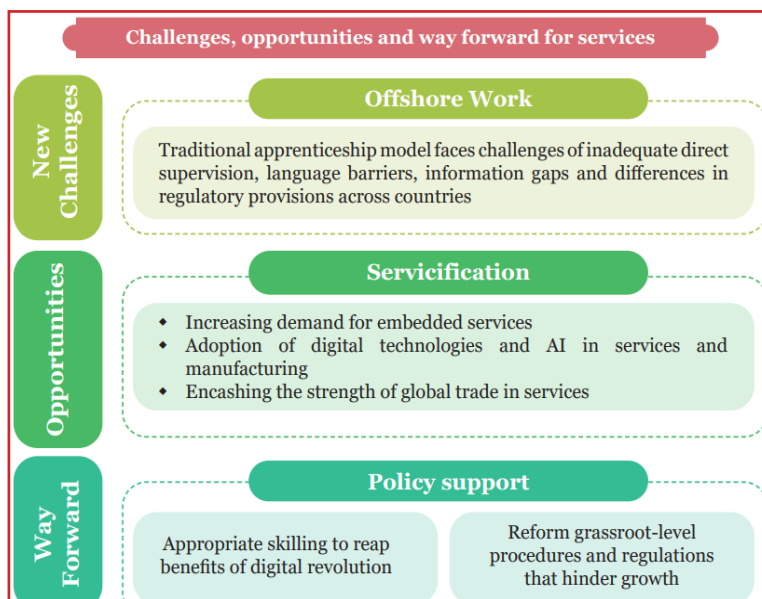
- India ranks 7th in global services exports (4.3% share).

- Information and **computer-related services** grew at 12.8% CAGR (FY13–FY23), increasing their GVA share from 6.3% to 10.9%.

- **Railway passenger traffic** grew 8%, **freight movement** increased 5.2% (FY24).

- Tourism rebounded, contributing 5% to GDP (FY23), and real estate sales hit an 11-year high in H1 FY25.

- The **telecom sector**, with 1.18 billion subscribers, leads in global mobile data consumption.



- **Agriculture and Food Management:** India's **agriculture sector** contributes 16% to GDP (FY24), employing 46.1% of the population, with 5% annual growth (FY17-FY23).

- Kharif foodgrain production hit 1,647 LMT (2024), up 89.37 LMT YoY, while **fisheries** (184 LMT) and **livestock** (CAGR 12.99%) outpaced traditional farming.

- **Minimum Support Price** for **Arhar and Bajra** increased by 59% and 77% (FY25) to ensure farmer profitability.

- 55% of India's net sown area is irrigated, with severe drought risks in two-thirds of farmland.

- **Kisan Credit Cards (KCC):** 7.75 crore accounts.

- **PM Fasal Bima Yojana (Crop Insurance):** 4 crore farmers enrolled, covering 600 LMT hectares in FY24.

- **e-NAM** platform linked 1.78 crore farmers, 2.62 lakh traders (Oct 2024) for better price discovery.

- **Food Security & Processing:** **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)** provides free food grains to 80 crore people.

- **Food processing** exports reached USD 46.44 billion (FY24), with 23.4% share in agri-food exports (11.7 % of India's total exports).

- **Climate & Environment:** Climate adaptation spending rose from 3.7% to 5.6% of GDP (FY16-FY22).

- The **Lifestyle for the Environment (LiFE)** initiative promotes sustainability, with potential global savings of USD 440 billion by 2030 through reduced consumption and lower prices.

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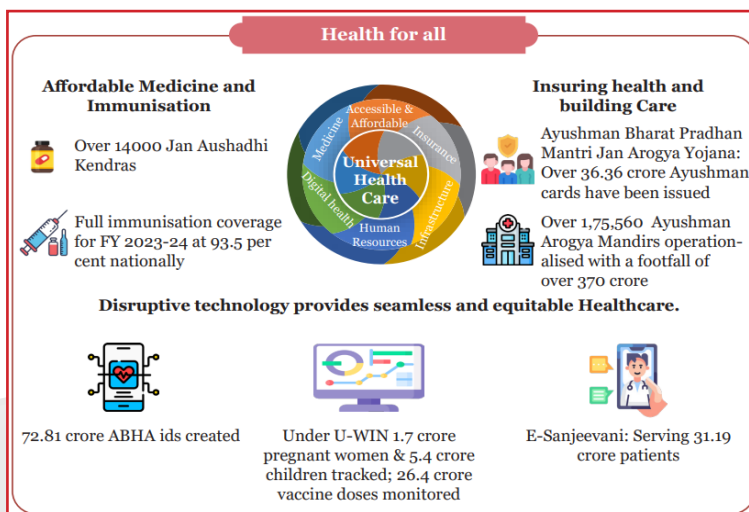
- **Renewable Energy & Emissions:** 46.8% of India's power capacity is **non-fossil** (target 50% by 2030).
  - **Forest carbon sink** increased by 2.29 billion tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> (2005-2023).
- **Climate Finance & International Cooperation:** **Conference of Parties 29** failed to secure adequate climate funds, with a USD 300B annual goal vs. USD 5.1 to 6.8T needed by 2030.
  - India issued USD 20,000 crore in **Sovereign Green Bonds** in FY24 to fund green projects.
- **Sustainable Development & Resilience:** **Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes (MISHTI)** initiative restoring 22,560 hectares of mangroves across 13 states and UTs.
  - **Water conservation via AMRUT 2.0** (3,078 water body rejuvenation projects approved).
  - **PM Surya Ghar** (7 lakh rooftop solar systems installed; goal: 1 crore households).
- **Energy Security & Transition:** **Coal** remains India's primary energy source, with 65,290 MW supercritical coal plants for efficiency.
  - **Nuclear, hydrogen, and bioenergy** programs expanding for a balanced transition.

➤ **Social Sector:** India's social sector spending grew at 15% CAGR (FY21-FY25), reaching Rs 25.7 lakh crore in FY25.

- The **Gini coefficient** for rural areas declined to 0.237 in 2023-24 from 0.266 in 2022-23, and for urban areas, it fell to 0.284 in 2023-24 from 0.314 in 2022-23.
- **Education & Skill Development:** Education spending rose 12% CAGR to Rs 9.2 lakh crore, reducing dropout rates to 1.9% (primary) and 14.1% (secondary), while higher education

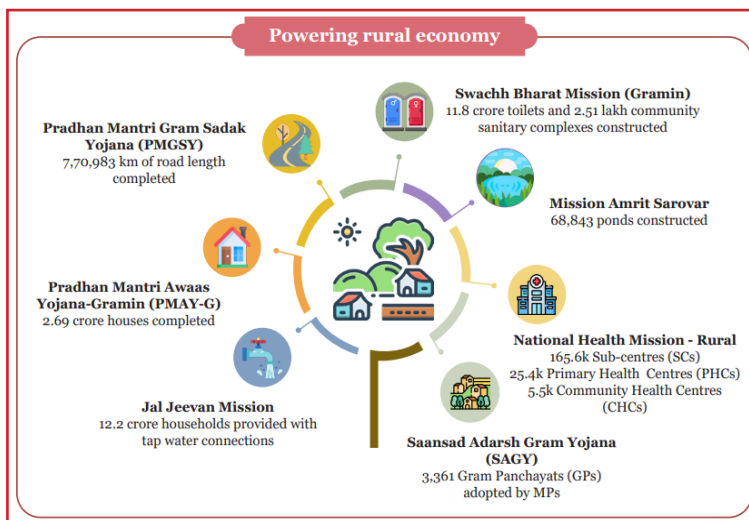
enrolment increased 26.5% (2014-2022), pushing **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)** to 28.4%.

- **Healthcare & Social Security:** Healthcare spending surged 18% to Rs 6.1 lakh crore, with **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY)** saving Rs 1.25 lakh crore in medical expenses.



- **Welfare:** **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)** provides free food grains to 80 crore people, covering 84% of households via ration cards.

- **Fiscal policies** helped reduce inequality, with bottom 5% rural and urban consumption rising by 22% and 19%.



- **Employment and Skill Development:** India's **unemployment rate** declined from 6% (2017-18) to 3.2% (2023-24), with **labour force participation (LFPR)** rising to 60.1%.

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Note:

- The **working-age population (15-59 years)** reached 923.9 million (2026 projection), offering a **demographic dividend** (26% of the population aged 10-24).
- The **female LFPR grew from 23.3% (2017-18) to 41.7% (2023-24)**, driven by rural women's participation.
- **Self-employment** rose to 58.4%, while regular wage jobs remained at 21.7%.
- **Employment Trends:** Formal sector jobs surged, with **Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)** net payroll additions doubling from 61 lakh (FY19) to 131 lakh (FY24).
- **Skill Development & Job Creation:** 73,151 startups with women directors under **Startup India**.
  - **Skill India** and **Mudra Yojana** supported entrepreneurship and vocational training.
- The growing **digital economy** and **renewable energy sectors** are driving job creation, vital for Viksit Bharat.
  - The government is enhancing skills for global trends like AI and climate change. Initiatives like the **PM-Internship Scheme** are boosting employment and self-employment.
- **Labour in the AI Era:** **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** presents **both opportunities and risks** for labour markets, with **75 million global jobs at risk (ILO 2024)** and **300 million full-time roles exposed (Goldman Sachs)**.
  - India's AI market is set to grow at **25-35% CAGR by 2027 (NASSCOM)**, making workforce upskilling, regulatory oversight, and human-AI collaboration crucial for a balanced transition.

### What are India's Economic Challenges According to the Economic Survey 2024-5?

- **Global:**
  - **Geopolitical Risks:** Conflicts like the **Russia-Ukraine war** and **Red Sea disruptions** impact trade, energy prices, and supply chains.
  - **Global Trade Slowdown:** **Protectionism**, supply chain realignments affect India's export competitiveness.
  - **Financial Market Volatility:** Interest rate fluctuations in the US and **European Union** may cause capital

outflows, impacting India's **foreign exchange reserves** and currency stability.

- **Inflation:**
  - **Persistent Food Inflation:** Create inflationary pressures, despite stable core inflation.
  - **Climate Impact:** Erratic **monsoons, droughts, and extreme weather events** affect food security and farm incomes.
- **Investment & Infrastructure Bottlenecks:** While public Capex grew at **38.8% CAGR (FY20-FY24)**, private investment remains cautious due to global uncertainties and regulatory concerns.
  - **Logistics costs** remain high (**13-14% of GDP**), limiting industrial competitiveness despite **National Logistics Policy** efforts.
  - **Lack of planned urbanization** results in **traffic congestion**, inadequate public transport, and rising housing costs in major cities.
    - **Smart City** and urban transport projects face **delays** in execution due to regulatory hurdles and financing gaps.
- **Employment & Skilling Gaps:**
  - **Jobless Growth Concerns:** India faces a **critical challenge of jobless growth**, with economic growth outpacing job creation, largely due to a focus on high-skill, low-employment sectors, premature deindustrialisation, and skill mismatches.
  - **Low LFPR:** Female LFPR in India is **41.7% (FY25)**, still below the global average of over 50%.
- **Fiscal & Financial Sector Risks:** **Several states face high debt burdens** due to rising subsidies, limited revenue growth, and dependency on central transfers.
  - **Rising unsecured lending risks** pose a challenge for **NBFCs and fintech lenders**, requiring better regulation and monitoring and **cyber threats remain**.
  - **Slow credit penetration to MSMEs**, despite digital lending growth, hinders small business expansion.
- **External Sector:** While **Foreign Direct Investment** inflows grew **17.9% YoY**, **higher repatriation** and **disinvestment** remain a concern.
  - **Export Dependency on IT & Services (70% of services exports rely on IT & business services)**, increasing vulnerability to global demand shocks.

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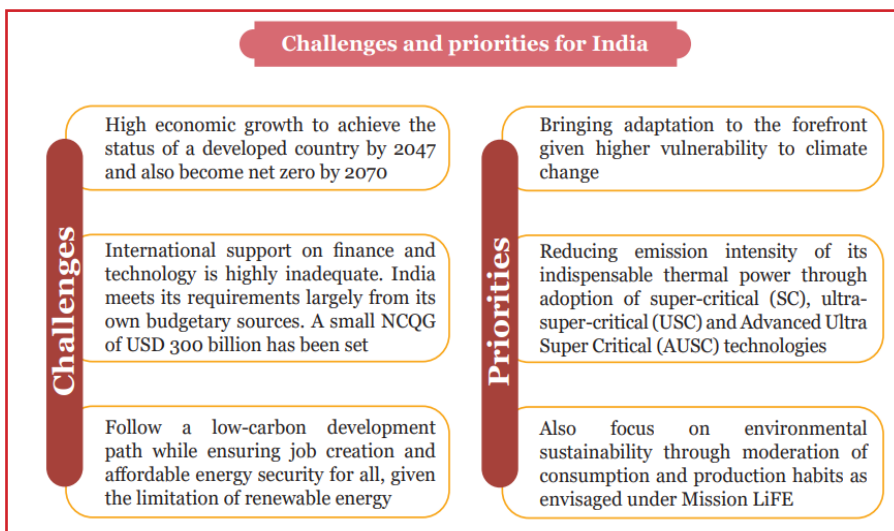


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Note:

- **Climate Change & Energy Transition:** India faces energy transition challenges due to **grid stability issues**, high storage costs, and slow renewable adoption.
  - Dependency on **Coal remains high**, delaying the shift to clean energy.
  - Climate risks, extreme weather, and inadequate global climate finance further hinder sustainable growth.
- **EoDB reforms:** Despite **Ease of Doing Business Reforms (EoDB) reforms**, labour laws, land acquisition, and tax complexity still hinder **MSMEs and startups**.
  - India's R&D spending **remains low at 0.64% of GDP**, affecting innovation and tech competitiveness.
- **Effect of AI:** AI's reliability is still **unproven**, leading to biases in hiring, predictive policing, and automation failures.
  - **Energy demand for AI data centers** may reach India's total electricity consumption (1,580 terawatt-hours) (Bloomberg, 2024).
  - Indian IT, **Business process outsourcing (BPO)**, and banking sectors face high AI disruption, particularly in low-value service jobs.

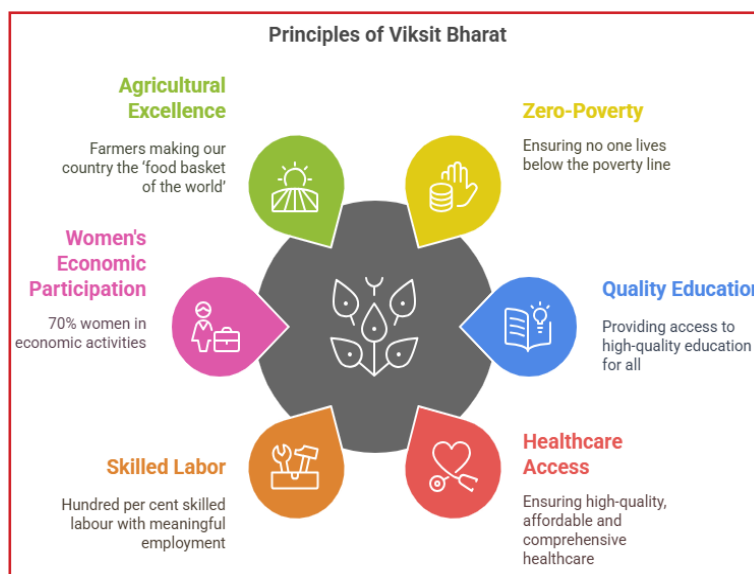


## Union Budget 2025-26

### Why in News?

The **Union Budget 2025-26** was presented by the Union Finance Minister in the **Parliament** recognising 4 engines of development- **agriculture, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), investment and exports**.

- The **Union Budget 2025-26**, with the theme **Sabka Vikas**, aims to stimulate balanced growth across all regions.
- In line with the Budget theme, the Finance Minister outlined the **broad principles of Viksit Bharat**.
- The Budget proposes development measures focusing on the **poor (Garib), Youth, farmers (Annadata) and women (Nari)**.



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# UNION BUDGET



A statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Govt in an FY

## ARTICLE 112 (PART V)

- President of India to present the **Annual Financial Statement** for each FY before both Houses of Parliament

*The term 'Budget' is not mentioned anywhere in the Constitution of India*

## NODAL BODY FOR PREPARING BUDGET

- **Budget Division** (Dept of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance) in **consultation with NITI Aayog** and concerned Ministries

*The first Budget of Independent India was presented in 1947*

## MAJOR COMPONENTS OF BUDGET

- Estimates of **revenue and capital receipts**
- **Ways and means** to raise the revenue
- Estimates of **expenditure**
- Actual receipts/**expenditures of closing** FY (+ deficit/surplus)
- **Economic/financial policy** of upcoming FY

*Till 2017, the Govt of India had 2 budgets - **Railway Budget** and **General Budget***

## STAGES OF BUDGET ENACTMENT

- Presentation
- **General discussion**
- **Scrutiny** by Dept Committees
- **Voting** on Demands for Grants
- Passing an **Appropriation Bill**
- Passing of **Finance Bill**

*What else does the Constitution of India provide for the Budget?*

- **Without the recommendation of the President:**
  - No demand for a grant can be made
  - No money bill imposing tax can be introduced
- **No money can be withdrawn from the Consolidated Fund of India** except under **appropriation** made by law
- **Role of Parliament:**
  - Money/Finance Bill (involving taxation) - **introduced only in LS**
  - Vote on the demand for grants - **RS has no such power**
  - Money/Finance Bill - **to be returned to LS by RS in 14 days**
  - **LS may/may not accept** the recommendations made by RS

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## What are the 4 Engines of Development in the Union Budget 2025-26?

### ➤ 1<sup>st</sup> Engine- Agriculture:

- **Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana:** Announced to cover **100 low agricultural productivity districts**, benefiting **1.7 crore farmers**, enhancing **irrigation**, and **post-harvest storage facilities**.
  - A 'Rural Prosperity and Resilience' programme will be launched with states to address agricultural underemployment through skilling, investment, and technology.
- **Atma Nirbharta in Pulses:** A 6-year mission focusing on **Tur, Urad, and Masoor** announced launched, ensuring climate-resilient seeds and **remunerative prices**.
  - Central agencies (**NAFED** and **NCCF**) will be prepared to procure **these 3 pulses from farmers over the next 4 years**.
- **Enhanced Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Limit:** Raised from **₹3 lakh to ₹5 lakh** to facilitate credit flow for **7.7 crore farmers**.
- **National Mission on High Yielding Seeds:** To strengthen **research**, ensuring availability of **100+ high-yielding and pest-resistant seed varieties**.
- **Mission for Cotton Productivity:** A 5-year initiative promoting **sustainable farming**, increasing **extra-long staple cotton** production, and improving quality.
- **Makhana Board in Bihar:** To be established to enhance **production, processing, and value addition of Makhana**.
- **Comprehensive Program for Fruits and Vegetables:** To promote efficient **supply chains** and ensure better **market prices** for farmers.
- **Fisheries Development:** New framework for **sustainable fishing** in the Indian **Exclusive Economic Zone** and High Seas, focusing on **Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep**.
- **Urea Plant in Assam:** A new urea plant in the premises of **Brahmaputra Valley Fertilizer Corporation Ltd (BVFCL)** with **12.7 lakh metric ton capacity** to boost agricultural productivity.

### ➤ 2<sup>nd</sup> Engine- MSMEs:

- **Revised MSME Classification:** Investment and turnover limits **increased to 2.5 times**, expanding credit opportunities for **small businesses**.

₹ in Crore	Investment		Turnover	
	Current	Revised	Current	Revised
Micro Enterprises	1	2.5	5	10
Small Enterprises	10	25	50	100
Medium Enterprises	50	125	250	500

- **Micro Enterprise Credit Cards:** Rs 5 lakh **credit facility** for **10 lakh micro enterprises**, promoting **financial inclusion** and economic participation.
- **Credit Cover for MSMEs:** Guarantee cover **increased from ₹5 crore to ₹10 crore**, enabling higher loan access.
- **Focus Product Scheme for Leather and Footwear:** Expected to **generate 22 lakh jobs** and ₹4 lakh crore turnover, and exports of over ₹1.1 lakh crore.
- **Toy Sector Development:** Clusters and innovation-based manufacturing fostering **'Made in India'** brand in **global markets**.
- **National Institute of Food Technology:** A **National Institute of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management** to be established in **Bihar**, promoting **food processing, skilling, and entrepreneurship**.
- **Fund of Funds for Startups:** To be established with an expanded scope and an additional contribution of **₹10,000 crore**.

### ➤ 3<sup>rd</sup> Engine- Investment:

- **Urban Challenge Fund:** ₹1 lakh crore allocated to support **'Cities as Growth Hubs,' 'Creative Redevelopment of Cities,'** and **'Water and Sanitation,'** with ₹10,000 crore allocated for 2025-26.
- **Jal Jeevan Mission:** With total budget outlay enhanced to Rs 67,000 Crore and extension till **2028**, ensuring **universal piped water coverage** with enhanced funding for rural water projects.

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- 15 crore households representing 80% of India's rural population have benefitted by the mission.
- **Maritime Development Fund:** ₹25,000 crore fund (49% contribution by the Government), supporting **long-term financing** for shipbuilding, **ports**, and **logistics infrastructure**.
- **Expansion of IITs:** Additional infrastructure for **6,500 more students**, boosting India's **technical education capacity**.
  - **PM Research Fellowship:** **10,000 fellowships** for advanced **research in IITs and IISc**.
- **Day Care Cancer Centers:** To be set up in **all district hospitals** in the next 3 years, with 200 Centres in 2025-26, ensuring affordable **cancer treatment** accessibility.
- **Bharatiya Bhasha Pustak Scheme:** Digital Indian language books to enhance **school and higher education** accessibility.
- **Nuclear Energy Mission for Viksit Bharat:** To be set up with a **₹20,000 crore** outlay for **Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)**, with at least 5 indigenously developed SMRs operational by 2033.
  - Amendments to the **Atomic Energy Act** and the **Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act** will be taken up for active partnership with the private sector.
- **UDAN - Regional Connectivity Scheme:** A revised **UDAN scheme** will enhance regional connectivity to 120 new destinations, aiming to carry 4 crore passengers over the next 10 years.
  - It will also **support helipads and smaller airports** in hilly, aspirational, and North East regions.
- **Greenfield Airport in Bihar:** **Greenfield airports** will be developed in Bihar, alongside the **expansion of Patna airport** and a **brownfield airport at Bihta (Patna)**.
- **Western Koshi Canal ERM Project:** Financial support for **irrigation infrastructure in Mithilanchal, Bihar**.
- **Tourism for Employment-led Growth:** The top **50 tourist destinations** across the country will be developed in partnership with states through a challenge mode.

#### ➤ 4<sup>th</sup> Engine- Export Promotion:

- **Export Promotion Mission:** It will be established, with sectoral and ministerial targets, led collaboratively by the **Ministries of Commerce, MSME, and Finance**.
- **BharatTradeNet (BTN):** A **unified digital platform** facilitating **international trade** documentation and financing solutions.
- **National Framework for GCC:** Policy incentives to promote outsourcing hubs (**Global Capability Centres**) in emerging Tier-2 cities.
- **Warehousing Facility for Air Cargo:** Development of **storage infrastructure** for high-value perishable exports.

### What are Other Major Highlights of the Union Budget 2025-26?

#### ➤ Taxation and Financial Reforms:

- **Direct Taxes: No Income Tax** for annual incomes up to **₹12 lakh**, extended to **₹12.75 lakh** for salaried taxpayers with deductions.

Income (in ₹)	Tax Rate
₹0 - ₹4 lakh	Nil
₹4 - ₹8 lakh	5%
₹8 - ₹12 lakh	10%
₹12 - ₹16 lakh	15%
₹16 - ₹20 lakh	20%
₹20 - ₹24 lakh	25%
Above ₹24 lakh	30%

- **Tax Deducted at Source (TDS): TDS on Rent** increased from **₹2.4 lakh to ₹6 lakh**, reducing tax compliance burden.
- **Tax Returns:** **Time limit for updated tax returns** extended from **2 years to 4 years**, facilitating voluntary tax compliance.
- **Basic Customs Duty (BCD) Exemptions:** **36 life-saving drugs** for **cancer, chronic, and rare diseases** fully exempted from BCD.
  - **Lithium-ion battery** manufacturing **capital goods** for EVs and mobile devices exempted to boost domestic production.
  - **Textile and electronics sector** components exempted to encourage **local manufacturing** and reduce dependency on imports.

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### ➤ Social Welfare and Inclusion:

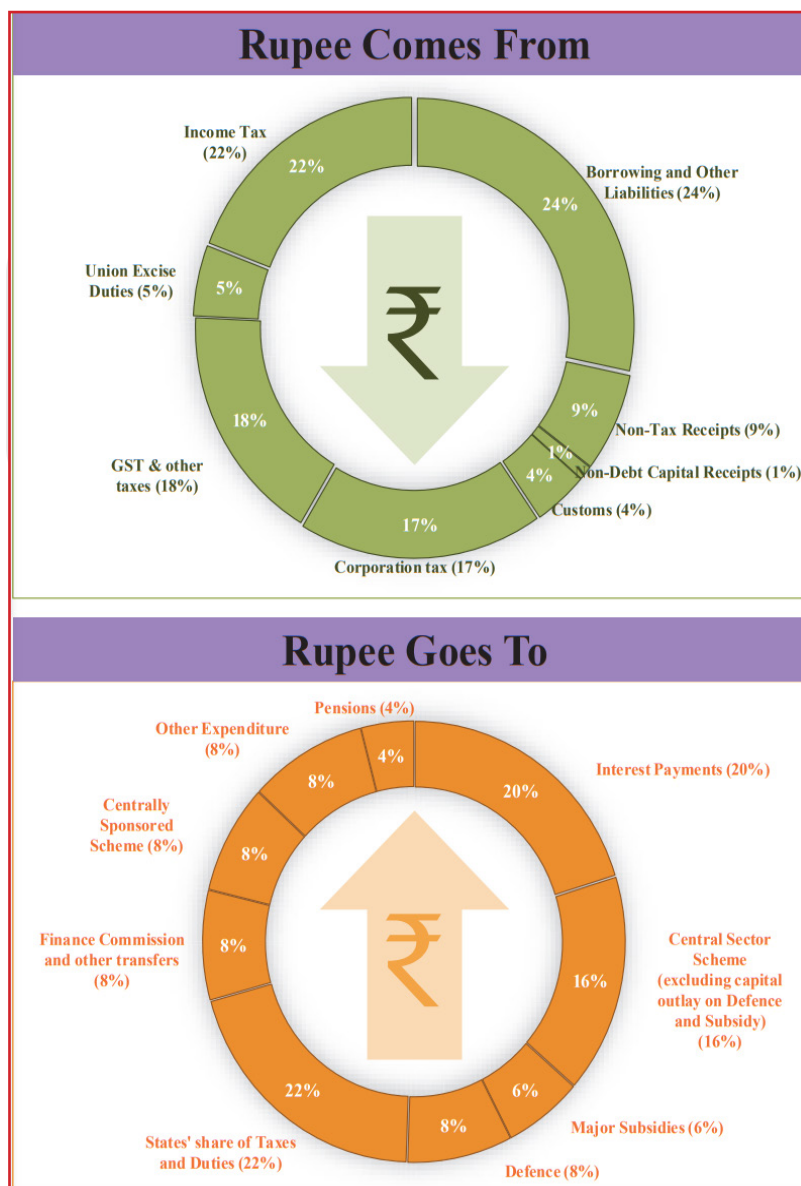
- **PM SVANidhi Scheme:** UPI-linked credit cards with ₹30,000 limit for street vendors to enhance financial inclusion.
- **Identity Cards for Gig Workers:** Registration on e-Shram portal, ensuring social security and health benefits under PM Jan Arogya Yojana.
- **50,000 Atal Tinkering Labs:** To be established in **government schools** in the next **five years** to promote innovation.
- **Expansion of Medical Education:** **10,000 new medical seats**, targeting a total increase of **75,000 seats** in five years.

### ➤ Financial Sector Reforms:

- **Grameen Credit Score:** A framework enabling SHG members and **rural borrowers** to access **formal credit facilities** more efficiently.
- **Jan Vishwas Bill 2.0:** Decriminalizing **100+ legal provisions**, easing business operations and reducing regulatory compliance burdens.
- **SWAMIH Fund 2.0:** A ₹15,000 crore fund to complete 1 lakh more dwelling units, with contributions from the government, banks, and private investors.
- **FDI in Insurance Sector:** The FDI cap in the insurance sector will be increased from **74% to 100%** for companies that **invest the entire premium in India**.

- **Investment Friendliness Index of States:** A new ranking framework for states to promote competitive cooperative federalism.
- **Credit Enhancement Facility:** NaBFID will establish a '**Partial Credit Enhancement Facility**' to support corporate bonds for infrastructure.
- **Pension Sector:** A forum will be established for regulatory coordination and the development of pension products.
- **High-Level Committee for Regulatory Reforms:** A High-Level Committee will be formed to review all non-financial sector regulations, certifications, licenses, and permissions.

### ➤ Major Sources of Revenue and the Expenditure from the Budget:



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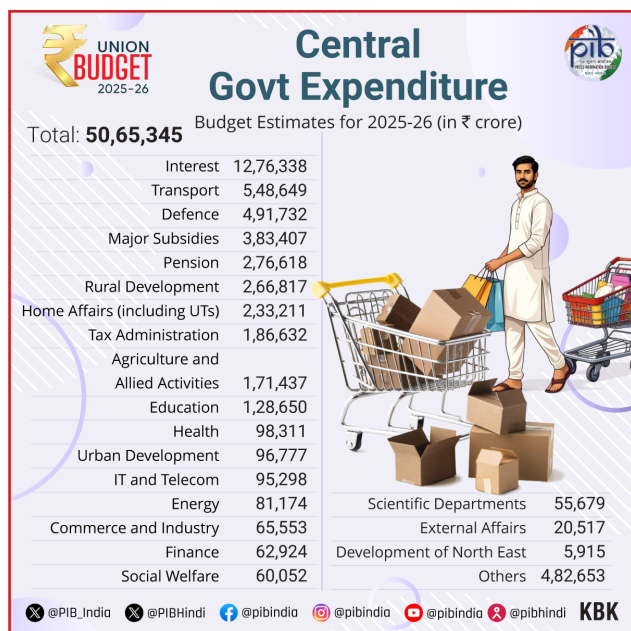


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### ➤ Major Central Govt Expenditure (Budget Estimates):



### What are Financial Trends and Budgetary Estimates (2023-24 & 2024-25)?

- **Receipts and Expenditure:** In **2023-24**, revenue receipts were ₹27.3 lakh crore, rising to ₹31.3 lakh crore (BE) for **2024-25**.
  - **Effective capital expenditure** fell from ₹17.1 lakh crore to ₹16.3 lakh crore (RE). Revenue expenditure increased from ₹34.9 lakh crore to ₹37.0 lakh crore (RE).
  - **Capital expenditure** rose from ₹12.5 lakh crore to ₹15.0 lakh crore (BE) but was later revised to ₹13.2 lakh crore.
- **Deficit Trends (as a percentage of GDP):** The **fiscal deficit** was **3.3% in 2023-24**, and the estimate for **2024-25 (RE)** remains unchanged at **3.3%**.
  - The **revenue deficit** was **0.3% in 2023-24**, which increased slightly to **0.8% in 2024-25 (RE)**.
  - The **effective revenue deficit** in **2023-24** was **0.3%**, and for **2024-25 (RE)**, it stood at **0.8%**.
- **Total Transfers to States & UTs:** In **2023-24**, the total transfers to States and Union Territories amounted to ₹20.65 lakh crore.
  - This figure was revised to ₹22.76 lakh crore in **2024-25 (RE)** and is projected to increase further to ₹25.60 lakh crore in **2025-26 (BE)**.

- **Net Receipt of the Central Government:** The net tax revenue collected by the Centre in **2024-25 (RE)** was ₹28.4 lakh crore, while non-tax revenue stood at ₹5.8 lakh crore.

- Additionally, **non-debt capital receipts**, which include disinvestment proceeds and recoveries of loans, amounted to ₹0.8 lakh crore in **2024-25 (RE)**.

**Key Numbers**

In ₹ crore	2023-24 (Actuals)	2024-25 (Budget Estimates)	2024-25 (Revised Estimates)	2025-26 (Budget Estimates)
Revenue Receipts	27,29,036	31,29,200	30,87,960	34,20,409
Capital Receipts	17,14,411	16,91,312	16,28,527	16,44,936
Total Receipts	44,43,447	48,20,512	47,16,487	50,65,345
Total Expenditure	44,43,447	48,20,512	47,16,487	50,65,345
Effective Capital Expenditure	12,53,111	15,01,889	13,18,320	15,48,282
Revenue Deficit	7,65,216	5,80,201	6,10,098	5,23,846
Effective Revenue Deficit	4,61,300	1,89,423	3,10,207	96,654
Fiscal Deficit	16,54,643	16,13,312	15,69,527	15,68,936
Primary Deficit	5,90,771	4,50,372	4,31,587	2,92,598

**KBK**

## Gender Budget 2025-26

### Why in News?

The **Gender Budget Statement (GBS) 2025-26** marks a significant step toward **gender-responsive budgeting (GRB)**, with increased allocations and wider participation from ministries.

### What are the Key Highlights of the GBS 2025-26?

- **Rise in Budget:** The Gender Budget for FY 2025-26 is Rs 4.49 lakh crore (8.86% of total **Union Budget 2025-26**), a **37.5% increase** from Rs 3.27 lakh crore in FY 2024-25.
  - **GBS 2025-26 is India's largest-ever gender budget**, boosting women's welfare, education,

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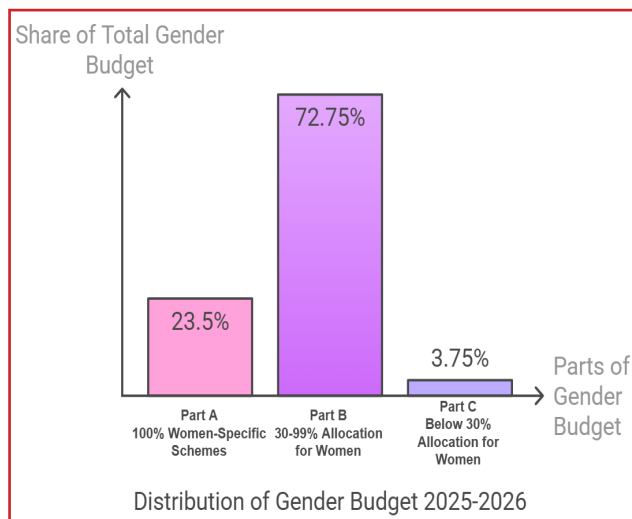
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and economic empowerment, with 49 ministries reporting gender-specific allocations.

- **Parts of GBS 2025-26:** The Gender Budget has been categorised into **three parts**.



**Note:** Gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are **socially constructed**. While **sex** is a **biological characteristic** related to chromosomes and reproductive organs.

### What is Gender Budgeting in India?

- **About:** Gender budgeting is a **strategic tool** used by governments to allocate resources efficiently based on the **distinct needs of different genders**.
  - It ensures that policies and resource allocations are gender-sensitive and address specific needs within existing frameworks.
- **Background:** India's gender equality commitment, starting with **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979** ratification in 1993, led to the first **Gender Budget Statement in 2005-06**, and it has been included annually since, reflecting ongoing focus on gender-sensitive policies.
  - Gender budgeting falls under the **Samarthya sub-scheme of Mission Shakti**.
- **Need:** Gender budgeting is not just a fiscal tool but a **moral necessity to break the cycle of gender inequality**.

- India ranks **129<sup>th</sup> out of 146 countries in the 2024 Gender Gap Report**, indicating significant room for improvement in gender equality.
- Empowered women contribute to future generations by investing in their children's education and health, creating a **positive cycle of development**.

#### Implementation:

- **Central Level:** **Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD)**.
- **State Level:** Departments of Women and Child Development, Social Welfare, Finance, and Planning are responsible for gender budgeting at the state level.
- **District Level:** The **Hub for Empowerment of Women (HEW)** coordinates gender budgeting at the district level, and each hub must have at least one gender specialist.

- **Importance:** Promotes gender equality by addressing **discrimination** and **exploitation** and supports **Sustainable Development Goal 5 (global gender equality)** efforts.

- It supports the implementation of women-specific legal frameworks like the **Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013** and the **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013**.

**Note:** The **Mission Shakti** initiative in **2021**, under the **MWCD**, is a comprehensive program to empower women in India.

- It consists of two sub-schemes: **Sambal** (focuses on women's **safety and security**) and **Samarthya** (aims at **empowering women** through various skill-building and capacity development programs).

### What Challenges Does Gender Budgeting Face in India?

- **Ambiguities in Allocation:** The unclear methodology for assigning funds to gender-sensitive schemes often results in discrepancies, such as **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)** being underreported in Part B despite its significant female workforce.

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- **Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana–Grameen (PMAY-G)**, which prioritizes women's ownership of homes, **reports only 23% of houses allotted to women**, despite being classified in **Part A of the GBS**, which **claims 100% allocation for women**.
- **Concentration of Funds:** Around 90% of the gender budget is concentrated in just a few ministries, with schemes like **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)**, MGNREGS, and PMAY-G, limiting its impact across other sectors.
- **Long-term Schemes:** The inclusion of long-term schemes like **Ayushman Bharat** and **Awas Yojana** in gender budgeting diverts funds from **immediate-impact programs such as Mission Shakti and female education**, hindering real-time women's empowerment and skill development.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Inadequate tracking mechanisms, **poor quality of gender impact assessments**, and a lack of gender-segregated data hinder the accurate assessment of needs and outcomes.
  - The **United Nations** calls for stronger **sectoral monitoring and collaboration between the MWCD and Ministry of Finance** to enhance the design and effectiveness of the Gender Budget Statement.
- **Political Will:** Gender budgeting may not always align with political priorities, resulting in insufficient support.

## Union Budget 2025-26 Measures to Boost MSMEs

### Why in News?

The **Union Budget for 2025-26** has introduced a series of significant measures to enhance the **Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector**, recognising its vital role in driving India's economic growth.

### What are the Key Budgetary Measures for MSMEs?

- **Increased Investment and Turnover Limits:** Investment limits raised by **2.5 times** and turnover limits by **2 times** to allow MSMEs to **scale operations and adopt better technology**.
- This will **enable more businesses** to qualify as MSMEs and avail government incentives.

Rs. in Crore	Investment		Turnover	
	Current	Revised	Current	Revised
Micro Enterprises	1	2.5	5	10
Small Enterprises	10	25	50	100
Medium Enterprises	50	125	250	500

- **Enhanced Credit Availability:** **Credit guarantee cover** increased from **Rs 5 crore to Rs 10 crore** for micro and small enterprises, unlocking **Rs 1.5 lakh crore** in additional credit over five years.
  - **Startups' guarantee cover** doubled from **Rs 10 crore to Rs 20 crore**, with a reduced fee of 1% for loans in **27 priority sectors**.
  - **Exporter MSMEs** eligible for **Rs 20 crore term loans** with enhanced guarantee cover, encouraging international trade.
- **MSME Credit Cards:** The 2025 budget introduces **MSME credit cards to boost growth and streamline loan access**, with experts urging reduced bureaucratic hurdles.
  - **Rs 5 lakh credit facility** will be provided for micro-enterprises registered on the **Udyam portal**, with **10 lakh cards** to be issued in the first year.
- **Support for Startups:** A new Fund of Funds with Rs 10,000 crore will be established to expand support for startups.
- **Scheme for First-time Entrepreneurs:** A new scheme aimed at empowering 5 lakh first-time entrepreneurs from women, **Scheduled Castes (SC)** and **Scheduled Tribes (ST)**.
  - This initiative will offer term loans up to **Rs 2 crore over the next five years**.
  - Drawing inspiration from the **Stand-Up India scheme**, the scheme will also include online capacity-building programs to enhance entrepreneurial and managerial skills.
- **National Manufacturing Mission (NMM):** The NMM, announced in Budget 2025-26, supports **Make in India** with a focus on **clean tech manufacturing**, including

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solar photovoltaic (PV) cells, Electric Vehicles batteries, wind turbines, and transmission equipment.

- It aims to boost domestic value addition and reduce reliance on Chinese imports.

➤ **Labour-Intensive Sector Support:**

- **Focus Product Scheme:** Supports design, component manufacturing, and non-leather footwear production, expected to create **22 lakh jobs** and generate **Rs 4 lakh crore turnover**.
- **Toy Sector:** A new Scheme for the Toy Sector will promote cluster development and skill-building, aiming to position **India as a global toy manufacturing hub**.
- **Food Processing:** Establishment of a **National Institute of Food Technology** in Bihar to boost Eastern India's food industries.

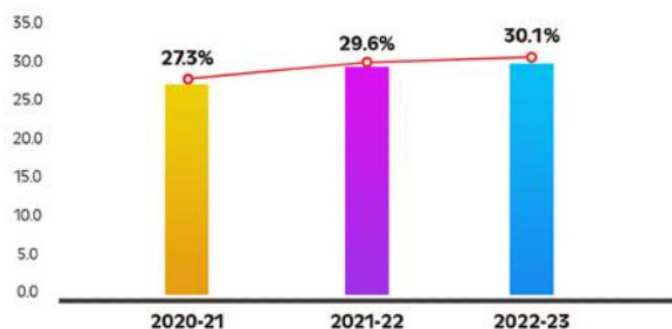
- **Cross-Border Factoring:** The government aims to scale cross-border factoring services to reach about **3% of India's merchandise exports**, aligning with the global average.
- This will help MSMEs access financing through **export factoring**, thereby improving cash flow and reducing financial strain.

- Export factoring is a financing method where exporters sell their **receivables to a third party (factor)** at a discount in exchange for immediate payment, reducing bank dependence and aiding growth.

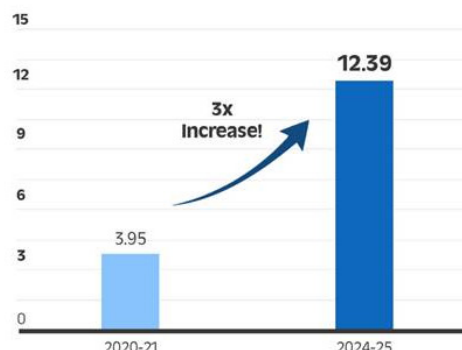
### What is the Current Landscape of MSMEs in India?

- **Employment:** MSMEs employ over **25.18 crore** individuals in India and play a pivotal role in economic growth and job creation.
- **Economic Contribution:** The share of MSMEs in India's **Gross Value Added (GVA)** has grown from **27.3% in 2020-21** to **30.1% in 2022-23**, highlighting its growing importance in national economic output.
- **Export Growth:** Exports from MSMEs increased from **Rs 3.95 lakh crore in 2020-21** to **Rs 12.39 lakh crore in 2024-25**.
  - The number of exporting MSMEs surged from **52,849 in 2020-21** to **1,73,350 in 2024-25**.
  - The contribution of MSMEs to India's overall exports has steadily risen. MSMEs accounted for **43.59% of total exports in 2022-23**, **45.73% in 2023-24**, and **45.79% in 2024-25** (up to May 2024).

**Share of MSME Gross Value Added (GVA) in India's GDP**



**Growth of MSME Exports**  
(In ₹ Lakh Crore)



### What are the Challenges Faced by MSMEs in India?

- **Labour Issues:** Labour-related issues, such as the absence of well-defined trial periods for new hires, an unskilled workforce, wage disparities across states, and inefficient training centres, hinder MSME growth and productivity.
- **Lack of Clarity:** There is a lack of awareness and confusion about various government schemes, coupled with poor coordination between the Centre and State, hindering MSMEs from fully benefiting from them.

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- **Export Issues:** MSMEs struggle with inadequate export infrastructure and face challenges due to the lack of **Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG)** reports, which negatively impacts their **competitiveness in global markets**.
- **Formalisation and Inclusion** Despite efforts like the **Udyam Registration Portal**, the formalisation of informal micro-enterprises is a significant challenge, as many do not have **Permanent Account Number (PAN)** or **Goods and Services Tax (GST)**, limiting their access to government benefits.
- **Regulatory Burden:** MSMEs are burdened with **complex licensing, inspection, and compliance requirements** imposed by various government levels, making it particularly challenging for smaller businesses to meet regulations.

#### What are the Government Initiatives for MSMEs?

- **PM Vishwakarma Scheme**
- **Udyam Assist Platform**
- **Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)**
- **Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI)**
- **Self-Reliant India (SRI) Fund**
- **MSME Samadhan**
- **CHAMPIONS Portal**
- **MSE-CDP (Cluster Development Programme)**
- **Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana**
- **Government e-Marketplace**
- **Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS)**
- **Public Procurement Policy for MSEs:** 25% of annual procurement by Central Ministries and CPSEs must be sourced from MSEs.
  - 4% reserved for SC/ST-owned MSEs, 3% for women-owned MSEs.
  - In 2023-24, Rs 74,717 crore worth of goods/services procured from MSEs, 43.71% of total procurement.

## Asian Fisheries and Aquaculture Forum

### Why in News?

The Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying inaugurated the **14<sup>th</sup> Asian Fisheries and Aquaculture Forum (AFAF)** at New Delhi.

### What is the Asian Fisheries and Aquaculture Forum (AFAF)?

- **About:**
  - **AFAF** is a **global fisheries and aquaculture conference** held every 3 years by the **Asian Fisheries Society (AFS)**.
  - **AFS**, a **non-profit scientific body**, was founded in **1984** in **Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**.
  - It brings together **scientists, researchers, and industry experts** to discuss challenges, trends, and innovations in the sector.
  - The forum encourages **international cooperation** to develop better practices for the **future of fisheries and aquaculture**.
- **Headquarters:** Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- **India as Host:** India hosted AFAF for the **2<sup>nd</sup> time** (1<sup>st</sup> : **8<sup>th</sup> AFAF** in **Kochi** in **2007**).
- **Organisers:**
  - **AFS** in collaboration with **ICAR**, the **Department of Fisheries, GoI**, and **Asian Fisheries Society Indian Branch (AFSIB)**, **Mangalore**.
- **Theme for 14<sup>th</sup> AFAF:** "Greening the Blue Growth in Asia-Pacific".

### What is the State of India's Fisheries Sector?

- **India is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest fish producer and 2<sup>nd</sup> largest aquaculture nation** in the world after China.
- India ranks **4<sup>th</sup> globally** in fish exports, contributing **7.7% to global fish production**.
- **Top fish-producing states:** Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Karnataka.
- **Inland fisheries account for over 75% of total output.**

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### ➤ Government's Initiatives:

- [Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana](#)
- [Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund \(FIDF\)](#)
- [Kisan Credit Card \(KCC\)](#)
- [Marine Products Export Development Authority](#)

## Economic Dynamics of Southern Indian States

### Why in News?

Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) V. Anantha Nageswaran emphasized that Southern Indian states should benchmark their economic performance against global standards rather than just other Indian states, highlighting the economic strength of the region and areas requiring improvement.

### What is the Economic Contribution of Southern States?

- **Economic Contribution:** Southern States account for 30% of India's GDP, with Tamil Nadu and Karnataka leading in [Gross State Domestic Product \(GSDP\)](#) growth after Maharashtra in FY 2024-25.
- **Higher Growth Rate:** The South records 6.3% annual GSDP growth in real terms, compared to 5% for the rest of India.
  - Per capita GDP is rising at over 5%, compared with the rest of India per capita GDP growth of 4.2%.
- **Manufacturing & Investment:** 37.4% of total factories and 37% of operational factories are located in South India.
  - 25.6% of India's total fixed capital investment comes from the region.
  - 33% of India's manufacturing workforce is based in South India.

### Why Do Southern States Outperform the Rest of India?

- **Historical Stability:** Southern India's relative stability, unlike the north's repeated foreign invasions, enabled consistent economic and cultural development, with

major trade centres like Vijayanagaram, Kanchipuram, Madurai, Mahabalipuram, Kochi, and Kozhikode.

- **Colonial Advantage:** By the mid-18th century, Madras and Bombay had emerged as major Presidency towns in the south, while the north had only one—Calcutta.
  - Portuguese and French influences in the south further boosted early trade and urban development.
- **Economic Growth:** Southern states outpaced northern states in economic growth post [LPG reforms](#), attracting more industrial investment and [FDI](#).
  - Karnataka and Tamil Nadu became hubs for automobile, textile, and Information technology (IT) industries, while Telangana emerged as a [biotech](#) and [pharmaceutical center](#) (contributes to 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the global vaccine output).
  - Despite development in Maharashtra, Gujarat, and National Capital Region, uneven growth persists in other regions, with northern states lacking major urban centers, unlike southern states.
  - while the Northeast faces significant challenges, including border identification delays, congested roads, and limited connectivity, hindering its trade and development.
- **Agricultural Productivity:** Tamil Nadu and Karnataka adopted modern farming techniques and diversified into [cash crops](#), [horticulture](#), and [aquaculture](#).
  - Northern states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar relied heavily on traditional crops like wheat and rice, leading to stagnation in productivity.
- **Governance:** Telangana and Karnataka introduced IT & e-governance reforms that boosted their economies.
  - However, cities like Mumbai, Pune, Ahmedabad, Noida, and Gurugram gained economic growth much later than southern cities due to delayed reforms in land, labor, and industry.
- **Social Development:** At independence, southern states were underdeveloped. Controlled population growth later enabled better resource allocation for development.
  - Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka have much [higher literacy rates](#). Better schooling infrastructure and focus on education in the South led to a comparatively more skilled workforce than the rest of India.

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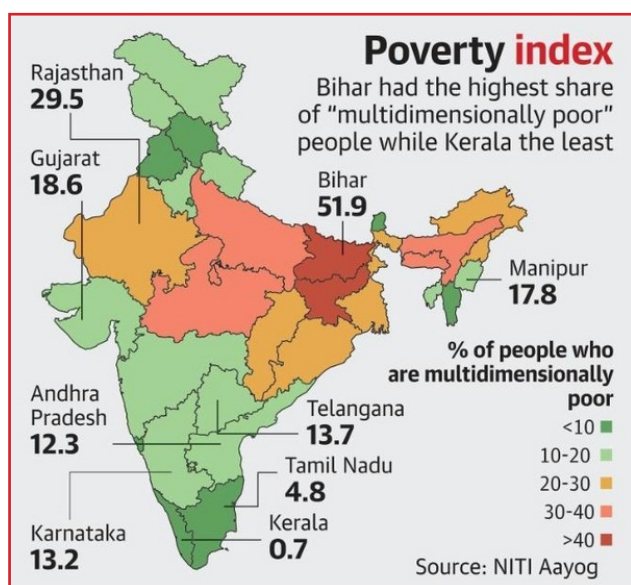


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Note:

- Tamil Nadu pioneered the **midday meal program**, boosting school enrollments, while Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have focused on expanding **English-medium education**.
- Kerala, with the highest literacy rate in India (96.2%), has developed a highly skilled workforce.
- Poor performance in northern states is due to insufficient investment in **education, and infrastructure**, driven by **political neglect**.
- **Health and Social Indicators:** Southern states excel in healthcare, with Kerala having the best infrastructure and low **infant mortality** (6 per 1,000 births) compared to Madhya Pradesh (46).
- The **Maternal Mortality Ratio** in Southern India is lower than the national average (103 in 2020).



- **Natural Factors:** Proximity to ports boosts **trade, exports, and industrial growth** (Chennai, Kochi, Visakhapatnam).
- Moderate climate supports **agriculture, tourism, and living conditions** better than extreme weather in the north.

### What are the Concerns Regarding the Southern States' Economic Growth?

- **Productivity Gap in Manufacturing:** The southern region contributes **only 26% to the total manufacturing**

**output**. Indicates **lower productivity and efficiency** in manufacturing despite a strong workforce.

- **Skill Development Deficiencies:** The region has a **strong Skill Level 2 workforce** (intermediate skills) but **lags in Skill Levels 3 and 4** (advanced professional skills in AI, engineering, and high-tech sectors).
- **Inadequate investment in higher education and research** limits innovation and job creation in high-value industries.
- **Declining demography** (youth) in southern states, worsened by **emigration for better opportunities**, risks **labour shortages**, highlighting the need for an **inclusive migrant policy** to sustain growth.
- **Infrastructure:** **Urban congestion** and **energy challenges** persist. There is a need for **better industrial corridors, logistics networks, and digital infrastructure** to attract more global investments.
- **Regional Disparities:** States like **Tamil Nadu and Karnataka** lead in economic growth, while others like **Andhra Pradesh and Telangana** face **slower industrialization**.
- **Rural areas still lag behind urban centers** in terms of economic opportunities and infrastructure.
- **Climate Change:** Southern India is highly vulnerable to **climate change**, with frequent **droughts, cyclones, and extreme weather events**. **Agriculture and coastal economies** are particularly at risk.
- **Policy Issues:** Many states rely heavily on **financial transfers from the central government**, reducing their fiscal autonomy and rising **state debt ratios** are burdening the states.

## Edible Oil Imports and SAFTA Agreement

### Why in News?

The **Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA)** has raised concerns over the massive influx of **refined Edible Oil** (soybean and palm) from Nepal to India, citing a misuse of the **South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) agreement's** duty-free import provisions.

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**Note:** Established in 1963, SEA represents India's **solvent extraction industry**, including processors, exporters, refiners, and traders. It operates independently as a private body.

- Solvent extraction is a method to separate compounds based on their relative solubilities in two different immiscible liquids.

## What is the Edible Oil Scenario in India's Economy?

- **Edible Oil and Oil Seeds:** India, one of the largest **oilseed producers**, contributes 5-6% to global production, with an estimated 39.66 million tonnes in 2023-24.
  - Major oilseeds include **Groundnut, Soybean, Sunflower, Mustard, Sesame, Niger, and Safflower**.
  - India's **vegetable oil economy** is the world's fourth largest after the USA, China and Brazil.
  - The edible oil industry contributes significantly to **agriculture and trade**, with **oilseed and oil meal exports** valued at **Rs 29,587 crore** in 2023-24.
    - In 2022-23, India imported **16.5 million tonnes (MT)** of edible oils, with domestic production fulfilling only 40-45% of the country's requirements, relying on imports for 57% of consumption.
- **Major Edible Oils in India:**
  - **Traditional oils:** Groundnut, mustard/rapeseed, sesame, safflower, linseed, niger seed, castor, Soybean, and sunflower.
  - **Plantation-based oils:** Coconut, oil palm (grown in **Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andaman and Nicobar**).
  - **Non-conventional oils:** Rice bran oil, cottonseed oil.
  - **Forest-based oils:** Collected from tree and forest sources, mainly in **tribal regions**.
- **Government Initiatives:** The country aims to **reduce import dependency** through initiatives like the **National Mission on Oilseeds and Oil Palm (NMOOP)**, aiming to boost oilseed production from **39 to 69.7 million tonnes by 2030-31**, meeting **72% of edible oil demand**.
- **Concerns:** SEA is concerned about rising refined edible oil imports from Nepal, after **India raised import duties on edible oils in 2024**, Nepalese refiners

started importing large amounts of crude oil and exporting refined oil to India at lower prices through SAFTA impacting Indian refiners and oilseed farmers.

- **SEA Recommendations:** India should restrict duty-free edible oil imports from SAFTA nations that **don't produce oilseeds** and amend **SAFTA to prevent agro-commodity dumping**.
- Introduce a **Minimum Import Price (MIP)** (protects farmers from predatory import pricing) based on the **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** of oilseeds.

### South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA)

- **About:** SAFTA is the **free trade arrangement** of the **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)**.
  - Came into force in 2006, succeeding the **1993 SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement**.
- **Members:** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.
- **SAFTA Provisions:** SAFTA's **trade liberalization** policy ensures a **gradual reduction of tariffs to 0-5%** on traded goods.
  - LDCs (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal) receive **special treatment**, such as a **longer implementation period** for tariff reductions, **greater exemptions** from trade restrictions.
  - Safeguard Measures allow **temporary suspension to protect domestic industries**.

## SOUTH ASIAN FREE TRADE AREA (SAFTA)



## CSS and Fiscal Federalism

### Why in News?

The Centre cut the **2025-26 centrally sponsored schemes (CSS)** outlay to states by **Rs 91,000 crore (18% of the budget estimate for the schemes)** after finding **Rs 1.6 lakh crore in unspent funds** from past transfers.

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- Many states have termed this decision as **contrary to fiscal federalism** and raised questions on the **viability of Article 282**.

### What is Article 282?

- **About Article 282:** It allows both the **Union and States** to make grants for **any public purpose**, even if the purpose is **outside their legislative jurisdiction**.
  - Unlike **tax devolution (Articles 270 & 275)**, grants under **Article 282** are **discretionary** and **not bound** by **Finance Commission (FC)** recommendations.
  - Initially intended for **unanticipated contingencies**, successive central governments have used it to introduce **CSSs**.
    - **Articles 270 and 275** mandate that the FC determines the States' share in Union tax revenues.
- **Judicial Stand:** In the **Bhim Singh Case, 2010**, the **Supreme Court (SC)** upheld the **Union's power** to provide **discretionary grants** under **Article 282**, even beyond **FC recommendations (Article 275)**.
  - Grants can be made **even for subjects beyond Parliament's legislative competence**, provided they serve a **public purpose**.
  - Citing **Ram Jawaya Kapur Case, 1955**, the SC ruled that **Appropriation Acts**, authorizing expenditure from the **Consolidated Fund of India (CFI)**, legally justify grants under **Article 282**.

### How CSS Pose Challenge to Fiscal Federalism?

- **Discretionary CSS Funding:** Grants under **Article 282** the Union or a State can grant funds for any **public purpose**, even if it lacks legislative authority over it.
  - The **NITI Aayog 2015** (like earlier **Planning Commission** which guided grants though they lacked constitutional status), continues to influence CSS design.
- **Erosion of States' Fiscal Autonomy:** CSSs have **strict fund utilization conditions**, limiting states' flexibility to adapt them to local needs.
  - E.g., under the **Poshan Abhiyaan**, States cannot modify target groups or key nutrition indicators.

- **Resource-Expenditure Asymmetry:** The **15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission (2021-26)** highlighted the Union holds **63% of resources but spends 38%**, while states get **37% but bear 62% of expenditure**.
  - It makes states **reliant on CSS funds** and limit state-specific initiatives.
- **Prioritization Issues:** CSS funds require states to provide **matching grants**, **diverting their resources** from state-priority sectors.
- **Threat to Cooperative Federalism:** During Constitutional debates, **Dr. BR Ambedkar** emphasized a **co-equal partnership** between the Union and states but over-reliance on discretionary CSS grants undermines the constitutional intent of **cooperative federalism**.
  - E.g., CSS guidelines mandate **"branding"** to highlight **central leadership**, reinforcing central control.
- **Pushing Union' Policies:** CSSs have increasingly been used as **political instruments** to control states.
  - E.g., the Ministry of Finance's **2022 guidelines** included a **Rs 50,000 crore interest-free loan** for states willing to disinvest public sector enterprises, a move opposed by several states.
- **Proliferation of CSS Funding:** CSS fund releases rose from **7.5% of total transfers in 2014-15 to 47% in 2022-23**, reducing FC recommended transfers.
  - As opposed to the **Seventh Schedule of the Constitution**, many CSSs operate in areas under the **State List**, leading to Central encroachment into State jurisdictions.

### What is CSS?

- **About:** CSSs are **jointly funded** by the Centre and states, **implemented by states**, and cover sectors under the **State and Concurrent Lists** of the Constitution.
  - They **supplement the efforts of State Governments**, as the **Central Government has greater financial resources**.
  - All transfers to States for CSSs are being routed through the **Consolidated Fund of the State**.
- **Types:** CSS is divided into **three main categories**:
  - **Core of the Core Schemes:** These schemes are the **most crucial** for social inclusion and protection. E.g., **MGNREGA**.

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- **Core Schemes:** These schemes focus on various developmental sectors such as agriculture, infrastructure, education, health, and rural development.
  - E.g., Mid-Day Meal Scheme (School Nutrition Programme), Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (Rural Roads) etc.
- **Optional Schemes:** States are free to choose the ones they wish to implement.
  - Eg: Border Area Development Programme etc.
- **Funding Pattern:** The Centre allocates about 12% of its budget to CSS, with funding shared in varying Centre-State ratios:
  - 60:40 (Majority of Schemes)
  - 80:20 (Some Schemes)
  - 90:10 (For North-Eastern & Special Category States)

#### Difference Between CSS and Central Sector Schemes:

Feature	Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS)	Central Sector Schemes
Implementation	By State Governments	By Central Government
Funding Source	Shared funding (Centre & State)	Fully funded by Centre
Examples	MGNREGA, PMAY, Swachh Bharat Mission	National Rural Health Mission, PM-KISAN

## Repo Rate Cut and its Implications

### Why in News?

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of Reserve Bank of India cut the **repo rate to 6.25% from 6.5%** (25 basis points (bps)) for the **first time in 5 years** (since 2020).

- After the **Union Budget 2025-26** reduced **personal income tax** to spur consumption, this step aims to **revive economic growth** amid a slowdown.

### What Factors Led to RBI's Decision to Cut the Repo Rate?

- **Growth-Stimulating Budget:** The Union Budget 2025-26 introduced a **personal income tax** cut and revised **TDS limits**, increasing disposable income.
  - The RBI's repo rate cut **supports the government's tax reductions** by lowering borrowing costs and sustaining demand.
- **Declining Inflation:** Consumer Price Index (CPI) eased to **5.22% in December 2024**, a **four-month low**, down from **5.48% in November** that provides room for **monetary easing**.
- **Market Liquidity Enhancement:** The RBI recently introduced measures to improve **liquidity** in the banking system by injecting **Rs 1.5 trillion**.
  - Liquidity injection **eased tight credit markets**, while the repo rate cut ensured **liquidity and lower rates** to boost growth.
- **Global Economic Uncertainty:** The recent US tariffs on Canada, Mexico, and China sparked trade war fears, **weakening the rupee to 87.29 per dollar** and raising inflation risks.
  - A **repo rate cut** could help **cushion the impact of external shocks** and support domestic growth.

### What is Repo Rate?

- **About:** Repo rate (Repurchase Agreement Rate) is the **interest rate** at which commercial banks **borrow money** from the central bank.
- **Purpose & Functioning:** It helps banks **meet short-term liquidity needs** by borrowing funds.
  - Banks provide **securities as collateral** and agree to repurchase them later at a higher price (including interest).
- **Impact on Borrowing Costs:**
  - **Higher repo rate** → Costlier loans for banks → **Higher interest rates for consumers & businesses** → Slower borrowing & spending.
  - **Lower repo rate** → Cheaper loans for banks → **Lower interest rates for borrowers** → Increased borrowing & spending.
- **Role in Monetary Policy:** It is used by the central bank to **control money supply, inflation, and economic growth**.

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## What are the Implications of the Repo Rate Cut?

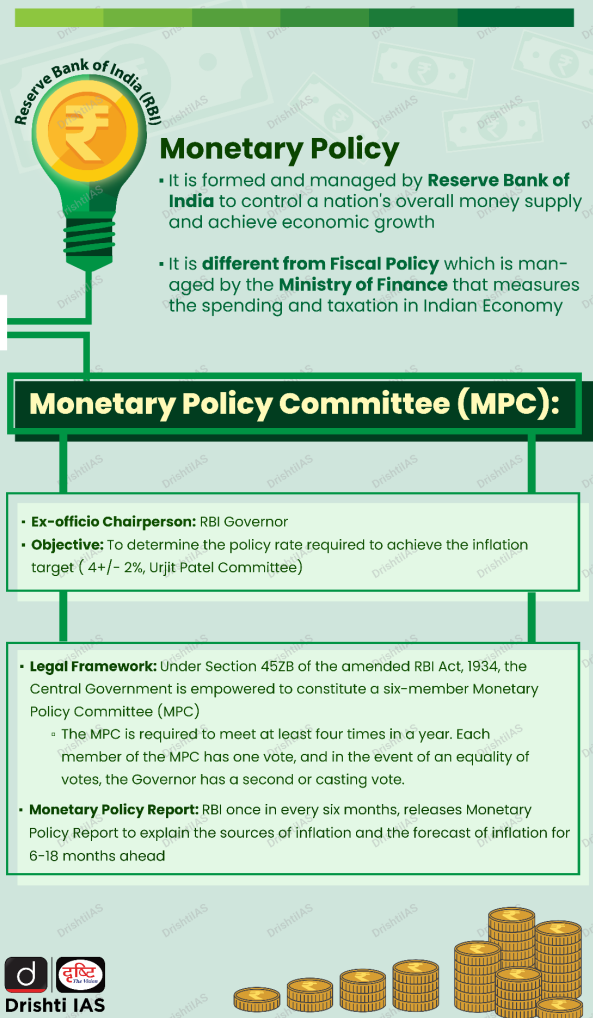
- **Economic Growth:** Lower borrowing costs make it easier for **businesses to expand and invest**, leading to **higher production and job creation**.
  - A repo rate cut reduces interest rates, making **loans cheaper**, **lowering EMIs**, and boosting borrowing and spending.
- **Strengthening Financial Markets:** Banks may **reduce interest rates on savings accounts and fixed deposits**, making savings **less attractive** that may drive consumers toward **stocks, mutual funds, or real estate**.
- **Export Competitiveness:** A lower repo rate may cut investment returns, leading to **capital outflows**. This may **weaken the currency**, raising import costs but enhancing export competitiveness.
- **Inflation:** **Increased spending** due to rate cuts may push up prices and inflation over time, breaching the **RBI inflation target (4% within a band of +/- 2%)**

### Background of the 4% Inflation Target

- **Chakravarty Committee (1982-85):** It was set up by the then **RBI Governor Manmohan Singh** under **Sukhamoy Chakravarty** to review monetary policy. Its recommendations included:
  - Emphasized **price stability** as a core objective of monetary policy.
  - Proposed **4% average annual inflation in the Wholesale Price Index (WPI)** to balance economic priorities.
  - Recommended **market-driven government borrowing** and an **active government securities market** to reduce reliance on RBI funding.
  - Advocated **monetary targeting (M3 money supply control)** to manage inflation.
    - M3 = M1 (Currency held by the public + Demand Deposits held by commercial banks) + Net time deposits of commercial banks
- **Urjit Patel Committee (2014):** It **formalized** inflation targeting, setting the **4% target (±2% band)**, a target first proposed by the **Chakravarty Committee 40 years ago**.

- India's inflation targeting framework, **adopted in 2016**, aligns India's monetary policy with global best practices.

## Monetary Policy Committee



Click Here to Read: [What is the Consumer Price Index?](#)

## Agricultural Initiatives and their Implementation

### Why in News?

The **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare** has **initiated and is implementing** a number of initiatives for **promotion of agriculture**.

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## What are the Various Initiatives for Promotion of Agriculture?

- **KCC Scheme:** The Kisan Credit Card (KCC) scheme was expanded in 2019 to include animal husbandry, dairying, and fisheries.
  - As of March 2024, India has **7.75 crore operational KCC accounts** with a loan outstanding of **Rs 9.81 lakh crore**.
  - KCC provides farmers with **easy access to credit** for their agricultural needs.
- **Crop Insurance Schemes:** The number of farmer applications under PMFBY and RWBCIS has grown by **35.12% and 27.50%** year-on-year during **2022-23 and 2023-24**.
  - PMFBY covers risks from **pre-sowing to post-harvest losses**, while RWBCIS addresses **weather-related risks**.
- **Agricultural Mechanization:** Under the Sub Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM), **Farm Machinery Training & Testing Institutes (FMTTIs)** provide **skill training** on equipment selection, operation, maintenance, and energy management.
- **Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY):** RKVY allows states to **choose their own agriculture and allied sector development activities** as per the district/state agriculture plan.
  - RKVY is an **umbrella scheme** that supports the holistic development of agriculture and allied sectors.
- **National Research Centre for Makhana (NRCM):** It has developed machines for **Makhana processing**, such as **seed washers, graders, and roasting machines**.
  - It has supported **24 enterprises**, including Mithila Naturals, to boost Makhana industries and the agricultural economy.
- **Project VISTAAR:** Project VISTAAR (**Virtually Integrated System To Access Agricultural Resources**) aims to create a **unified digital agriculture ecosystem**, enhancing **scalability, accessibility, inclusivity**, and enabling two-way communication with farmers.
  - It supports Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for agricultural extension, and integrates **AI chatbots and Agristack** for real-time farmer support and feedback.
- **Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY):** PKVY has covered **14.99 lakh hectares** through clusters, benefiting **over 25 lakh farmers** since 2015-16.
- **Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs):** As December 2024, **9268 FPOs** have been registered under the Formation and Promotion of 10,000 FPOs scheme for sourcing inputs, accessing credit, and marketing for farmers.
- **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana (PMKMY):** As of November 2024, **24.66 lakh farmers** are enrolled under PMKMY, providing a minimum pension of **Rs 3,000 per month** after reaching **60 years of age**.
- **Per Drop More Crop (PDMC):** The Government provides financial assistance of **55%** to the **small and marginal farmers** and of **45%** to other farmers of the project cost for installation of **drip and sprinkler systems** under the PDMC.
- **Gramin Krishi Mausam Sewa (GKMS):** **130 Agromet Field Units (AMFUs)** disseminate weather and crop-related information through multiple channels, including **SMS, radio, and social media**.
  - Meghdoot and Mausam mobile apps also help farmers get weather information.
- **Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF):** AIF aims to enhance **post-harvest infrastructure**, reduce losses and intermediaries, and enable farmers to **sell directly** to consumers at better prices.
  - **Interest rate** for loans capped at **9%**, with a **3% subvention for loans** up to Rs 2 crore.
- **Skill Development Initiatives:**
  - **Skill Training of Rural Youth (STRY):** Offers **7-day short-term** skill training in agriculture and allied sectors for self-employment.
  - **Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK):** Provides training in agriculture, horticulture, livestock, and allied sectors to strengthen **rural skills**.
  - **Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA):** Delivers decentralized extension services to update farmers on **new technologies and practices**.
  - **Student READY Programme:** Focuses on skill development and hands-on learning through **training, rural awareness, internships, and projects**.

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## What Plagues Indian Agriculture Despite Several Initiatives?

- **Fragmented Land:** The average farm size decreased from 2.3 hectares in 1970-71 to **1.08 hectares in 2015-16**.
  - **86.1%** of farmers have **less than 2 hectares** that limits productivity, mechanization, and access to credit.
- **Innovation Gap:** Low adoption of modern technology like **precision farming, drones, and AI** contributes to lower yields.
- **Post-Harvest Losses:** **Postharvest losses** in India are estimated at **10-25%**, with only **11%** of produce stored in **cold storage**, causing distress sales and lower income.
- **Diversification Dilemma:** Indian agriculture is mainly focused on **rice and wheat**, with just **17%** of land used for **horticultural crops**, despite **millet** promotion efforts.
- **Irrigation Challenges:** Over-reliance on monsoons and inefficient irrigation hinder productivity, with **52% of land irrigated by 2022-23**.
  - Climate change may **cut agricultural incomes by 15-18%**, with heat waves damaging crops.

## State of India's Digital Economy (SIDE) Report 2024

### Why in News?

The **State of India's Digital Economy (SIDE) Report 2024**, published by the **Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER)** and based on a study by the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**, provides a comprehensive analysis of India's digital economy.

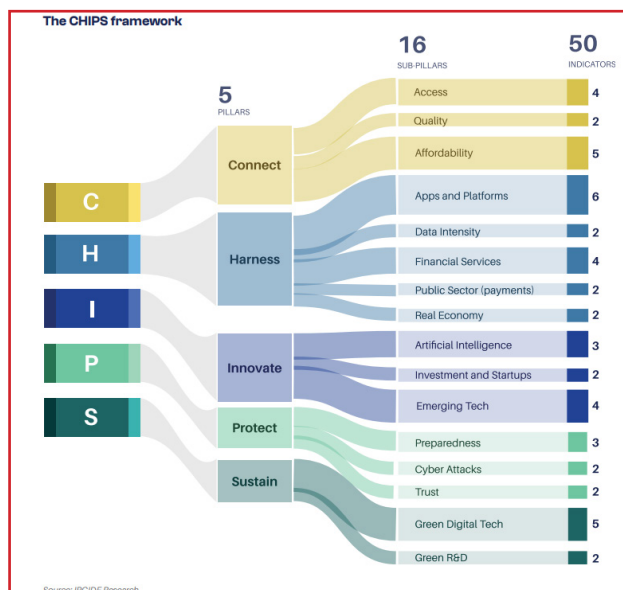
### What are the Key Highlights of State of India's Digital Economy Report 2024?

- **India's Digital Economy Standing:** India is the **3<sup>rd</sup> largest digitalized** (behind the **US and China**) economy in the world in terms of **economy-wide digitalisation**.
  - It **ranks 12<sup>th</sup>** among **G20** nations in terms of **digitalisation of individual users**, indicating **lower average user digitalisation**.

- **Contribution of Digital Economy:** In 2022-23, the digital economy contributed **11.74% to GDP**, with projections to **rise to 13.42% by 2024-25**.
  - It **employs 2.55%** of the workforce with **productivity 5 times higher than the overall economy**.
- **Future Projection:** By **2029-30**, the digital economy is expected to contribute **one-fifth (20%) of GDP**, surpassing agriculture and manufacturing.
- **Sectoral Breakdown:** The traditional **ICT sector** is the largest contributor to the digital economy, while new digital industries, including **Big Tech and platforms**, account for nearly **2% of GVA**.
- **State-Level Disparities:** **Richer states** like Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana, Gujarat, and Haryana exhibit higher **digitalisation levels compared to poorer states**.

### CHIPS (Connect-Harness-Innovate-Protect-Sustain):

- The **CHIPS (Connect-Harness-Innovate-Protect-Sustain)** framework, introduced in the **SIDE 2024**, offers a **comprehensive approach to measuring digitalization**, focusing on **outcomes and risks**.
- Unlike traditional indices that emphasize internet access, the CHIPS framework includes **5 pillars (Connect, Harness, Innovate, Protect, Sustain)** and **50 indicators**, enabling comparisons at both **national and sub-national levels**.



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## What are the Key Drivers of Digital Economy Growth in India?

- **Expanding Digital Infrastructure:** India's digital infrastructure is bridging urban-rural divides and fueling a vibrant digital economy.
  - Initiatives like **BharatNet** are providing **high-speed internet to rural areas**, while the **5G rollout** is enhancing **digital adoption, e-governance, e-commerce**, fintech and IT services especially in underserved regions.
  - Programs like **Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)** are enabling **small businesses to enter the digital marketplace**.
- **Rising Smartphone Penetration:** Affordable smartphones and low-cost data have positioned India as a mobile-first economy, enhancing access to **online education, digital payments, and entertainment**.
  - Domestic manufacturing incentives are supporting India's Atma Nirbhar Bharat initiative.
- **Global Capability Centers (GCCs):** India hosts **55% of the world's GCCs**, which provide essential services like **IT support, R&D, and business process management**.
- **Start-Up Ecosystem and Innovation:** India's startup ecosystem is a major driver of digital innovation. Initiatives like **Start-Up India** and strong funding have helped tech startups address unique market needs.
  - In 2024, Indian startups raised **USD 30.4 billion** in funding, despite global economic challenges.
- **Digital Financial Inclusion:** Programs such as **UPI** and **Jan Dhan accounts** are transforming **financial inclusion** in India, especially in rural areas.
  - UPI processed Rs 23.49 lakh crores across 16.58 billion transactions in October 2024.

## India's Digital Advancements

### Mobile Subscriptions

India ranks second globally with 1.14 billion mobile subscriptions.

### Internet Traffic

India has an average monthly data traffic of 16.9 GB, ranking third worldwide after Saudi Arabia and Russia.

### 5G Deployment

By the end of 2023, 10% of India's population had subscribed to 5G services, making India the second-largest market for 5G smartphones in early 2024, after China.

### Digital Identity

Over 1.3 billion biometric IDs have been issued in India, enhancing digital identity.

### Digital Payments

India recorded over 1,644 billion digital transactions in FY 2023-24, the highest globally.

### ICT Service Exports

India's ICT services exports reached USD 162 billion in 2023, second highest globally after Ireland's USD 236 billion.

### AI Projects

India contributes 23% of global AI projects on GitHub, leading in AI development.

### Unicorns

India has the third-largest (after US and China) number of homegrown unicorns, showcasing entrepreneurial growth.

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## Agriculture

### Development in India

#### Why in News?

Emphasizing '**Agriculture** as the first engine' for India's development journey, the **Union Budget 2025-26** announced a **slew of measures** to spur **agricultural growth and productivity**.

- The **Economic Survey 2024-25** found that the agriculture sector has shown **robust growth**, averaging **5% annually** from **2016-17 to 2022-23**.
- However, the announced **National Mission on High-Yielding Seeds** raised concerns over **monocultures** and loss of **crop diversity**.

#### What Agricultural Initiatives were Announced in the Union Budget 2025-26?

- **National Mission on High Yielding Seeds:** It aims to improve **agricultural productivity** by developing **high-yielding seeds** that are more **resilient to pests and climate stress**.
  - **Focus Areas:**
    - Developing new **seed varieties** with better productivity and resistance.
    - Creating seeds **resilient to pests and climate stress**.
    - Ensuring easy **access** to high-yielding seeds for **farmers**.
  - **Seed Varieties:** It targets to increase the availability of over **100 new seed varieties**, including **23 cereals, 11 pulses, 7 oilseeds, among others**.
- **Makhana Board in Bihar:** A **Makhana Board** will be established to boost **production, processing, and marketing**, and support farmers through **FPOs** and government schemes.
- **Food Processing:** The union government will establish a **National Institute of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management** in Bihar to promote **food processing** activities in Eastern India.
- **Gene Bank:** The second **Gene bank** (1<sup>st</sup> in 1996) with **10 lakh germplasm lines** would be set up for future **food and nutritional security**.
  - A **gene bank** is a facility where **genetic material** from plants, animals, or microorganisms is **stored and preserved** for future use.
- **Mission for Cotton Productivity:** It is a **5-year mission** for improvements in productivity and sustainability of cotton farming, and promotes **extra-long staple cotton varieties**.
  - It aligns with the **5F principle** of the Ministry of Textiles i.e., **Farm to Fibre, Fibre to Factory, Factory to Fashion, Fashion to Foreign**.
- **Sustainable Fisheries:** The government will create a **sustainable fisheries framework** for the **EEZ and High Seas**, focusing on **Andaman & Nicobar** and **Lakshadweep Islands**.
  - India ranks **2<sup>nd</sup>-largest** globally in **fish production and aquaculture**.
- **Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana:** It aims to enhance agricultural productivity in **100 low-productivity districts**, focusing on **crop diversification, sustainable practices, improved storage, irrigation, and credit availability**, benefiting **1.7 crore farmers**.
- **Mission for Self-reliance in Pulses:** A 6-year mission will be launched to achieve self-sufficiency in **pulse production**, focusing on crops like **Tur, Urad, and Masur**.
- **Rural Prosperity and Resilience Programme:** It is a multi-sectoral initiative to address **under-employment** in agriculture through **skilling, investment, technology, and rural empowerment**.
  - It prioritizes **rural women, young farmers, and small farmers**, aiming for job creation, financial independence for women, and agricultural modernization.
- **Grameen Credit Score:** Public Sector Banks will develop the '**Grameen Credit Score**' framework to serve the credit needs of **SHG members** and people in rural areas.
- **Kisan Credit Cards (KCC):** Loan limit under the **Modified Interest Subvention Scheme** increased from **Rs 3 lakh to Rs 5 lakh** for KCC holders supporting around **7.7 crore farmers, fishermen, and dairy farmers**.

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### Makhana

- Known as **fox nut**, Makhana is the **dried seed of the prickly water lily (*Euryale ferox*)**.
- **Bihar** contributes to **90%** of India's **makhana production**. It is recognized as a **nutrient-dense, low-fat healthy snack**
- In 2022, '**Mithila Makhana**' received a **GI tag**.
- The global makhana market was valued at **USD 43.56 million** in 2023.

### High-Yielding Seeds

- **About:** High-yielding seeds are designed to **increase crop output per unit of land** using selective breeding, genetic modification, or advanced techniques.
- **Benefits:** They produce **more output** with **faster growth**, better **disease resistance**, and **require fewer resources**.
- **Examples:** Hybrid Rice (PRH 10 and Pusa Basmati 1121), Hybrid Wheat (HD 3086 and PBW 725), **Bt Cotton**, etc.
- **Concerns:** It risks promoting **monocultures**, **reducing biodiversity**, threatening indigenous seeds, and increasing **dependence on corporate seed companies**.

### What are Agriculture Related Findings of Economic Survey 2024-25?

- **Agricultural Growth:** Agriculture sector grew at **5% annually (2016-23)**, with **GVA** share rising from 24.38% (2014-15) to **30.23% (2022-23)**.
  - **Agricultural income** has grown at **5.23% annually** over the past decade.
- **Sectoral Performance:** The **fisheries** sector had the highest growth rate (**13.67%**), followed by **livestock (12.99%)** between 2013-14 and 2022-23, while **oilseeds** grew slowly at **1.9%**.
- **Irrigation:** Irrigation coverage increased from **49.3% (2015-16)** to **55% (2020-21)** of **Gross Cropped Area (GCA)**, while irrigation intensity rose from **144.2%** to **154.5%**.
  - **Punjab (98%), Haryana (94%), Uttar Pradesh (84%), and Telangana (86%)** have high irrigation coverage, while **Jharkhand and Assam** have below 20%.

- GCA is the **total land cultivated** in an agricultural year, including **multiple cropping cycles on the same land**.

## Infrastructure Development in India

### Why in News?

India has made remarkable progress in **infrastructure development** over the past decade that is the **backbone of economic development**.

- The total infrastructure investment (capital expenditure) in India has **increased to Rs 11.2 lakh crore in 2025-26** from **Rs 10 lakh crore in 2023-24**.

### What Infrastructure Initiatives were Announced in Budget 2025-26?

- **Infrastructure Financing:** Rs 10 lakh crore worth of assets would be **monetised** in the **next 5 years (2025-30)** under the **National Monetisation Plan**.
  - **Urban Challenge Fund** of Rs 1 lakh crore will be set up to implement the proposals for '**cities as growth hubs**', '**creative redevelopment of cities**' and '**water and sanitation**'.
  - Government to provide certainty in taxation of **Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs)** in infrastructure.
  - States to propose projects funded by India **Infrastructure Project Development Fund (IIPDF)** loans.
- **Railways:** India aims to become the **2<sup>nd</sup>-largest cargo-carrying railway in the world** after China and producing **indigenous high-speed 'bullet' trains**.
  - Indian Railways will complete **100% electrification** of its network in FY 2025-26.
- **Shipbuilding:** A **Rs 25,000 crore fund** will be established to support the **maritime industry**, promoting competition and long-term financing.
  - **Large ships** will be given **infrastructure status** reducing financial costs by up to 10 percentage points.

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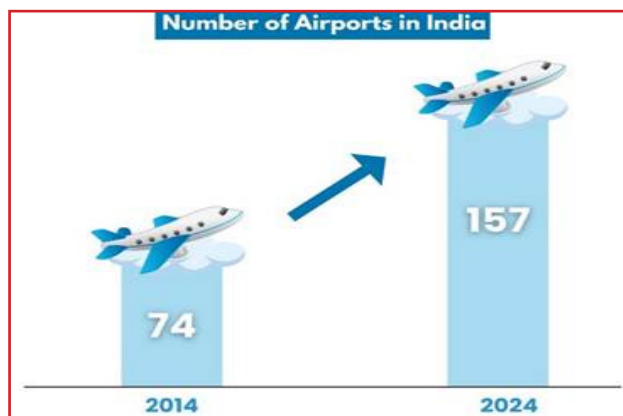
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- infrastructure status enables **better financing, tax benefits, government support, and fewer regulatory hurdles.**
- **Credit notes** will be introduced for **shipbreaking** in Indian yards to promote a circular economy.
  - **Credit notes** are commonly used when a **buyer returns goods.** It can help shipbreaking companies to **return or recycle materials**, such as **steel, copper, and aluminum** obtained from **dismantled ships.**
- **Aviation Sector:** UDAN scheme has been **extended for another 10 years** and a **revamped UDAN** scheme will connect **120 new destinations**, serving **40 million more passengers.**
  - New **greenfield airports** in Bihar will complement **Patna and Bihta (in Patna) airport** expansions in Bihar.
- **Housing:** **SWAMIH Fund 2** of Rs 15,000 crore will be set up to speed up completion of **1 lakh incomplete housing units** with contributions from the **government, banks, and private investors.**
- **Local Economy:** **PM SVANidhi** will be revamped to provide enhanced loans from banks and **UPI-linked credit cards** with a **Rs 30,000 limit.**

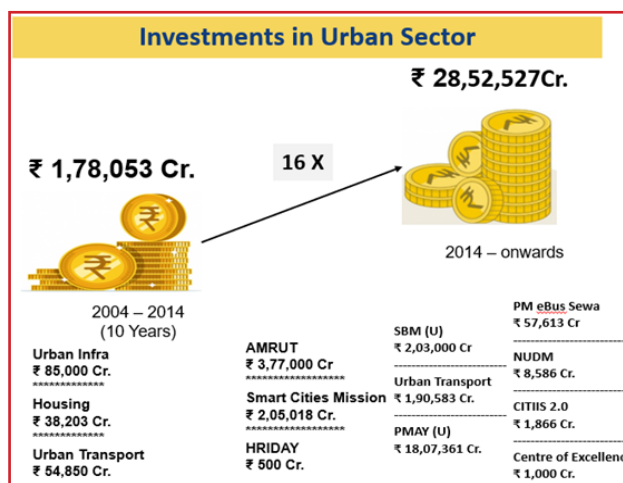
### What is the Status of Infrastructure Development in India?

- **Highways and Roads:** India has the **2<sup>nd</sup>-largest road network** globally (after the United States), with **National Highways (NH)** standing at **1,46,145 km** in 2024.
  - The length of **operational high-speed corridors** has increased to **2,138 km (2024)**, NH construction pace has **risen 2.8 times** (12.1 km/day in 2014-15 to 33.8 km/day in 2023-24), and capital expenditure **increased 5.7 times** (2013-24).
- **Railways:** As of December 2023, **93.83%** of the broad-gauge tracks (called large line and distance between the two tracks is **5 feet 6 inches**) were **electrified**, up from **21,801 km** in 2014.
  - The provision of **Bio-toilets** in coaches stands at **80,478 coaches** in the year 2014-2023.
- **Civil Aviation:** India is the **3<sup>rd</sup>-largest domestic aviation market** globally with operational airports increased from 74 (2014) to 157 (2024).

- Under the **Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) – UDAN**, **147 lakh passengers** benefited as of December, 2024.



- **Shipping and Ports:** India has **12 major ports and 217 minor/intermediate ports.**
  - **Cargo handling** capacity rose from 800.5 MT (2014) to **1,630 MT (2024)** (+87%), boosting India's shipping rank to **22<sup>nd</sup>** in **International Shipment category** as against **44<sup>th</sup>** rank in 2014.
- **Urban Affairs and Housing:** Under the **Smart Cities Mission (SCM)**, around 91% projects have been completed.
  - Under **Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0**, urban waste collection has **increased by 97%** (2014-15 to 2024-25), while waste processing has risen from **18% to 78%** in the same period.
  - During 2015-2024, **118.64 lakh houses** were approved under **PMAY-U.**



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- **Metro Rail:** India's metro network expanded from 248 km (2014) to 993 km (2024), with commissioning rising from 0.68 km to 6 km/month and metro cities increasing from 5 to 23.
- **Tap Water Connections:** Jal Jeevan Mission increased rural tap water coverage from 3.23 crore (17%) to 15.44 crore (79.74%) households by February, 2025.

### What is Infrastructure?

- **About:** Infrastructure (capex) refers to the **basic systems** essential for the functioning of a **business, region, or nation**.
  - Sectors like power, coal, petroleum, cement, railways, ports, civil aviation, roads, Cybersecurity and telecommunications are part of infrastructure.
- **Features:**
  - **Long-Term Investments:** Involves **large-scale, long-lived structures** like power grids and transport systems.
  - **Public Utilities and Works:** Includes utilities (e.g., power, water) and public works (e.g., **roads, railways**).
  - **Natural Monopoly:** High initial costs make **competitive supply inefficient** (e.g., power grids).
  - **Non-Tradable Services:** Services like water and electricity **can't be sold across borders**.
  - **Public and Private Good:** Benefits society but often requires **usage charges**.
  - **High-Sunk Costs:** Once invested, resources in infrastructure projects **cannot be recovered, regardless of success or failure**.
- **Infrastructure as a Public Service:**
  - **Non-Rival Nature:** One person's consumption **does not reduce availability for others**.
  - **Price Exclusion:** They are provided on a **paid basis**, unlike pure public goods.
- **Social Infrastructure:** Infrastructure also includes social sector facilities like **hospitals and schools**, though lacking monopoly characteristics.

### What are Government Initiatives for Infrastructure Development?

- **PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan (NMP):** NMP has onboarded 44 Central Ministries and 36 States/UTs.
- **National Logistics Policy:** India's World Bank Logistics Performance Index (LPI) ranking improved by 6 places from 44 in 2018 to 38 out of 139 countries in 2023.
- **Bharatmala Pariyojana:** A total of 18,926 km of roads have been completed under the project by November 2024.
- **Pradhan Mantri Grameen Sadak Yojana:** In 2024-25, 7,71,950 km of roads were completed.
- **Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) - UDAN:** 619 RCS routes have so far commenced operations connecting 88 airports including 13 heliports & 2 water aerodromes.

## Balancing Energy Transition & Security

### Why in News?

The Economic Survey 2024-25 highlights **coal's continued importance** as a **reliable and affordable** energy source for India's **energy security and economic development**.

- In another development, the Union Budget 2025-26 announced some initiatives in the renewable energy sector.

### What is Energy Security?

- **About:** Energy security refers to the ability to maintain a **reliable, sustainable, and affordable** energy system that can meet the needs of **individuals, industries, and governments**.
- **Components:**
  - **Availability:** Reliable energy supply from **diverse sources** to meet demand.
  - **Accessibility:** Infrastructure to deliver **energy to all, including remote areas**.
  - **Affordability:** Stable, **cost-effective** energy prices for consumers and industries.

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- **Sustainability:** Clean, efficient energy use for long-term environmental balance.
- **Importance:** It is essential for meeting daily **energy demands** and supporting key sectors like agriculture and manufacturing.
- **Economic Growth:** Fuels industrial growth and productivity.
- **Political Stability:** Prevents unrest from energy shortages.
- **Sustainable Development:** Ensures clean energy for the future.
- **Food Security:** Essential for agriculture, impacting food production, distribution, and prices.
- **Factors Affecting Energy Security:**
  - **Physical Factors:** Fossil-rich regions have better energy security, others face scarcity challenges.
  - **Costs:** Depletion of non-renewable resources raises extraction costs and energy prices.
  - **Technology:** Advances make renewable energy viable, but environmental impacts must be considered.
  - **Political Factors:** Geopolitical tensions and conflicts can disrupt energy supply.

### Why Coal is Important for India's Energy Security?

- **Large Coal Reserves:** India holds **10% of the world's coal reserves** but only **0.7% of its natural gas reserves**, making coal the most reliable and affordable energy source in the country.
- **Economic Viability:** Coal-based power plants have seen **significant investments**, especially since the **2010s**, and shutting them down prematurely would leave these investments **stranded and underutilized**.
- **Climate Financing:** At **UNFCCC COP 29** in Baku, Azerbaijan, developed countries promised only **USD 300 billion** in annual climate finance, falling short of the required **USD 1 trillion**.
  - This may force India to **continue its dependence on coal** and may require it to adjust its climate targets.

- **Challenges with Renewable Energy:** **Renewable energy** sources like solar and wind face significant challenges such as:
  - **High investments for grid integration.**
  - Issues with **battery storage** to manage intermittency.
  - **Limited land availability** in densely populated areas for renewable installations.
  - The need for **critical minerals** required in renewable technology, which India does not have in abundance.
- **Geopolitical Vulnerabilities:** Renewable energy technologies often rely on **imported materials and technologies**, increasing India's vulnerability to external geopolitical risks, boosting **energy independence and national security**.
- **Lessons from Developed Nations:** Energy transitions in the past were driven by **commercial interests**, not by a desire to **limit emissions** from advanced economies.
  - **France** expanded its nuclear power in the **1970s due to oil embargos**, while in 2022, the **European Union** launched the **REPowerEU plan** to reduce reliance on **Russian gas supplies**.
  - In 2023, the US approved its **largest oil-drilling project in Alaska**, highlighting that even developed countries **continue to rely on fossil fuels**.
- **Congestion Costs:** The transition to renewable energy introduces **congestion costs** and has led to **increased electricity prices** in many countries.
  - Congestion cost refers to the **extra costs** arising from **limited transmission or distribution capacity**, making electricity delivery inefficient.

#### Status of India's Renewable Energy

- **Installed Capacity:** As of November 2024, India has **213,701 MW** from non-fossil fuel sources, making up **46.8%** of total electricity capacity.
  - India aims for **50%** of its electricity generation from **non-fossil fuels by 2030**.
- **Progress:** In 2022-23, **420.8 thousand GWh** came from non-fossil fuels, contributing **22.8%** to total generation.
  - **Large Hydro** contributes **8.81%**, **Nuclear** accounts for **2.49%**, and **Solar, Wind, Biomass** make up **11.52%**.

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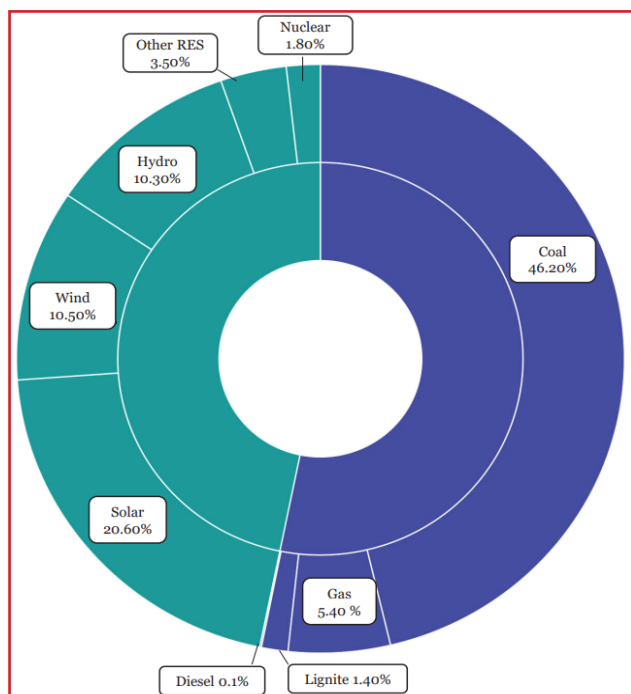
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### What are Union Budget Announcements in the Renewable Energy Sector?

- **Customs Duty Exemption:** Cobalt powder, lithium-ion battery scraps, lead, zinc, and 12 other critical minerals have been exempted from basic customs duty.
  - In July 2024, 25 critical minerals not available domestically were exempted from customs duties.
- **National Critical Minerals Mission (NCMM):** Rs 410 crore allocated for 2025-26 to the NCMM for technology development, skilled workforce creation, and financing mechanisms for clean energy.
  - NCMM under the Ministry of Mines aims to enhance domestic production, recycle critical minerals, and acquire global mineral assets.
- **Nuclear Energy Mission:** A budget of Rs 20,000 crore has been allocated for the Nuclear Energy Mission, aimed at developing indigenous Small Modular Reactors (SMRs).
  - The goal is to operationalize at least five SMRs reactors by 2033.
  - The private sector will be involved in the development of Bharat Small Reactors (BSR) and Bharat Small Modular Reactors (BSMR).

- BSR refers to incrementally modified forms of India's existing **Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWR)** whereas BSMR is a nascent technology being researched globally.

### What are the Initiatives Shaping India's Energy Transition?

- **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles (FAME)**
- **Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (SAUBHAGYA)**
- **Green Energy Corridor (GEC)**
- **National Solar Mission (NSM)**
- **National Biofuels Policy and SATAT**
- **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**

## Strengthening Regulatory Bodies

### Why in News?

Some experts called for studying the impact of regulatory bodies like **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** so that it can be factored into decision-making.

- They argued that regulatory bodies should clearly explain their decisions to ensure stakeholders feel satisfied, not just in reality but also in perception.

### What are Regulatory Bodies?

- **About:** Regulatory bodies are organizations established to monitor and regulate specific sectors of the economy, ensuring fair practices and protecting public interests.
  - Since 1991 (after LPG reforms), numerous authorities have been formed to prevent monopolies and regulate crucial sectors like banking, insurance, and capital markets.
  - Most regulatory bodies are quasi-judicial in nature.
- **Types:** There are primarily two types of regulatory bodies i.e., Statutory regulatory bodies (e.g., SEBI) and Self-regulatory bodies (e.g., Bar Council of India).

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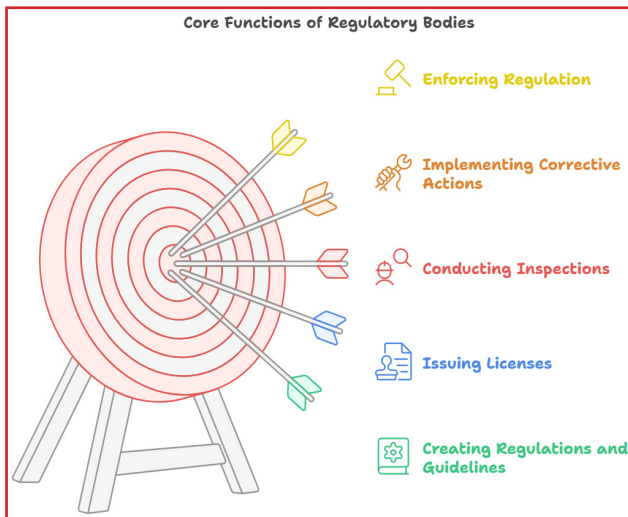


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### ➤ Functions:



### ➤ Need:

- **Protecting Consumer Interests:** Enforcing standards and ensuring fair practices (e.g., **FSSAI** for food safety, **TRAI** for telecom pricing).
  - Setting health and safety standards (e.g., **CPCB** for environment)
- **Market Stability:** Preventing fraud and promoting competition (e.g., **SEBI** for financial markets, **CCI** for fair competition).
- **Economic Growth:** Supporting sectoral growth (e.g., **RBI** for financial health, **IRDAI** for insurance), and attracting investments.
- **Legal Compliance:** Upholding laws and transparency (e.g., **CVC**, **ED** for legal compliance).
- **Ethical Standards:** Regulating professional ethics (e.g., **Bar Council of India** for legal professionals).

### ➤ Examples: There are more than 30 regulatory bodies. Some of the authorities are as under:

- **Reserve Bank of India (RBI):** Oversees credit supply, banking operations, and ensures financial stability.
- **SEBI:** Regulates the securities market, ensures fair practices, and protects investors.
- **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI):** **IRDAI** regulates the insurance sector, ensuring fairness and consumer protection.
- **Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA):** Regulates corporate governance and safeguards stakeholders' interests.

- **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA):** **PFRDA** oversees the **National Pension System (NPS)** and pension industry development.
- **Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB):** **PNGRB** was set up under **PNGRB Act, 2006** that set technical and safety standards for petroleum, petroleum products, natural gas, and related infrastructure projects.
- **Central Electricity Regulatory Commission:** It regulates tariffs for Central Government-owned electricity generating companies, and oversees their inter-State transmission.

### ➤ Issues:

- **Lack of Independence:** Indian regulators, like TRAI, face interference from ministries, compromising their autonomy and objectivity.
- **Absence of Financial Autonomy:** They depend on ministry approval for budgets, and surplus funds are returned to the Consolidated Fund of India, limiting financial independence.
- **Ineffective Appointment Processes:** Top officials are often filled by retired civil servants lacking regulatory expertise, affecting credibility and efficiency.
- **Lack of Parliamentary Accountability:** Regulators lack sufficient oversight from Parliament, weakening public accountability and transparency in their decisions.
  - E.g., **SEBI** is not directly accountable to **Parliament's Standing Committee on Finance**.
- **Inadequate Stakeholder Engagement:** Indian regulators often fail to engage with stakeholders, resulting in decisions that don't fully address public or industry needs.
  - E.g., **SEBI's unclear communication** of regulatory decisions create uncertainty among market participants.
- **Fragmented Regulatory Framework:** Different financial segments (insurance, bonds, derivatives) are overseen by separate regulators that hinders market efficiency.

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- E.g., Separate regulators for **insurance and bonds** hinder **credit default swaps** (insurance against loan default) and corporate debt market growth.

#### Steps to Reform Regulatory Bodies

- **12<sup>th</sup> Report of the 2<sup>nd</sup> ARC Suggested:**
  - **Simplify, streamline, and make regulatory procedures transparent, citizen-friendly, and less discretionary** to reduce corruption.
  - Strengthen **internal supervision and independent assessments** of regulatory agencies.
  - Promote **self-regulation** in sectors like taxation and public health to ease enforcement.
- **13<sup>th</sup> Report of the 2<sup>nd</sup> ARC Recommended:**
  - Ministries should create a '**Management Statement**' outlining regulators' **objectives and roles**.
  - Ensure **uniformity in the appointment, tenure, and removal** of regulatory authorities for consistency and independence.
  - Strengthen **parliamentary oversight** of regulators through Standing Committees for accountability.

#### SEBI

- **About:** SEBI is a **Statutory Body** (a Non-Constitutional body) established under the **SEBI Act, 1992**.
  - It was constituted as a **non-statutory body** on **12<sup>th</sup> April 1988** through a **resolution** of the Government of India
  - Prior to SEBI, the **Controller of Capital Issues**, governed under the **Capital Issues (Control) Act, 1947**, was the regulatory authority for capital markets.
- **Purpose:** SEBI's main functions are to **protect the interests of investors** in securities and to promote and regulate the securities market in India.
- **Structure:** SEBI's board includes a **Chairman**, and other whole-time, and part-time members.
  - The **Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT)** handles appeals against SEBI's decisions, with powers similar to those of a **civil court**.
- **Key Responsibilities:** It enables issuers to **raise finance, ensures safety and accurate information for investors**, and promotes a competitive market for intermediaries.

## Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs

### Why in News?

The **Government of India** has approved the introduction of the **Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs (MCGS- MSME)**.

### What is MCGS- MSME?

- **About:** It is an initiative designed to facilitate **access to credit for MSMEs** by offering a **guarantee** for loans extended to them by **reducing the risk perceived by lenders**.
- **Key Features:**
  - **Target Borrowers:** MSMEs with valid **Udyam Registration Number**.
  - **Loan Limit:** Up to **Rs 100 crore** for purchase of equipment/machinery.
  - **Loan Guarantee:** National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Ltd (NCGTC) provides **60% guarantee** coverage to **Member Lending Institutions (MLIs)**.
  - **Project Costs:** 75% of the project cost should be for **equipment/machinery**.
  - **Scheme Duration:** Applicable for **4 years or until Rs. 7 lakh crore cumulative guarantee** is issued, whichever is earlier.
- **Significance:**
  - **Boost to Manufacturing:** Enhances **credit availability for MSMEs**, which contribute **17% to India's GDP**.
  - **Support for Make in India:** Aligns with the vision to increase the **manufacturing sector's** share to **25% of GDP**.
  - **Credit Access:** Facilitates **collateral-free loans** for MSMEs to expand.
  - **Employment Growth:** Creates significant job opportunities in the manufacturing sector, **employing over 27 million**.

**Note:** MLIs include all **Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs)**, **Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)** and **All India Financial institutions (AIFIs)**, who register with NCGTC under the Scheme.

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## What is National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Ltd (NCGTC)?

- **About:** NCGTC is a **common trustee company** to manage and operate **various credit guarantee trust funds** to help borrowers access finance by **sharing lending risks** with lenders.
  - It provides **loan guarantees** to lenders (like **banks and financial institutions**), encouraging **credit extension** to underserved sectors like **MSMEs, startups, and vulnerable groups**.
- **Establishment:** It was established in **March 2014**, under the **Indian Companies Act, 1956**, with a paid-up capital of **Rs 10 crore**.
  - It is a **private limited company** that is **fully owned by the Government of India** and operates under the **Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance**.
- **Coverage:** NCGTC currently manages **14 dedicated credit guarantee trust schemes** including **MCGS-MSME, Credit Guarantee Fund for Micro Units (CGFMU), Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS)** among others.

## Injecting Liquidity in Economy

### Why in News?

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has announced measures to inject over **Rs 1.5 lakh crore** to increase **money liquidity** in the economy.

### What are Key Points About RBI's Liquidity Measures?

- **Money Liquidity:** It refers to the **availability of cash and easily accessible funds** in the economy, influencing spending and **investment**.

- **Liquidity** refers to how **quickly and easily** an asset can be converted into **cash** without impacting its price much.
- **Reason for Liquidity Shortfall:** The RBI's **forex sale** to stabilize the rupee amid **foreign institutional investors (FIIs) outflows** led to a liquidity deficit.
  - RBI sells US dollars in exchange for rupees, reducing the **supply of rupees** in the banking system.
  - It led to **tighter short-term interest rates** and increased borrowing costs.
- **Measures Taken by RBI:** RBI's liquidity infusion plan comprises **three measures**:
  - **Government Bond Buyback:** It means the central bank or the government **repurchases bonds** from the market **before maturity**.
    - It **injects liquidity by paying bondholders** (banks, financial institutions, or investors), increasing fund availability in the banking system.
  - **Repo Auction:** Repo auction is a **liquidity adjustment tool** used by the RBI where banks **bid for funds** at desired borrowing rates, and the **RBI accepts the lowest bids** until the required amount is allotted.
  - **US Dollar-Rupee Swap Auction:** A **swap auction** increases liquidity in the market by facilitating the **temporary exchange** of currencies or financial instruments.
    - **Borrowing dollars** stabilizes the domestic currency and prevents a liquidity drain by **avoiding rupee sales** in the forex market.
- **Potential Repo Rate Cut:** Addressing the **liquidity deficit** may be a **precursor to a possible repo rate cut** in the upcoming monetary policy review.
  - **Sufficient liquidity** will ensure that any future **repo rate cuts are effectively transmitted** to borrowers through lower interest rates.



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# International Relations

## Highlights

- Paris AI Summit 2025
- World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2025
- India-UK Agreements in Aero India 2025
- India-Sri Lanka Fishing Dispute
- US Agency for International Development
- India-Bhutan Ties and Subnational Diplomacy

## Paris AI Summit 2025

### Why in News?

The **Prime Minister (PM)** of India visited France to co-chair the **Paris Artificial Intelligence (AI) Action Summit 2025**.

- Also, the **2<sup>nd</sup> India-France AI Policy Roundtable** was held on the sidelines of the summit.

#### Artificial Intelligence (AI) Action Summit:

- The **AI Action Summit** is a global forum that brings together **world leaders, policymakers, technology experts**, and industry representatives to **discuss AI governance, ethics**, and its role in society.
- The **AI Action Summit** in Paris is the **3<sup>rd</sup> summit**, following the **Bletchley Park Summit (UK 2023)** and the **Seoul Summit (South Korea 2024)**.
  - **Bletchley Park Declaration** (28 countries): Advocated **safe, human-centric, and responsible AI**.
  - **Seoul Summit** (27 nations): Reaffirmed **international cooperation and proposed a network of AI Safety Institutes**.

#### Key Themes of Paris AI Action Summit 2025:

- **Public Interest AI**: Developing open AI infrastructure for social, economic, and environmental benefits.
- **Future of Work**: Ensuring AI's responsible use through sustained social dialogue.
- **Innovation & Culture**: Creating sustainable AI ecosystems, especially for creative industries.
- **Trust in AI**: Establishing scientific consensus on AI safety and security.
- **Global AI Governance**: Shaping an inclusive and effective international AI governance framework.

### What are the Key Outcomes of the Paris Artificial Intelligence (AI) Summit 2025?

- **Joint Declaration on Inclusive and Sustainable AI**: Joint Statement on '**Inclusive and Sustainable Artificial Intelligence for People and the Planet**' was signed by **58 countries** including **India, China, EU, except US and the UK** (expressing concerns related to excessive regulations on AI).
- **Public Interest AI Platform and Incubator**: **Public Interest AI Platform and Incubator** was launched to **bridge public-private AI efforts**, and **promote a trustworthy AI ecosystem** through **capacity building in data**, transparency, and financing.
- **Human-Centric AI and Global Priorities**: The summit emphasized the need for **ethical, safe, and inclusive AI**, ensuring **human rights protection** while **addressing AI-driven inequalities**.
  - Global Priorities related to AI includes **AI accessibility, transparency, job creation, sustainability, and international governance**.
  - It emphasized **bridging the digital divide**, ensuring **AI safety**, promoting **green AI**, and fostering **global cooperation**.
- **Alignment with Existing Multilateral AI Initiatives**: The summit emphasized alignment with global AI initiatives, including **UN General Assembly Resolutions**, the **Global Digital Compact**, **UNESCO AI Ethics Recommendations**, the **African Union AI strategy**, and frameworks by **OECD, G7, and G20**.
- **India's Stance**: India advocated **open-source and sustainable AI**, emphasizing **clean energy and workforce upskilling**.

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Note:

- As the **2024 lead chair** of the **Global Partnership on AI (GPAI)**, it aims to establish GPAI as the central platform for responsible AI development.

### What are the Key Outcomes of 2<sup>nd</sup> India-France AI Policy Roundtable?

#### ➤ About:

- The **2nd India-France AI Policy Roundtable** was held alongside the **AI Action Summit 2025** in Paris.
- It was organized by India's **Principal Scientific Adviser's Office, IISc Bengaluru, IndiaAI Mission, and Sciences Po Paris**.

#### ➤ Key Takeaways:

- **AI Governance & Ethics:** Emphasis on **responsible AI, equitable benefit-sharing**, techno-legal frameworks, and AI safety.
  - Discussions covered **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for AI, AI foundation models, global AI governance**, and AI's role in **tackling global challenges**.
- **Cross-Border AI Collaboration:** Focus on **data sovereignty, interoperable AI infrastructure**, and **sovereign AI models**, addressing the **lack of arbitration mechanisms** for cross-border data flows.
- **AI for Global Challenges:** Integration of AI in **multilingual models, federated computing**, and solutions for **global issues**.
- **Sustainable AI:** Promotion of **energy-efficient AI models** and **responsible computing practices** to mitigate AI's **high energy footprint**.

Read more: [Major Areas of Cooperation between India and France](#)

Read More: [Some Major AI Tools](#)

#### PM Recalls Marseille Connection with Savarkar's and India's Freedom Struggle:

- In 1910, while being transported to India, **Veer Savarkar attempted an escape in Marseille** but was recaptured.
- His extradition led to a **Franco-British legal dispute**, resolved by the **Permanent Court of Arbitration (1911)** in Britain's favor.
- He was sentenced to **2 life terms** and imprisoned in the **Cellular Jail, Andamans**.

### What are the Challenges Related to the Development of AI?

- **High Energy Consumption:** AI's growing energy demand could increase data centers' power consumption from **1-2% to 3-4% by 2030**, potentially reaching **21% of global energy consumption**.
  - The expected **rise in carbon dioxide emissions** due to increased energy demand is **projected to result in a "social cost" of USD 125-140 billion**.
  - **IEA** states that a **ChatGPT query uses 10 times more energy than a Google search**.
  - AI data centres may consume as much **electricity as India's total current consumption (1,580 terawatt-hours)** ([Economic Survey 2024-25](#)).
- **Issue of People-Centric AI vs AI-Centric Development:** Balancing **people-centric AI** (ethical, inclusive, and human-focused) with **AI-centric development** (automation-driven) is a key challenge as over-reliance on AI risks **job loss, data privacy issues, and digital divide**.
- **Insecure and Low-Cost AI Models:** Insecure and low-cost AI models like **DeepSeek** pose risks of data breaches, **misinformation, deepfakes, and cybersecurity threats**.
  - Weak regulatory oversight and ethical safeguards heighten bias and security concerns, necessitating robust AI governance.

What are the Challenges related to Generative AI before India?

Read more: [Challenges of AI Disruption](#)

## World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2025

### Why in News?

The **2025 World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting** concluded in Davos, Switzerland, bringing together global leaders to discuss pressing issues under the theme **"Collaboration for the Intelligent Age."**

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## What are the Key Takeaways From 2025 WEF?

- **Sustainability:** The meeting stressed that sustainability is vital for **business resilience**, urging companies to align growth with global sustainability goals for profitability and societal impact.
- **Emerging Technologies:** The 2025 WEF highlighted that **Artificial Intelligence** and **green tech** offer both opportunities and challenges.
  - Responsible AI frameworks and **ethical balance** with progress is key to improving supply chains, reducing **emissions**, and enhancing transparency.
- **Partnerships:** Emphasized that global challenges require multi-sectoral partnerships for impactful solutions. Effective collaborations could unlock **USD 12 trillion in market opportunities by 2030**.
- **Climate Action:** Stressed the need for **urgent climate action**, ensuring **decarbonization** includes a fair transition for workers and communities.
- **India at the 2025 WEF:**
  - **Investment Commitments:** India secured over Rs 20 lakh crore in investment commitments, with Maharashtra securing nearly 80% of the total.
  - **States' Contributions:** Telangana secured Rs 1.79 lakh crore investment, Kerala emphasized its **industrial transformation**, and Uttar Pradesh highlighted its **vision to become a USD 1 trillion economy by 2029 with Zero poverty**.

### World Economic Forum

- **Founded:** German engineer and economist **Klaus Schwab** in 1971 founded the European Management Forum, it became the WEF in 1987.
  - In 2015, WEF was officially recognized as an international organization, headquartered in **Geneva, Switzerland**.
- **Purpose:** To engage leaders from business, government, and civil society to address global challenges and promote economic and social progress.
  - Introduced the **Stakeholder Capitalism** concept, emphasizing that companies should prioritize long-term value creation, benefiting all stakeholders.

- **Annual Meeting:** WEF Annual Meeting held in Davos, Switzerland, with over 3,000 participants including world leaders, business executives, and economists.
- **Focus:** Global issues like economic growth, climate change, technology, and geopolitical uncertainties.
- **Funding:** Primarily funded by global corporations with annual turnovers above USD 5 billion.
- **Reports:** **Global Competitiveness Report**, **Global Gender Gap Report**, **Future of Jobs Report**, **Global Risks Report**, and **Global Travel and Tourism Report**.
- **Index:** Travel & Tourism Development Index (TTDI).
- **Influence:** Has played a role in major diplomatic breakthroughs, such as the **creation of the G20**.

## India-UK Agreements in Aero India 2025

### Why in News?

India and the United Kingdom (UK) signed multiple defence agreements at **Aero India 2025** to strengthen defence ties.

- In another development, the **4<sup>th</sup> India-UK Energy Dialogue** took place focusing on **sustainable, resilient, and inclusive energy future**.

### What are the Recent Developments in India-UK Ties?

- **Defence:**
  - **Defence Partnership–India (DP-I):** DP-I was launched that aims to strengthen and **streamline bilateral defense** collaboration.
  - **Defence Manufacturing:** Both entered into a contract to supply **Laser Beam Riding MANPADs (LBRM)**, beginning with an initial delivery of **High Velocity Missiles (STARStreak)** and **launchers**.
    - Both will produce **Lightweight Multirole Missiles (LMMs)**, incorporating Indian industries into the UK's **global supply chain**.
    - Both will establish India's first **Advanced Short-Range Air-to-Air Missile (ASRAAM)** assembly and test facility in **Hyderabad** to equip fighter jets and support global exports.

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- **Electric Propulsion System:** Both agreed to develop an **Integrated Full Electric Propulsion (IFEP)** system for India's next-gen **Landing Platform Dock (LPD)** fleet, aiming for LPD delivery by 2030.
- **Energy:**
  - **ASPIRE Phase-2:** The 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of India-UK **Accelerating Smart Power & Renewable Energy in India (ASPIRE)** programme was launched.
    - ASPIRE program, a **UK-India initiative**, supports **24/7 power supply**, and boosts industrial energy efficiency and **decarbonization**.
  - **Wind Taskforce:** Both launched a **UK-India Offshore Wind Taskforce** to strengthen offshore wind to enhance **ecosystems, supply chains, and financing**.
    - Both announced the continuation of the **Power Sector Reforms** programme under **UK Partnering for Accelerated Climate Transitions (UKPACT)**.
      - UK PACT supports **emerging economies** like India in their **transition to low-carbon**, sustainable growth.

#### How Can the UK Strengthen India's Defence?

- **New Defence Technologies:** Under the **India-UK 2030 Roadmap**, the UK offers critical tech, including jet engine development and electric propulsion.
- **Self-Reliance:** Supports '**Make in India, Make for the World**' by co-developing next-gen defence capabilities.
- **Strategic Military Presence:** Establishing a **Littoral Response Group** in the Indian Ocean for joint training, with bases in **Oman, Nepal, Brunei, Diego Garcia, and Singapore**.

#### How Can the UK Support India's Green Transition?

- **Investment:** **USD 1 billion** in green projects via British Investment International and a **USD 1 billion** World Bank guarantee.
- **Offshore Wind:** UK's expertise to aid India's **30 GW** offshore wind goal by 2030.
- **Renewable Energy:** **67 million Euros** invested in Indian solar, water, and climate projects, adding **413 MW** renewables and reducing **1.14 million tonnes of emissions**.

- **Clean Energy Initiatives:** UK's **Clean Growth Programme** supports business expansion in India's **1.8 trillion Pounds** clean energy sector.
- **Global Collaboration:** India-UK launched the **Green Grids Initiative** at COP26, with India joining Glasgow Breakthroughs and the Zero EV Declaration.

#### What are Key Points Regarding India-UK Ties?

- **Trade Relations:** India was the UK's **11<sup>th</sup> largest** trading partner in 2024 and bilateral trade stands at **42 billion Pounds**.
  - **India-UK Joint Economic and Trade Committee (JETCO)** was established in **2005** to enhance bilateral economic cooperation
- **Investment:** India was the UK's **2<sup>nd</sup>-largest FDI** source in 2022-23.
  - The UK is India's **6<sup>th</sup> largest investor**, with **USD 33.88 billion** in FDI (April 2000 - March 2023), contributing **5.34% of total inflows**.
- **Defence Cooperation:** **Konkan Shakti** was the first India-UK **tri-service exercise**, strengthening defence ties. India joined **Exercise Cobra Warrior** (air exercise), while **Ajeya Warrior** fosters Army collaboration.
- **Education:** The Mutual Recognition of Academic Qualifications was signed in July 2022, facilitates **academic cooperation**.
  - Indian student enrollments in UK universities reached 185,000 in 2022-23.
- **People-to-People Ties: Migration and Mobility Partnership (MMP)** was signed in **May 2021**, facilitating the **movement of professionals** between India and the UK.
  - The **Young Professional Scheme (YPS)**, announced at the **G20 Bali Summit**, allows graduates (18-30) from both countries to live and work for two years.

### India-Sri Lanka Fishing Dispute

#### Why in News?

The **Sri Lankan Navy** arrested some **Indian fishermen** for fishing in **Palk Bay** (Sri Lankan waters), reigniting the **India-Sri Lanka fishing dispute**.

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Note:

- In **2024**, Indian fishermen arrested in Sri Lanka **crossed 500** for the first time in a decade (**2014: 787 arrests**).

### What are the Key Issues in the India-Sri Lanka Fishing Dispute?

- **Recurrent Arrests:** Indian fishermen with their **trawlers** often in search of fishes stray into Sri Lankan waters due to **engine failures or sudden weather changes**.
  - The **destruction of fishing vessels, continued boat confiscation** after fishermen's release, and **heavy fines** by Sri Lankan authorities remain **recurring issues** between both nations.
- **Violation of IMBL:** Indian fishermen claim **historical fishing rights** beyond the **International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL)** based on traditional practices that lead to arrests of Indian fishermen in areas close to the IMBL.
  - The Palk bay is **equally divided** between India and Sri Lanka by the IMBL, but **fishing rights remain contested**.
  - The IMBL (as per **UNCLOS**) is an **official boundary** separating territorial waters, defining **maritime jurisdiction**, and regulating fishing, resource use, and naval activities.
- **Depletion of Fish Stocks:** Overfishing on the Indian side of the IMBL forces Indian fishermen into Sri Lankan waters, which Sri Lanka views as **"poaching,"** posing **security risks and threatening local livelihoods**.
- **Bottom-Trawling:** Sri Lanka opposes ecologically destructive **bottom trawling** employed by Indian fishermen, and seeks a **sustainable solution** to protect their waters from over-exploitation.
  - Bottom trawling drags **weighted nets along the seabed**, damaging marine habitats like coral reefs and sponges.
- **Sri Lanka's National Security Concerns:** Sri Lanka alleges that Indian trawlers intrude regularly in a **coordinated manner** and fears **Tamil militant groups** may re-emerge using fishing vessels.
- **Katchatheevu Island Dispute:** **Katchatheevu**, a 285-acre islet in the Palk Strait, was ceded to Sri Lanka in 1974.

- Indian fishermen can only use **Katchatheevu** for **drying nets and resting**, and Tamil Nadu politicians periodically **demand its return** to India.

**Note:** Due to **depletion** of fisheries stock in Indian and Sri Lankan waters, Indian fishermen are venturing into the **High seas**. They are now also being arrested in **Maldivian waters** and by the **British Navy** near **Diego Garcia** for allegedly crossing the maritime boundary.

### What are International Laws on Freedom of Fishing?

- **UN Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA, 1995):** States should **either become members**, or they should **agree** to apply the **conservation and management measures** established by **Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs)** to access fishery resources.
  - RFMOs are international bodies responsible for **managing and conserving fish stocks** in specific ocean regions.
- **UNCLOS, 1982:** Article 87 of UNCLOS **limits fishing freedom on the high seas**, making it illegal for vessels from States that fail to meet its conditions.
  - E.g., **Considering due regard for the interests** of other States in their exercise of the freedom of the high seas.

#### Palk Bay

- **About:** Palk Bay is a **narrow water body** between **southern India and northern Sri Lanka**, and is rich in biodiversity, due to monsoon-driven nutrient inflow.



- **Boundaries:** The **southern boundary** is marked by the **Pamban Strait, Rameswaram Island, and Adam's Bridge (Rama Setu)**.

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Note:

- The **northeastern boundary** is the **Palk Strait** that connects the Palk Bay to the Bay of Bengal.
- **Palk Bay Fishing Conflict:** Following the **end of the Sri Lankan civil war** in 2009, fishing disputes escalated, reaching their **peak in 2013** due to **overfishing and bottom trawling** by Indian fishers.

Click Here to Read: [India and Sri Lanka Relations](#)

### What are the Implications of Indo-Sri Lanka Fishing Conflict?

- **Livelihood Issues:** Sri Lanka Navy's arrests of Indian fishers **distress their families**, while sea conflicts have caused **fatalities and missing fishers**, heightening risks for fishing communities.
- **Enforcement Challenges:** The **enforcement cost for patrolling** the IMBL has risen, straining resources.
- **Smuggling Concerns:** The Indian Coast Guard and Sri Lanka Navy **struggle to differentiate** between **genuine fishers and smugglers** making IMBL vulnerable to smuggling.
- **Political Ramifications:** Allegations against the Sri Lanka Navy's actions in the Palk Bay have fueled diplomatic tensions between the two nations.
  - E.g., Political tensions have influenced **India's support for UN resolutions on Sri Lanka's human rights record**.
- **Environmental Impact:** Bottom trawling **harms fish breeding, depletes stocks, and damages the seafloor**, with recovery taking thousands of years.
- **Economic Consequences:** Overfishing has **reduced fishery resources** and fishers' income, with Sri Lanka losing an estimated **USD 730 million annually** due to Indian poaching.

## US Agency for International Development

### Why in News?

The US President Donald Trump has imposed a 90-day freeze on foreign aid, halting **US Agency for International Development (USAID)** programs worldwide.

- Additionally, the US has announced that it will not attend the **2025 G20 Foreign Ministers' meeting** in Johannesburg, South Africa.

### What is the US Agency for International Development?

- **About:** USAID is the primary US agency for **global humanitarian and development aid**.
- **Support:** In 2024, USAID was allocated **USD 44.2 billion**, just **0.4%** of the total US federal budget, but accounted for **42%** of all humanitarian aid tracked by the **United Nations**.
  - USAID funds **healthcare, food aid, disaster relief, and policy advocacy** worldwide.
  - Top aid recipients include **Ukraine, Ethiopia, Jordan, Somalia, and Afghanistan**.
- **USAID and India:** India's association with USAID began in 1951 with the **India Emergency Food Aid Act**, evolving over decades from food aid to infrastructure, capacity building, and economic reforms.
  - The agency has been supporting **education, immunization, polio eradication, and HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) / Tuberculosis (TB) prevention**.
  - In the last decade, India is said to have received around **USD 1.5 billion** from USAID (about **0.2 %** to **0.4 %** of USAID's total global funding).

### What are the Implications for India?

- **India's Role in the Global South:** India has positioned itself as a **bridge between the Global North and the Global South**, benefiting from its **rising status within the G20**.
- **China and Russia:** If the US reduces its role in G20, **China and Russia could expand their influence**, potentially shifting global economic dynamics and weakening India's position amid **China's rising power**.
- **Healthcare:** Although direct financial aid to India has decreased, USAID contributions exceeded **USD 50 million** in 2024.
  - A permanent funding cut could impact India's **vaccination programs, infectious disease control, and medical infrastructure**.

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Note:

- India may need to redirect domestic funds to sustain health, environment, and governance projects.

## G-20 (The Group of Twenty)

### About

- In 1999, following the **Asian Financial Crisis** of the **1990s**, **G20** was established as a Forum for **Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors**.
- Raised to the **Summit level in 2008** to address the global financial and economic crisis of 2008.

### Aims

- Secure global financial stability by involving world's largest advanced and emerging economies.

### Structure and Functioning of G20

- The **G20 Presidency** rotates annually
- No permanent **Secretariat** or **Headquarters**
- **19 countries** are divided into **5 groups**
- The presidency rotates between each group

### Troika

- It is a working association between the **current presidency**, **past presidency** and **next presidency**.

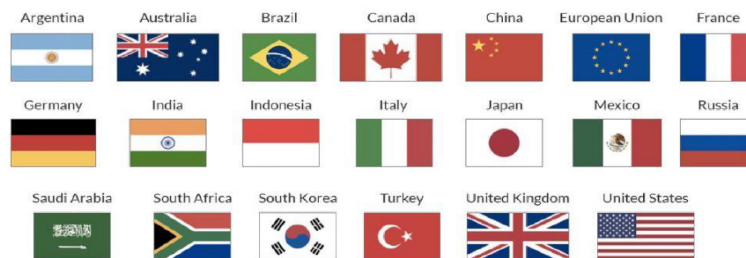
### Challenges

- No Enforcement mechanism
- No legal binding
- Polarization of Interests:
  - Russia Ukraine Conflict
  - China's strategic rise
  - NATO's expansion

## G20 India 2023

- India assumed the **18th G20 Presidency** from **December 1, 2023** for a **one-year period**.
- **Theme:**
  - "**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**" a Sanskrit word which Stands for "**One Earth - One Family. One Future**".
  - This is taken from the ancient Sanskrit text of the '**Maha Upanishad**'.

## G20 COUNTRIES



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# India-Bhutan Ties and Subnational Diplomacy

## Why in News?

Following the **King of Bhutan** visit to **India**, both countries **committed** to strengthening **India and Bhutan** ties in which **Subnational diplomacy** by states like **Assam** can further strengthen **economic and cultural relations**.

## What were the Key Outcomes of the Visit?

- **Strengthened Cooperation:** Bhutan expressed gratitude for India's continued support for its **13<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2024-29)** and for India's contributions to **Bhutan's Economic Stimulus Programme**.
- **Economic Development:** India has assured continued support for the **Mindfulness City project**, a sustainable **economic hub**.
- **Hydropower Cooperation:** Significant progress has been made in the **1020 MW Punatsangchhu-II hydro project** and both countries agreed to expedite the completion of the **Punatsangchhu-I project**.
- **Cross-Border Connectivity:** The **Integrated Check Post (ICP) at Darranga, Assam**, was inaugurated to boost **tourism and economic activities** in Bhutan's eastern region and Assam's border areas.



## What is Subnational Diplomacy?

- **About:** Subnational diplomacy (paradiplomacy) refers to **subnational entities (like states or regions)**

engaging in international relations to **promote their mutual interests**.

- Globalization has fueled **subnational diplomacy**, with regional governments seeking to advance their goals in an **interconnected world**.
- **Institutional Mechanisms in India:**
  - **States Division:** The 'States Division' under the **MEA** facilitates better **Centre-state interaction**, helping states develop foreign linkages in **trade, tourism, investment, and more**.
  - **Consular Offices and Federal Foreign Affairs Offices:** Foster diplomacy with **sub-national units**.
  - **City Diplomacy:** **City Diplomacy, or town twinning**, focuses on cultural and economic exchanges. E.g., **Kobe-Ahmedabad Sister Cities**.
- **Global City Diplomacy Examples:** **Sao Paulo city** in Brazil has its own policy for conducting international relations with support from Brazil's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
  - **Barcelona (Spain), Quebec (Canada), California (USA), London (UK), Vancouver (Canada)** also conduct foreign relations.
- **Subnational Diplomacy in India:** Indian states enjoy some liberty in **foreign policy implementation** in areas like trade, commerce, and cultural exchange.
  - In 2015, **Andhra Pradesh's CM** led a delegation to **China** before the **Prime Minister's (PM) visit**, and **West Bengal's CM** joined India's PM in **Bangladesh**.
  - Gujarat's "**Vibrant Gujarat Global Investors Summit**" promotes investment in Gujarat.
    - Other states like **Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Bihar** attract **FDI** boosting trade opportunities
  - In 1992, **Maharashtra** partnered with **MNCs (Enron and General Electric)** to finance the **Dabhol Power Project**.
  - The **1996 Farakka water-sharing issue** was resolved after **West Bengal CM's** visit to Bangladesh, resulting in the **Farakka Water-Sharing Treaty 1996**.
- **Benefits:**
  - **State-Level Influence:** Indian states shape **foreign policy** by aligning **federal and state policies** in sectors like land, labor, and health.

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- It can prevent issues like **Kachchatheevu Island** where the union's decision **negatively affected the local population**.

- **Complementary Strengths:** Indian states and their counterparts collaborate in sectors like **IT and automotive**, adopting **tailor made approaches** based on the mutual requirements.

- **Global Challenges:** State cooperation in **climate change** and **pandemic recovery** can offer **effective solutions at local levels for the global world**.

- **Long-Term Alliances:** Subnational diplomacy fosters **grassroots partnerships**, encourages **P2P and B2B relations**, ensuring lasting relations.

➤ **Concerns:**

- **Constitutional Constraints:** Foreign affairs are under the **Union List** in India's Constitution, **limiting states' involvement** and raising concerns **over central authority encroachment**.
- **National Security Concerns:** Subnational diplomacy could impact **national security**, particularly in sensitive areas like the **Northeast or states bordering Pakistan and China**.
- **External Influence:** Local governments may become targets of **disinformation**, affecting their ability to manage international relations independently.
  - Smaller cities may be vulnerable to **manipulation by foreign powers**.

- **Public Backlash:** Independent foreign relations by states can lead to **public opposition and diplomatic friction** if they conflict with national interests.

### How Subnational Diplomacy with Assam can Enhance India-Bhutan Ties?

- **Trade and Connectivity:** Establishing more **ICPs like Darranga** and developing railway links like **Kokrajhar-Gelephu and Banarhat-Samtse**, along with Assam's natural resources (**tea, oil, Joha rice, Bhut Jolokia**), will **boost trade with Bhutan**.
  - Currently, more than **70% of trade** between **India and Bhutan** passes through the **Jaigaon Land Customs Station (LCS)** in West Bengal.
- **Energy Cooperation:** Long-term **power purchase agreement (PPA)** with Bhutan's hydroelectric companies can help meet **Assam's energy needs**.
  - The sale of hydro-power accounts for **about 63% of Bhutan's GDP**.
- **Maritime Connectivity:** Bhutan can reduce transport costs to Bangladesh by using **Dhubri River port** and utilising **Assam's Asom Mala initiative** (road infrastructure development program).
- **Ecological Collaboration:** Collaboration on **Manas National Park** (Assam) and **Royal Manas National Park** (Bhutan) will strengthen **conservation and eco-tourism**, attracting more tourists.
- **Cultural Diplomacy:** Assam's cultural links with Bhutan can foster **greater solidarity through cultural exchanges**.



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# Social Issues

## Highlights

- International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation
- Rising Online Child Abuse
- International Day of Women and Girls in Science
- Tribal Welfare Measures in Budget 2025-26
- Mental Health at Workplace and Economic Productivity
- Ban on Begging
- Exploitation of Domestic Workers

## International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation

### Why in News?

The world observed the **International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** (6<sup>th</sup> February) under the theme *"Step up the Pace"*, emphasizing the need for stronger alliances and expanding movements to end FGM.

**Note:** The International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM was established by the **United Nations General Assembly** in 2012 to raise awareness and mobilize global efforts to eliminate FGM.

### What is Female Genital Mutilation?

- **Definition:** FGM involves altering or injuring the female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It is internationally recognized as a **violation of human rights** (violates non-discrimination on the basis of sex), **health, and integrity of girls and women**.
- **Health Impacts:**
  - **Immediate:** Severe pain, excessive bleeding, infections, shock, and even death.
  - **Long-term:** Chronic pain, infections, menstrual and sexual health issues,
- **Global Prevalence:** Over **230 million girls and women** worldwide have undergone FGM, mostly in 30 countries across **Africa, the Middle East, and Asia**.

- FGM is usually performed on **young girls between infancy and age 15**. An estimated **4 million girls** are at risk of undergoing FGM every year, averaging **12,000 cases per day**.
- **Reasons for Practicing FGM:** In many communities, FGM is seen as a necessary part of **raising a girl**, preparing her for adulthood and marriage. It is believed to **control female sexuality**, ensuring premarital **virginity** and marital fidelity.
- Some mistakenly believe that FGM is a religious requirement, although no religious texts prescribe the practice.
- **Rooted in gender inequality**, FGM is **gender-based violence** that harms girls' bodies and endangers their lives.
- **Elimination:** The UN aims to eliminate FGM by 2030 under **Sustainable Development Goal 5.3**, which targets ending harmful practices like child marriage and FGM.
- **Challenges:** Progress remains uneven, with opposition in some regions, such as **Gambia's** attempts to repeal the FGM ban.
- Nearly 7 million girls and women have accessed prevention services, but the global decline **must be 27 times faster to end FGM by 2030**.
- Of the 31 countries where data is collected on FGM prevalence, only **7** are on track to meet the **2030 UN SDG** target to eliminate the practice.
- Increasing **trend of healthcare providers** performing FGM, under the false belief that it makes the **practice safer**.

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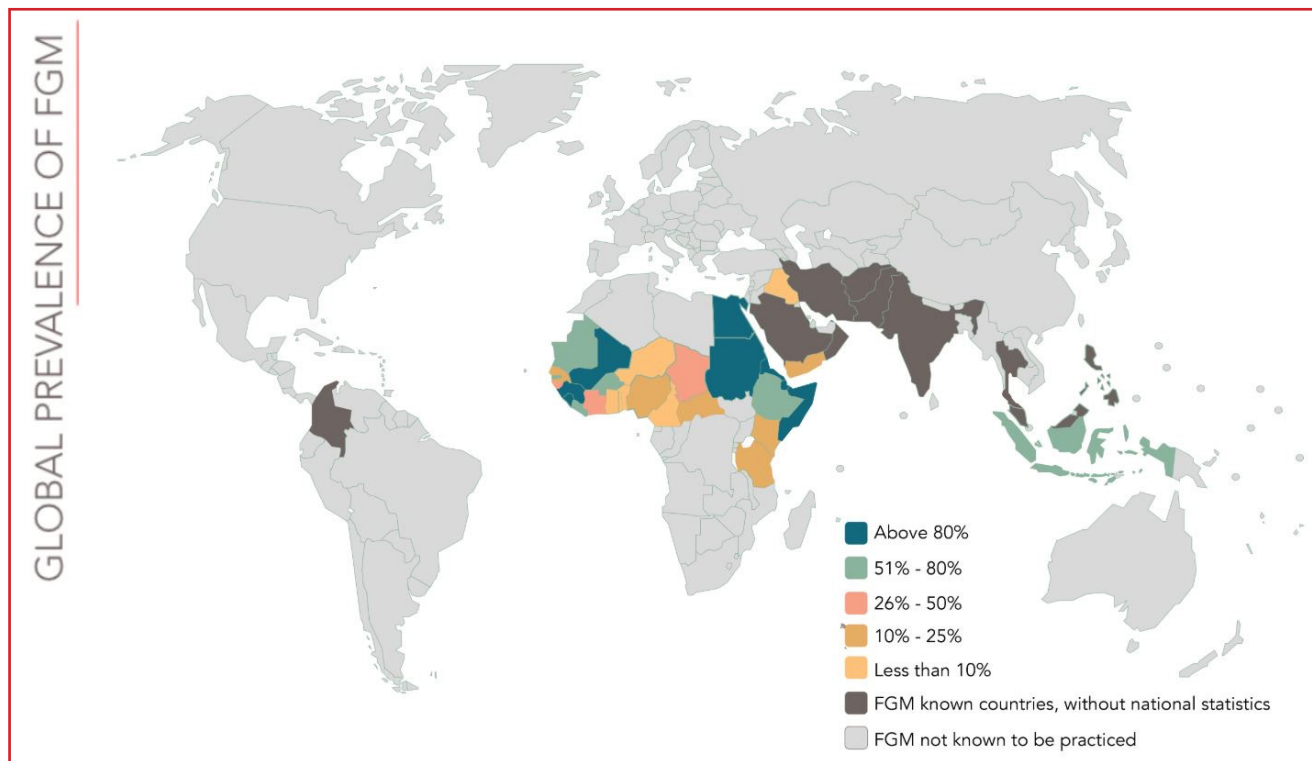


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- **Call for Collaborative Efforts:** Countries like **Kenya** and **Uganda** have shown declining prevalence rates due to community-led initiatives and stronger policies.
  - UN agencies urged for increased collaboration among governments, civil society, healthcare providers, and grassroots organisations to eliminate FGM.



#### FGM in India

- The reasons for FGM referred to as **“Khafd”** in India to practiced uphold tradition, follow religious edicts, and control women’s sexuality.
- It is mainly practiced by the **Bohra Muslim community** in India, with **no specific law currently banning the practice**.
- In 2018, a **Public Interest Litigation** was filed in the SC seeking a ban on **FGM**, citing a **violation of women’s rights**; however, the community defended it as **a matter of religious freedom under Article 25**.
  - The **Supreme Court (SC)** noted that **FGM** violates **Article 21** (life and personal liberty) and **Article 15** (no discrimination by sex). The PIL is still under consideration by the SC.

## Rising Online Child Abuse

### Why in News?

A study published in **The Lancet**, based on a comprehensive analysis of **123 studies** from various regions, has highlighted the **growing concern of online sexual abuse** faced by children worldwide.

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## What are the Key Findings of the Study on Online Child Abuse?

- **Prevalence of Abuse:** It highlights that **one in 12 children globally** (approximately **8.3%**) has **experienced online sexual abuse** in the last decade.
- **Types of Exploitation:** The study identified several subtypes of online sexual abuse, including **online solicitation** involving sexual inquiries/conversations (12.5%), **non-consensual image sharing** (12.6%), **online sexual exploitation** (4.7%), and **sexual extortion** (3.5%).
- **Gender Dynamics:** There is **no significant difference in online abuse rates between boys and girls**, challenging earlier beliefs that girls are more vulnerable.
  - This suggests **changing online environments and behaviors**, with **increasing risks for boys**.
- **Mental Health Implications:** The report links online sexual exploitation to **severe mental and physical health consequences** for victims, including **lower life expectancy** and reduced employment prospects.

## What are the Reasons for Rising Online Child Abuse?

- **Increased Internet Access:** Widespread internet access has significantly **increased children's online presence (1/3 of internet users)** rendering them vulnerable to exploitation, especially in unsupervised social media and gaming.
- **Pandemic-Related Factors:** Increased online activity during **Covid-19 pandemic** enabled **offenders to exploit children**, leading to a surge in abuse cases, including a **threefold rise in sextortion since March 2020**.
- **Advancements in Technology:** The large number of **artificial intelligence (AI) tools** and **digital platforms** has made it easier for offenders to create and distribute **child sexual abuse material (CSAM)** that is difficult to **detect and trace**.

- **Lack of Digital Literacy:** Limited awareness of online safety makes users vulnerable; only **38% of Indian households** are digitally literate.
- **Inadequate Monitoring and Enforcement:** Law enforcement and technology companies face challenges in keeping up with **rapidly evolving online platforms**, leaving **gaps in monitoring and enforcement**.

### India's Initiatives Related to Online Child Abuse

- **Legislative and Policy Measures:**
  - **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012** provides a legal framework to combat child sexual abuse, including **online exploitation**.
  - **Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000** contains provisions related to **cybercrimes** against children.
  - **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015** addresses **child protection issues**, including **online abuse**.
- **Institutional Mechanisms:**
  - **National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal:** Enables reporting of **online child abuse cases**.
  - **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)** strengthens law enforcement efforts against **cybercrimes**, including **child exploitation**.

## International Day of Women and Girls in Science

### Why in News?

The year 2025 marks the **10<sup>th</sup> anniversary** of the **International Day of Women and Girls in Science (IDWGS)**, observed annually on **11<sup>th</sup> February**.

- This day promotes the full and **equal participation of women and girls in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)**.

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# International Day for Women and Girls in Science



## ABOUT

- Celebrated **every year on February 11** since 2015
- Observed by the United Nation to promote the full and equal access and participation of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields.

## THEME 2023

- Innovate. Demonstrate. Elevate. Advance. Sustain (I.D.E.A.S.)

## STATUS OF WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN THE SCIENCE SECTOR

- According to the All India Survey on Higher Education 2020-2021, number of science researchers in India has doubled from 30,000 in 2014 to over 60,000 in 2022.
- Women's participation is the **highest in biotechnology at 40% and medicine at 35%.**

## INITIATIVES TAKEN FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE

- **Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions (GATI):**
  - To develop a comprehensive Charter and a framework for assessing Gender Equality in STEM.
- **Vigyan Jyoti Scheme:**
  - To create a level-playing field for the meritorious girls in high school to pursue STEM in their higher education.
- **Indo-US Fellowship for Women in STEMM (WISTEMM) program:**
  - Women scientists can work in research labs in the US.
- **Consolidation of University Research for Innovation and Excellence in Women Universities (CURIE) Programme:**
  - Improving R&D infrastructure and establishing state-of-the-art research facilities in order to create excellence in S&T in women universities.

## Women who Shaped India's Scientific History



**Anandibai Gopalrao Joshi (1865-1887)**

- First Indian female to study and graduate with a degree in western medicines from the United States.
- Believed to be the first woman to set foot on American soil from India.



**Kamala Sohanie (1911-1998)**

- First Indian woman to receive a PhD in a scientific discipline.
- Discovered the enzyme 'Cytochrome C' (helps in energy synthesis).



**Kadambini Ganguly (1861-1923)**

- Becomes India's first female doctor & practitioner of western medicine in the whole South Asia.



**Anna Mani (1918-2001)**

- First woman to join the Meteorological department.



**Kamal Ranadive (1917-2001)**

- Established India's first tissue culture research laboratory at the Indian Research Centre in Mumbai.



**Bibha Chowdhary (1913-1991)**

- First woman high energy physicist of India and the first woman scientist at the TFIR.
- IAU honoured her by naming a white yellow dwarf star after her name.



**Sanghamitra Bandyopadhyay**

- She has been conferred the Padma Shri in 2022.
- She is the first woman director of the Indian Statistical Institute.



**Edavaleth Kakkat Janaki Ammal (1897-1984)**

- Made significant contributions to genetics, evolution, phytogeography and ethnobotany.
- First director of the Central Botanical laboratory at Allahabad.



**Ms. Sujatha Ramdorai**

- She was awarded the Padma shri award in 2023.
- She became the first Indian to win the prestigious ICTP Ramanujan Prize in 2006.
- She was also awarded the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Award, the highest honour in scientific fields by the Indian Government in 2004.
- She is also the recipient of the 2020 Krieger-Nelson Prize for her exceptional contributions to mathematics research



**Debala Mitra (1925-2003)**

- First Indian archaeologist served as Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India.
- Explored and excavated several Buddhist sites.

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## What is the Status of Women in STEM?

### ➤ Global Scenario:

- **Women in STEM:** According to **UN data**, globally, women remain underrepresented in **STEM education and careers**, constituting only **35% of STEM graduates**.
- Between **1901 and 2024**, only **26 out of 650 Nobel laureates** in **Physics, Chemistry, and Physiology or Medicine** have been women.

## Facts & figures



Only 1 in 3 scientists worldwide is a woman

Despite some progress in recent years, gender equality in science remains elusive



Less than 2/5 STEM graduates are women

The gender gap varies across scientific disciplines. Some fields, such as physics, tend to attract more men than women



Only 12% of national academies of science members are women

At the upper levels of scientific hierarchies, the proportion of women scientists declines



Not all countries have reliable data on gender and science

98 countries have not supplied data for 2018-2021 (dataset of the UNESCO Institute of Statistics)

### ➤ Indian Scenario:

- **Women in Research:** Government data presented in **Lok Sabha (2024)** shows women comprise only **18.6% of the scientific workforce**.
- **STEM Enrolment:** Women constitute **43% of STEM students** in higher education.
- **Declining Representation:** Their presence significantly drops at **higher research levels and leadership positions** in scientific institutions.

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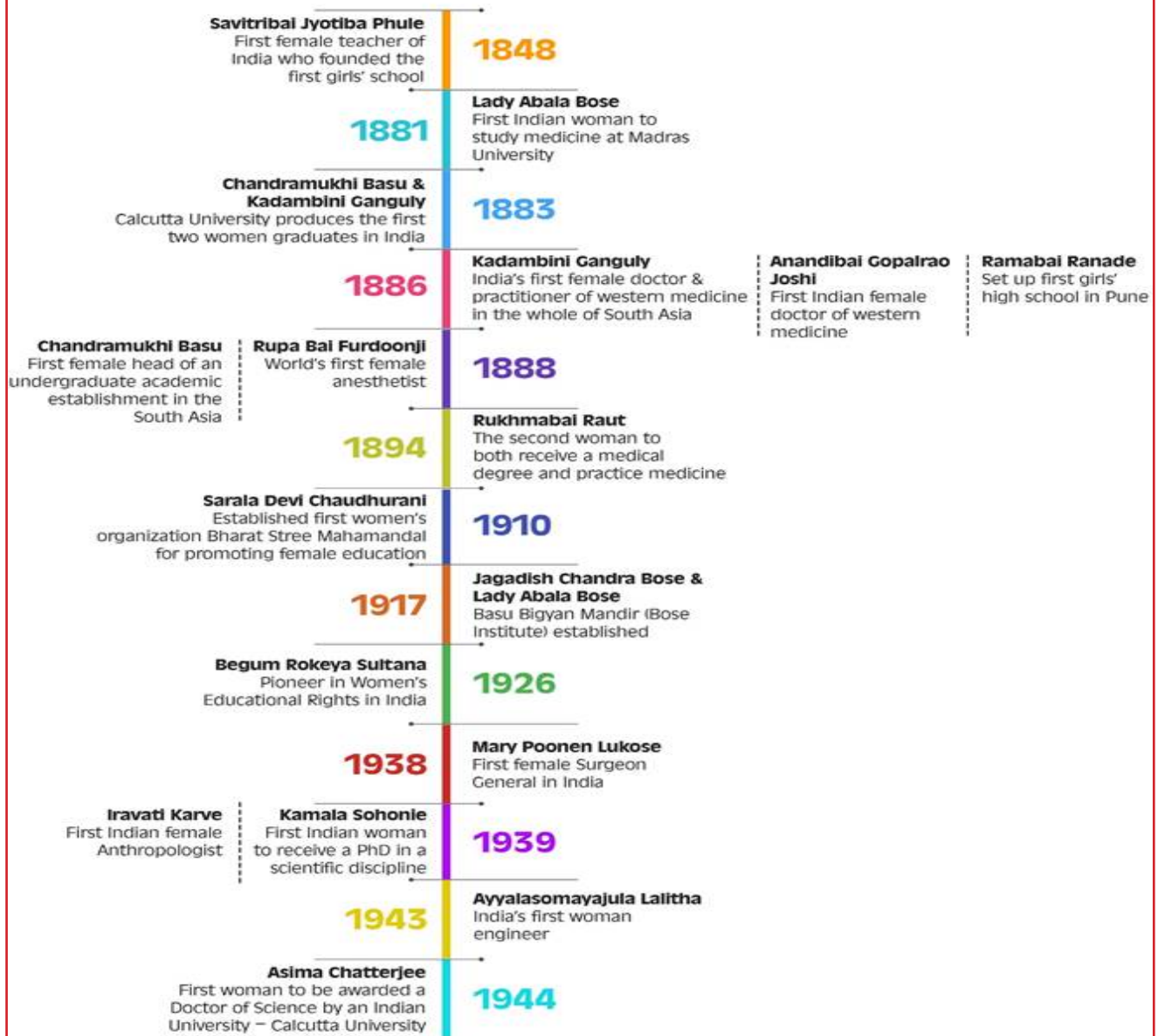


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## Milestones of Women in Indian Science



### What are India's Initiatives Related to STEM?

- [National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing Innovations](#)
- [Vigyan Jyoti](#)
- [Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions \(GATI\)](#)
- [WISE-KIRAN Scheme](#)

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➤ **BioCARE Fellowship:**

- It supports women scientists in biotechnology and allied fields to build successful research careers.

➤ **Technology Business Incubators (TBIs) at Women's Universities**

- TBIs have been established at IGDTUW (Delhi), SPMVV (Tirupati), and iTBI at DTU to promote women-led innovation and gender inclusivity in entrepreneurship.

### What are the Challenges Related to Women in STEM?

- **Workforce Dropout & Societal Barriers:** Women in STEM face career discontinuity due to caregiving responsibilities, rigid work policies, and re-entry challenges. Cultural stereotypes further discourage their participation, widening the gender gap in science.
- **Workplace Barriers:** Gender biases, lack of mentorship, and underrepresentation in decision-making roles restrict career growth. Women face lower access to research funding and leadership positions.
- **Institutional Barriers:** Lack of gender-sensitive policies such as maternity benefits, flexible work arrangements and limited gender data access hinder women's retention and equity in STEM.

## Tribal Welfare Measures in Budget 2025-26

### Why in News?

The **Union Budget 2025-26** has increased the Ministry of Tribal Affairs' allocation by 45.79% from 2024, emphasizing education, infrastructure, and socio-economic development.

### What are the Key Highlights of Union Budget 2025-26 for Tribal Welfare?

- **Increased Budgetary Allocation:** The Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) received Rs 14,925.81 crore in Budget 2025-26, a 45.79% increase from 2024-25.

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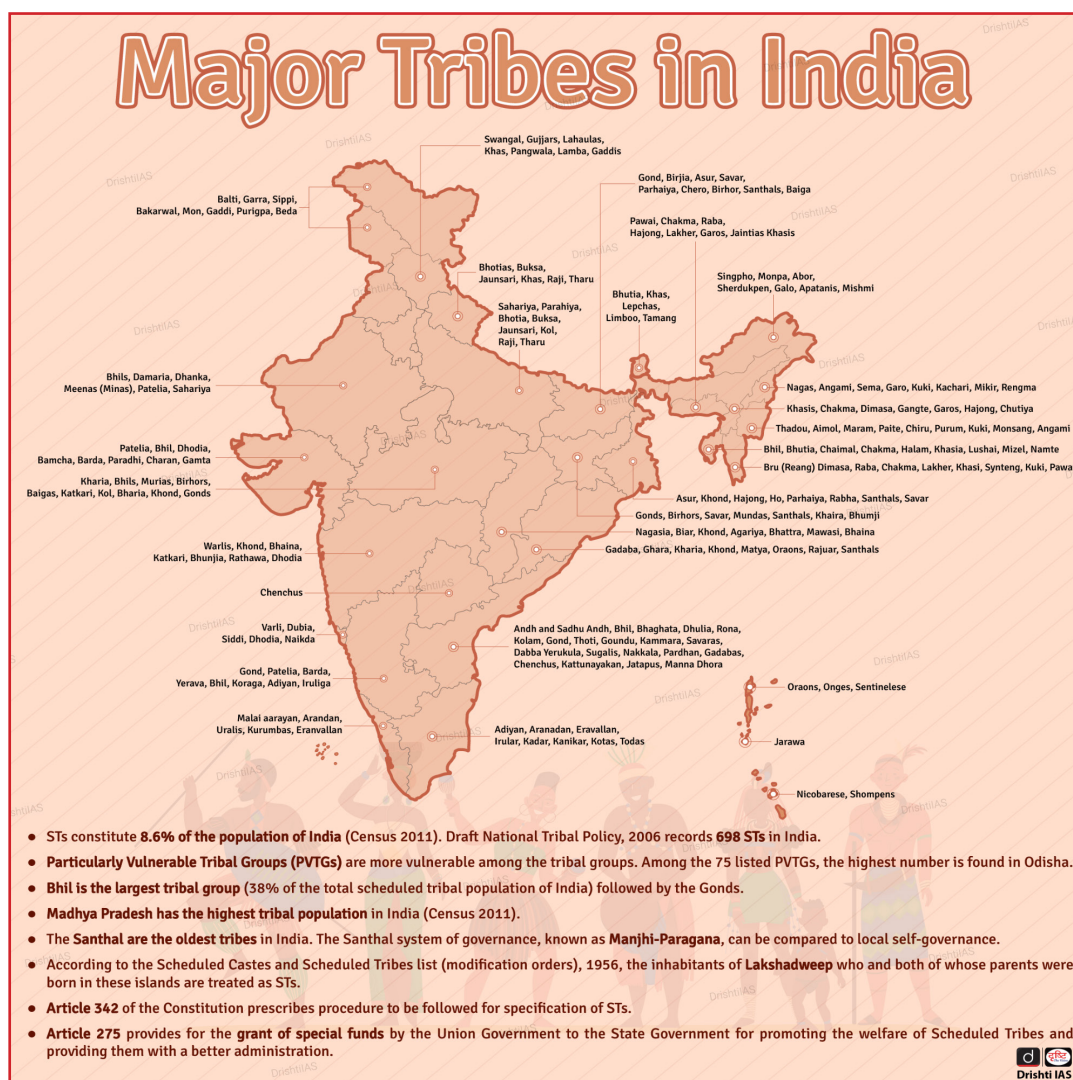


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- The **Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment** received **Rs 13,611 crore** (35.75% increase).
- The **Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA)** focuses on the welfare and development of **Scheduled Tribes (STs)**, while the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (MoSJE) works for the welfare of **SCs, STs, OBCs, PwDs, the elderly, and the transgender community**.
- **Expansion of Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS):** The **Budget 2025-26** allocates **Rs 7,088.60 crore** for **EMRS**, with the aim to operationalize 728 schools by March 2026, benefiting **3.5 lakh tribal students** with quality education and residential facilities.
- **DA-JGUA:** The **Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DA-JGUA)**, originally named the **PM Janjatiya Unnat Gram Abhiyan (PM-JUGA)** received **Rs 2,000 crore**, a **fourfold increase** from **Rs 500 crore**, to enhance **infrastructure, education, and livelihoods** in tribal regions.
- **Expediting PM-JANMAN:** The **Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN)** allocation has doubled to **Rs 300 crore** in **Budget 2025-26** to enhance healthcare, education, and livelihoods for **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)**.
- To expedite the **PM-JANMAN Housing Scheme**, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs revised the approval process for **PM-AWAS homes**, aiming for **4.90 lakh houses** for **PVTGs**.



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### What are the Various Government Initiatives Related to Tribals?

- **TRIFED**
- **Digital Transformation of Tribal Schools**
- **Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups**
- **Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana**
- **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)**
- **Janjatiya Gaurav Divas**
- **Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra**
- **Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)**

What are the Challenges Faced by Tribes in India?

Click to Read: [Problems Faced By Tribes in India](#)

## Mental Health at Workplace and Economic Productivity

### Why in News?

The **Economic Survey 2025** highlighted the significant impact of workplace culture, working hours, and lifestyle on mental health and worker productivity.

- It stressed the urgent need for improved **workplace** conditions and healthier lifestyles to boost employee well-being, which in turn, can enhance economic growth.

### What are the Key Factors Affecting Mental Health?

- **Workplace Culture:** A positive workplace culture boosts mental well-being. The survey finds that employees with **good relationships with managers and colleagues** report **33% higher mental well-being** scores.
  - A sense of purpose at work further enhances well-being.
- **Workload Management:** Excessive workloads negatively impact mental health. Employees with manageable workloads report **27% greater mental well-being** than those overwhelmed by work.
  - Long working hours (55-60 per week) increase stress and anxiety.

- **Impact of Remote Work:** While remote work offers flexibility, fully remote employees report **17% lower mental well-being** scores than those in-office or in hybrid models.
  - Social interaction at work is crucial for mental health.
- **Lifestyle Choices and Mental Well-being:**
  - **Dietary Choices:** Individuals who avoid **ultra-processed and packaged foods** report better mental well-being.
  - **Physical Activity:** Lack of exercise is linked to **higher stress levels** and lower productivity.
  - **Social Media Usage:** Excessive social media consumption is correlated with **declining mental health**.
  - **Family Ties:** Strong family relationships contribute significantly to better mental well-being.

### Increase in Self-Employed Workers as per Economic Survey 2024-25

- **Rise in Self-Employment:** The proportion of self-employed workers increased from **52.2% (2017-18)** to **58.4% (2023-24)**.
- **Sectoral Trends:** Agriculture remains dominant in employment, rising from **44.1% to 46.1%** during the same period.
- **Decline in Regular Jobs:** The share of salaried employment fell from **22.8% in 2017-18** to **21.7% in 2023-24**.
  - **Casual employment** also declined from **24.9% to 19.8%**, indicating a shift toward structured self-employment.
- **Unemployment Reduction:** The unemployment rate (15+ age group) declined from **6% (2017-18)** to **3.2% (2023-24)**.
- **Formal Sector Growth:** Net additions to **EPFO** subscriptions more than doubled, rising from **61 lakh (2018-19)** to **1.31 crore (2023-24)**, with **61%** of new payroll additions from youth (<29 years).

### What are the Key Implications of Poor Mental Health on the Economy?

- **Lost Productivity:** Mental health disorders such as **depression and anxiety** contribute to **reduced work efficiency**, absenteeism, and presenteeism (working while unwell).

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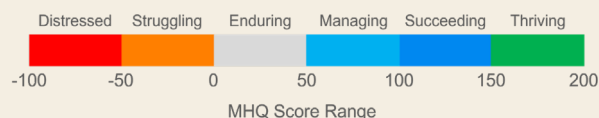
- As per **WHO**, globally, depression and anxiety lead to a loss of **12 billion work days annually**, amounting to an economic cost of nearly **USD 1 trillion**.

- In India, this translates to a loss of approximately **Rs 7,000 per affected worker per day**.

- **Absenteeism and Turnover:** Mental health conditions can result in **higher rates of sick days**, early departures, and increased job turnover, further disrupting workflow and **incurring costs associated with recruitment and training replacements**.
- **Economic Survey 2024-25** noted that individuals with poor mental well-being lose about **15 working days per month**, compared to **2-3 days for healthier individuals**.
- **Increased Healthcare Expenditure:** Poor mental health leads to **higher healthcare costs** due to **frequent medical visits**, hospitalizations, and long-term treatment, increasing the burden on public health infrastructure, diverting resources from other critical areas.
- **Decline in Innovation and Entrepreneurship:** Poor mental health **hampers creativity, risk-taking, and decision-making**, slowing technological and business **advancements**, especially in high-performance sectors facing stress and burnout.

#### Mental Health Quotient (MHQ)

- MHQ is a **standardized measure assessing mental well-being** and cognitive functioning.
- The **evaluation** is based on **self-reported responses to a standardized questionnaire**, assessing mental well-being across key domains like **emotional resilience, cognitive function, social well-being, and risk factors**.
- The **MHQ score** ranges from **-100 to +200**, assessing overall mental well-being. Higher scores indicate better mental health



### What are Suggestions Provided by Economic Survey 2024-25?

- **Workplace Reforms:** Foster a **supportive work culture** by improving interpersonal relationships, reducing workplace stress, and promoting a sense of purpose.
  - Implement **work-hour regulations** to prevent burnout and enhance productivity.
- **Flexible Work Models:** Encourage **hybrid work policies** to balance flexibility and social interaction, mitigating the negative effects of full remote work.
- **Health and Lifestyle Interventions:** Employers and the government should promote **healthy eating, physical activity**, and digital detox to improve mental well-being.
- **Awareness and Mental Health Programs:** Implement large-scale **mental health awareness initiatives, counseling services, and employee assistance programs** to support workplace well-being.
- **Policy and Legislative Measures:** Strengthen **occupational health policies** by integrating mental health considerations into labor laws, ensuring workplaces adopt mental health-friendly practices.

## Ban on Begging

### Why in News?

Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh has issued a complete **ban on begging** across all public places, following **Indore's example**, as part of efforts to tackle the issue and provide alternative solutions for displaced beggars.

### Why Did Bhopal Implement a Ban on Begging?

- **Reasons for Ban on Begging:** The ban was triggered by reports of **begging at traffic signals**, religious sites, and tourist spots, causing **traffic disruptions and accidents**.
  - Authorities also revealed that **many beggars come from other states and have criminal records** or are involved in illicit activities, emphasizing the need for immediate action to ensure public safety and prevent further hazards.

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- Bhopal, under Section 163 of **Bhartiya Nagrik Suraksha Sahita (BNSS)** (empowers magistrates to issue urgent orders in nuisance cases), has banned begging district-wide.
  - Additionally, **BNSS Section 223 punishes people who disobey orders** that have been officially given by public servants.
- This ban follows the actions of Indore, which imposed a **similar ban earlier this year, including filing first information reports (FIRs)** against violators.

### What is the Legal Framework Regarding Begging?

- **Colonial Law:** The **Criminal Tribes Act of 1871** criminalised **nomadic tribes**, associating them with **vagrancy and begging**.
- **Current Legal Framework:** The **Constitution of India** allows both the **Union and state governments** to enact laws on **vagrancy (includes beggary)**, **nomadic**, and **migratory tribes** under the **Concurrent List (List III, Entry 15)**.
  - There is **no central Act on beggary**. Instead, many states and Union Territories have based their laws on the **Bombay Prevention of Begging Act, 1959**.
    - The Act defines a beggar as anyone **soliciting alms, performing or offering articles for sale, or appearing destitute** without visible means of subsistence.
- **Jurisprudence:** The **Delhi High Court**, in 2018, ruled that the **Bombay Act** was arbitrary and violated the right to live with dignity, underscoring the importance of addressing poverty without criminalizing it.
  - The **Supreme Court of India** in 2021 rejected a **Public Interest Litigation** seeking to remove beggars from public spaces, emphasizing that begging is a **socio-economic problem** rather than a **criminal issue**.
- **SMILE:** Launched in 2022, **Support for Marginalised Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise (SMILE)** by **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**, aims to **rehabilitate beggars** by providing medical care, education, and skills training, working toward a **"beggar-free" India by 2026**.

- As of 2024, 970 individuals have rehabilitated under SMILE, including 352 children.

**Note:** As per **Census 2011**, India has around 413670 beggars and vagrants. **West Bengal leads** with the highest number of beggars, followed by Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

### Why is Begging Prevalent in India?

- **Economic Hardship:** **Poverty, unemployment, and underemployment** are major drivers of begging.
  - **Rural-to-urban migration** among marginalised people often leads to destitution, forcing individuals into begging.
- **Social and Cultural Factors:** The **caste system** has historically marginalized certain communities, leaving them with limited opportunities.
  - In some cultures, begging is considered a **hereditary occupation** (e.g., Nats, Bajigars, and Sains).
- **Physical and Mental Disabilities:** Lack of healthcare and rehabilitation services pushes **disabled individuals into begging**.
  - Many **mentally ill individuals** are abandoned and resort to begging for survival.
- **Natural Disasters:** **Floods, droughts, and earthquakes** displace people, pushing them into extreme poverty and begging.
- **Organized Begging Rings:** **Human traffickers** and criminal syndicates exploit **women and children** for forced begging infringing upon **Article 23** (prohibits trafficking in human beings, slavery, or exploitation).
  - Babies are often drugged to appear sick and increase sympathy-driven donations.

### What is the Impact of Begging on Society?

- **Public Health and Hygiene Risks:** Begging hotspots often **lack sanitation**, leading to the **spread of diseases**.
  - Malnourished beggars suffer from severe health issues, burdening **public healthcare systems**.
- **Crime and Exploitation:** Organized begging rings engage in **child trafficking and forced labor**. The risk of **drug addiction and substance abuse** is high among beggars.

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- **Tourism and Urban Spaces:** Aggressive begging in cities affects tourism and damages India's global image.
  - Increased street begging leads to security concerns and public nuisance complaints.
- **Human Rights Violations:** Many beggars are arrested under anti-begging laws without alternative rehabilitation.
  - The definition of a beggar continues to reflect colonial-era prejudices, which often include nomadic tribes and the poor as targets of legal action.
  - These laws can sometimes give authorities the power to round up the poor or those seen as incompatible with the urban aesthetic.

## Exploitation of Domestic Workers

### Why in News?

The **Supreme Court (SC) of India** has raised concerns over the exploitation and abuse of **domestic workers in India** due to the absence of a protective legal framework.

- It has directed the Centre to form an **inter-ministerial expert committee** to assess the need for a protective law.

### Who are Domestic Workers?

- **About:** According to the **ILO**, Domestic workers are those workers who perform work in or for a private household or households.
  - They provide direct and indirect care services, and as such are key members of the **care economy**.
- **Status of Domestic Workers in India:** Women make up the majority of domestic workers in India, with **26 lakh of the 39 lakh workers being female**, according to 2019 government estimates.
  - **12.6 million minors** are employed as domestic workers (86% are girls, and 25% are under 14 years old).
- **Characteristics of Domestic Workers:**
  - **Informal and Unregulated:** Most domestic workers lack job contracts, social security, and legal protection.

- **Live-in and Part-time Work:** Some workers live with their employers (live-in workers), while others work in multiple households (part-time workers).
- **Migration:** Domestic workers often migrate from poverty-stricken states like **Jharkhand, Bihar, and Odisha** to cities such as Delhi, Bengaluru, and Mumbai, as well as to **Arab States**, due to extreme poverty and a lack of job opportunities.
- **Marginalized Communities:** The workforce is primarily composed of marginalized communities from **Scheduled Castes (SCs)**, **Other Backward Classes (OBCs)**, and **Scheduled Tribes (STs)**.

### What are the Concerns of Domestic Workers India?

- **Low Wages:** Many earn below the minimum wage, with no formal contracts. They often work excessive hours without breaks or overtime pay.
- **Abuse:** Workers face physical and emotional abuse, including beatings, harsh conditions, **sexual harassment**, **forced labour**, and **human trafficking**, particularly minors from vulnerable communities.
  - The **ILO** states domestic work as a “modern slavery” practice, where workers, including minors, are vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, forced labor, and trafficking.
- **Sexual Harassment:** Female workers are vulnerable to sexual abuse. Many cases of abuse go unreported due to fear of retaliation or the lack of legal recourse.
- **Exploitation by Agencies:** Placement agencies exploit domestic workers by charging high fees for employment, without guaranteeing fair wages or safe conditions.
  - Workers are often not informed about the terms of their employment, including wages or job responsibilities.
- **Pandemic:** **Covid-19** worsened conditions, a 2020 study found that 57% of domestic workers in Kochi, Delhi, and Mumbai faced discrimination, while 40% worked without safety measures.

### What Laws Govern Domestic Work in India?

- **No Dedicated Central Law:** Domestic workers are excluded from mainstream labor laws as “workman”

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and “workplace” definitions do not cover household work, often seen as “unproductive” women’s labor.

- Multiple attempts were made to pass a Central law to protect domestic workers, including the **Domestic Workers (Conditions of Employment) Bill of 1959** and the **Domestic Workers (Regulation of Work and Social Security) Bill of 2017**.

- The **2019 National Domestic Worker Policy** aimed to regulate agencies and ensure workers’ rights, **including wages**, social security, and benefits. **However, none of these proposed laws were enacted.**

➤ **Weak Legal Protections:**

- **Unorganised Sector Social Security Act, 2008:** Provided some benefits but was later replaced by the **Code on Social Security, 2020**, which **has not been implemented.**
- **Minimum Wages Act, 1948:** Recognizes domestic work, but **only 10 states** have set minimum wages for domestic workers.
- **Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act, 2013:** Recognizes domestic workers but **lacks an enforcement mechanism.**
- **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986:** In 2006, India banned minors under 14 from domestic work, deeming it “**hazardous child labor**,” but the **Child Labour Act, 1986**, allows children over 14 to work in homes, considering them a “safe” place.

- **State Laws: Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Kerala** have implemented laws to protect domestic workers.
  - These states have established **specialized bodies** to oversee social security benefits, maternity care, education assistance, medical reimbursements, and minimum wages.
- **Global Protections:** In 2011, India voted in favor of **ILO Convention 189**, which aims to improve domestic workers’ conditions by recognizing **domestic work as legitimate work** ensuring domestic workers enjoy the same rights as others. **However, India has yet to ratify the convention.**

**Core Conventions of the ILO: - The eight Core Conventions of the ILO (also called fundamental/ human rights conventions) are:**

- Forced Labour Convention (No. 29)
- Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No.105)
- Equal Remuneration Convention (No.100)
- Discrimination (Employment Occupation) Convention (No.111)
- Minimum Age Convention (No.138)
- Worst forms of Child Labour Convention (No.182)

**(The above Six have been ratified by India)**

- Freedom of Association and Protection of Right to Organised Convention (No.87)
- Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (No.98)

**(The above two conventions have not been ratified by India)**



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# Science & Technology

## Highlights

- In-Vitro Gametogenesis (IVG)
- Einstein Ring
- Bombay Blood Group
- Antibiotics Resistance
- Asteroid 2024 YR4
- India's Nuclear Programme

## In-Vitro Gametogenesis (IVG)

### Why in News?

Researchers have developed In-Vitro Gametogenesis (IVG) that enables lab-based reproduction from **stem cells** that has many benefits compared to **In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF)**.

### What is In-Vitro Gametogenesis (IVG)?

- **About:** IVG is a new reproductive technology that creates **eggs and sperm** from **stem cells** collected from **skin, hair, or blood**.
  - These lab-grown gametes can be fertilized to create an **embryo**, which is implanted into a **surrogate** to carry the pregnancy.
- **Scientific Breakthroughs:** Scientists in Japan successfully produced **mice** using **IVG**, while the UK researchers expect **human trials within three years**.
  - It could allow **same-sex couples, older individuals, and infertile people** to have **biological children without** the need of a donor as in case of IVF.
- **Significance for India:** Due to several **socio-biological factors** IVG can be helpful in case of India like:
  - Indian women's reproductive age (**ovarian function**) is **declining six years earlier** than Western women.
  - **Men's sperm count** has declined over **50 years** and may reach **minimal levels** in **four decades**.
  - India's population has fallen **below the 2.1 replacement level**, risking an aging crisis.

### Difference Between IVG and In-Vitro Fertilisation (IVF):

Aspect	In-Vitro Gametogenesis (IVG)	In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF)
<b>Gamete Source</b>	Converts <b>stem cells</b> into eggs or sperm of the intended couple itself.	Requires <b>natural eggs and sperm</b> from the <b>intended couple or donors</b> .
<b>Genetic Editing</b>	Allows <b>removal of harmful traits</b> before fertilization ( <b>designer babies</b> ).	Limited to <b>screening embryos</b> for genetic disorders.
<b>Reproductive Age</b>	Could enable parenthood at any age by creating new gametes.	Fertility is limited by age-related as egg and sperm quality <b>declines with age</b> .
<b>Legal Status</b>	<b>Not yet regulated</b> in most countries.	Regulated and <b>widely used</b> worldwide.
<b>Ethical Concerns</b>	Raises concerns about designer babies and <b>genetic selection</b> e.g., <b>selection of physical traits, intelligence etc.</b>	Less controversial, but involves embryo selection.

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### Stem Cells

- **About:** Stem cells are unique cells that generate **specialized cells like blood, bone, and muscle**, playing a vital role in **tissue repair and bodily functions**.
- **Types:**
  - **Embryonic (Pluripotent) Stem Cells:** Can become **any cell type**, sourced from **embryos or cord blood**.
  - **Tissue-Specific (Multipotent/Unipotent) Stem Cells:** Generate cells **only for their tissue**, e.g., **blood stem cells**.
  - **Induced Pluripotent Stem Cells (iPSCs):** Lab-made cells mimicking embryonic stem cells for **research and drug testing**.

## Einstein Ring

### Why in News?

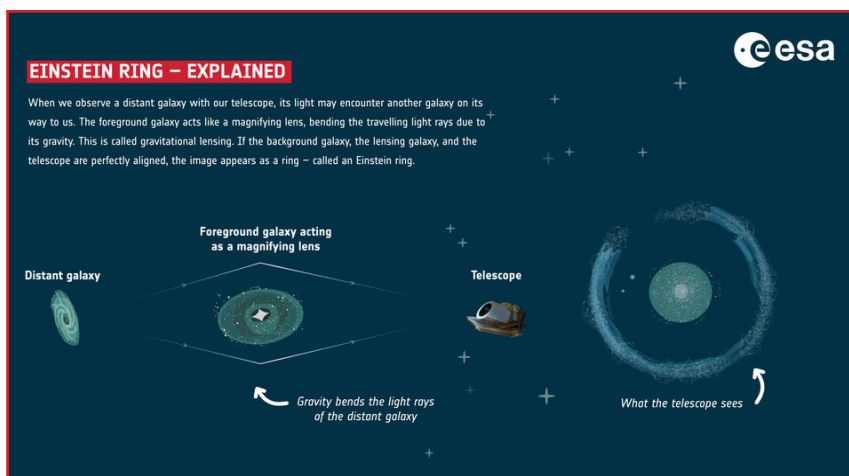
The **European Space Agency's (ESA)** Euclid space telescope discovered a rare **Einstein ring** around the galaxy **NGC 6505**, nearly **590 million light-years** away from Earth.

**Note:** A light-year is the distance light travels in one year, which is 9.46 trillion kilometres.

### What is an Einstein Ring?

- **About:** An Einstein ring is a **ring of light** that appears around a celestial object, such as a **dark matter**, galaxy or cluster of galaxies.

- A full Einstein ring appears only if the observer (Euclid telescope), lensing object, and background galaxy are nearly perfectly aligned.
- **Gravitational Lensing:** It is a phenomenon caused by **gravitational lensing**, where a massive celestial body (like a galaxy) creates a **gravitational field** that **bends and amplifies the light** from a more distant object behind it forming a complete ring around the foreground object, known as an **Einstein ring**.
  - The object causing the light bending is called a gravitational lens.
- **Discovery:** First discovered in 1987, Einstein rings are extremely rare, found in less than 1% of galaxies.
  - The Einstein ring around NGC 6505 is formed by light from an unnamed galaxy 4.42 billion light-years away, distorted by the **gravitational pull of NGC 6505**, creating the striking **ring-like appearance** observed around it.
- **Nomenclature:** **Albert Einstein's General Theory of Relativity** predicted that light **could bend and brighten** (warp space-time and curve the path of light) around massive objects due to their gravitational pull, hence the name **"Einstein ring."**
- **Observation:** Not visible to the naked eye, can only be observed through **powerful space telescopes** like Euclid.
- **Scientific Importance:** They provide a unique way to study the Universe because they act as a **natural magnifying glass**, revealing details of distant galaxies that would otherwise be invisible.
  - Einstein Rings are valuable tools in **astrophysics** because they help scientists investigate **dark matter** and study **dark energy** (responsible for the accelerating expansion of the Universe).



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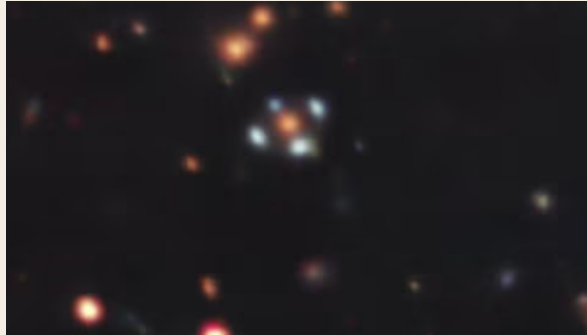
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### Phenomena Similar to Einstein rings

- **Einstein Cross:** An Einstein Cross is a rare **gravitational lensing** phenomenon where light from a distant galaxy is bent by a massive foreground galaxy, creating four distinct images around it in a cross-like pattern.



orange blob of light surrounded by four blue dots. That is the Einstein cross.

## Bombay Blood Group

### Why in News?

A woman with the rare '**Bombay**' (hh) blood group underwent a successful kidney transplant in India.

### What is Bombay Blood Group?

- **About:** It was identified in Mumbai in 1952, and also called the hh blood group due to the **absence of the H antigen**.
  - Antigens are **proteins or carbohydrates** on blood cells (**RBCs**, **WBCs** and **platelets**) that determine blood type. E.g., **AB blood group** has both **A and B antigens**, A has A antigens, B has B antigens, and O has none.
  - In the Bombay blood group, a **mutated or absent H antigen** gene prevents A, B, or O antigen formation.
- **Rarity:** It is **exceptionally rare** and found in approximately **1 in 10,000 Indians** and **1 in a million people globally**.
- **Problems in Blood Transfusion:** Individuals with hh blood groups can't receive any A, B, AB or O blood, including **O-negative**, as they contain the **H antigen**.
  - The recipient's immune system recognizes **donor antigens as foreign (antibodies)**, and triggers a severe **immune reaction**.

- **About Blood Group:** Under the **ABO blood group system**, blood groups are classified into four common blood groups i.e. **A, B, AB and O**.
  - It was first identified by Austrian immunologist **Karl Landsteiner in 1901**.
- **Cross-blood Transplants:** Cross-blood transplants (donors and recipients have **different blood types**) uses **double filtration plasmapheresis (DFPP)** process for blood transfusion.
  - In DFPP, the **antibodies** are **removed** from the **recipient's (patient's) blood**, using special filters for **safer transfusion** (suppress immune response).
  - If the recipient **antibodies** are not removed, they can cause **hemolysis (destruction of donor RBCs)** after transfusion.

## Blood Type Compatibility

Blood Type	Gives	Receives
A+	A+, AB+	A+, A-, O+, O-
O+	O+, A+, B+, AB+	O+, O-
B+	B+, AB+	B+, B-, O+, O-
AB+	AB+	Everyone
A-	A+, A-, AB+, AB-	A-, O-
O-	Everyone	O-
B-	B+, B-, AB+, AB-	B-, O-
AB-	AB+, AB-	AB-, A-, B-, O-

## Antibiotics Resistance

### Why in News?

**Widespread antibiotic use** in healthcare has fueled **drug-resistant bacteria**, with **antimicrobial resistance (AMR)** causing about **1.2 million deaths globally in 2021**.

- Indian hospitals report a **13% mortality rate** in infections caused by **drug-resistant bacteria**.

### What is Antibiotics Resistance?

- **About Antibiotics:** Antibiotics **treat bacterial infections** in humans and animals by **killing bacteria** or inhibiting their growth and multiplication.

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- They target bacterial **structures or processes**, ensuring minimal impact on human cells.
- **Working of Antibiotics:** Bacterial cells have a **protective cell wall** made of **peptidoglycan**. Its two key components are **Glycans and Peptides**.
- Antibiotics like **Penicillin** weakens bacterial cell walls by **disrupting peptide crosslinks**, leading to bacterial death.
- **Development of Antibiotics Resistance:** Antibiotic resistance occurs when bacteria **mutate or gain**

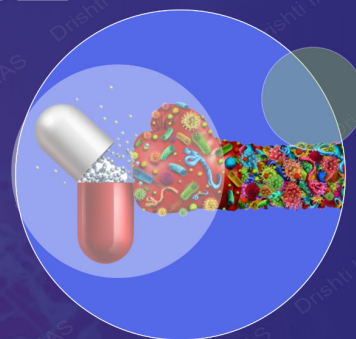
**resistance genes**, making infections harder to treat.

- Bacteria **evolve resistance** through various **mechanisms** like:
  - Producing enzymes like **penicillinase** against Penicillin, which break down antibiotic molecules.
  - **Modifying** their own structures to **evade the antibiotic's effects**.
- **New Survival Strategy:** A new study found that bacteria can **compensate for lost functions**, enhancing **resilience** and making **antibiotic resistance harder to combat**.

# ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE



*The ability of microorganisms to resist the effects of antimicrobial drugs*



## CAUSES OF ↑ AMR

- Poor infection control/sanitation
- Antibiotic overuse
- Genetic mutations of microbe
- Lack of investment in R&D of new antimicrobial drugs

*Microbes that develop AMR are called 'Superbugs'*

## IMPACTS OF AMR

- ↑ Risk of spreading infections
- Makes infections harder to treat; prolonged illness
- ↑ Healthcare costs

## EXAMPLE

- Carbapenem antibiotics stop responding due to AMR in *K. pneumoniae*
- AMR *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* causing Rifampicin-Resistant TB (RR-TB)
- Drug-resistant HIV (HIVDR) making antiretroviral (ARV) drugs ineffective

## RECOGNITION BY WHO

- Identified AMR as **one of the top 10 threats** to global health
- Launched **GLASS** (Global Antimicrobial Resistance and Use Surveillance System) in 2015

## INDIA'S INITIATIVES AGAINST AMR

- Surveillance of AMR in microbes causing **TB, Vector Borne diseases, AIDS etc.**
- **National Action Plan on AMR (2017)** with One Health approach
- **Antibiotic Stewardship Program** by ICMR

*New Delhi metallo-β-lactamase-1 (NDM-1) is a bacterial enzyme, emerged from India, that renders all current β-lactam antibiotics inactive*

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## Asteroid 2024 YR4

### Why in News?

**National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)** has identified a near-Earth Asteroid 2024 YR4, which has a slightly over 1% chance of impacting Earth in 2032.

### What are the Key Facts About Asteroid 2024 YR4?

- **About:** The asteroid, detected in December 2024, passed **800,000 km from Earth** (twice the Moon's distance) and remained observable until **April 2025**, set to reappear in **2028**.
- **Potential Risk:** NASA has classified it as **Level 3 on the Torino Scale**, indicating a potential for **localized destruction** if it impacts Earth.
  - The **Torino Scale**, adopted by the **IAU (International Astronomical Union)** in **1999**, categorizes asteroid impact risks on a **0 to 10** scale based on likelihood and severity.
  - It can release **8-10 megatons in case of impact**, higher than the **2013 Chelyabinsk, Russia meteor** (released **500 kilotons of energy**— about 30 times more than the Hiroshima atomic bomb).

### What are Asteroids?

- **About:** Asteroids are **rocky, airless remnants** from the **solar system's formation (4.6 billion years ago)**.
  - They primarily orbit the Sun in the **Asteroid Belt**, though some follow **Earth-crossing paths**.
  - Their sizes vary from **a few meters to hundreds of kilometers**.
- **Categorisation:**
  - **Main Asteroid Belt:** Located **between Mars and Jupiter**, this region contains the **majority of known asteroids**.
  - **Trojans:** These asteroids **share an orbit with a larger planet** and remain near **Lagrangian points (L4 and L5)**, where gravitational forces of the Sun and the planet balance, preventing collisions.

- **Near-Earth Asteroids (NEAs):** These asteroids have **orbits that bring them close to Earth**. Those that **intersect Earth's orbit** are specifically termed **Earth-crossers**.

- **Asteroid Collision Frequency:** Small asteroids frequently burn up in the atmosphere.
  - Larger asteroids occasionally reach the surface but **rarely cause significant damage**. Global-scale impacts, like the **Chicxulub event in Mexico** that led to the **extinction of dinosaurs and 75% of Earth's species**, occur approximately **once every 260 million years**.
- **Planetary Defense Against Asteroids:** NASA and other space agencies are developing **planetary defense mechanisms** to prevent asteroid collisions.
  - NASA's **DART mission (2022)** successfully altered the trajectory of asteroid Dimorphous, showcasing the potential for **deflection strategies** to mitigate future threats.

### Initiatives Related to Monitoring of Near-Earth Objects

- **Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART) Mission**
- **ESA's Hera Mission**
- **NETRA Project & Space Junk**

## What is a....?

### Comet

A comet is a mass of ice, rock, and dust, and often has a tail that is made up of dust and other materials.

### Asteroid

An asteroid is made up of metallic or non-metallic rocks, and orbits the sun. They can range in size from a few centimeters wide to almost a thousand kilometers across!

### Meteoroid

Meteoroids are usually fragments of asteroids or comets, often smaller than 1 meter wide, that fly through space.

### Meteor

A meteor is a meteoroid that enters Earth's atmosphere. It burns up as it travels through the atmosphere, producing a streak of light behind it.

### Meteorite

If a meteor doesn't completely burn up in the Earth's atmosphere, the fragment found on Earth is called a meteorite.

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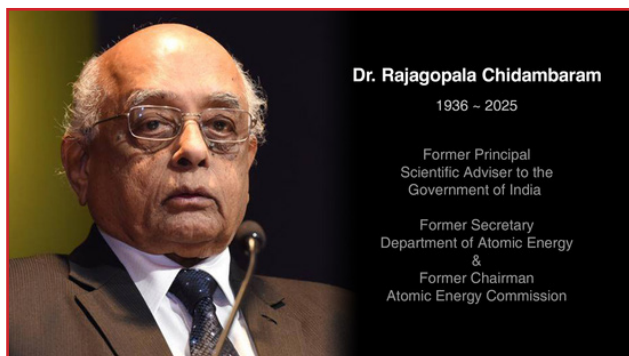
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## India's Nuclear Programme

### Why in News?

Eminent physicist, scientist, former Chairman of the **Atomic Energy Commission (AEC)** and a **key architect of India's nuclear programme** **Dr. Rajagopala Chidambaram** recently passed away.



### Key Contributions of Dr. Rajagopala Chidambaram

- **Scientific Achievements:** Solved the “equation of state” for plutonium (1967), advancing nuclear fission and **materials science**.

### ➤ 3 Stages:

Stage	Aim	Fuel/Coolant/ Moderator	Nuclear Reactor	Current Status
<b>Stage 1</b>	It aims to generate electricity while <b>producing plutonium-239 (Pu-239)</b> as a byproduct. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Plutonium is key for the next stages of the programme.</li> </ul>	Fuel: <b>Uranium (U-238)</b> Moderator: <b>Heavy water (deuterium oxide)</b>	Pressurized Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs)	India has already constructed 18 PHWRs, as the foundation of India's nuclear power infrastructure.
<b>Stage 2</b>	It focuses on <b>Fast Breeder Reactors (FBRs)</b> , which utilize <b>Pu-239</b> from the first stage to generate more fissile material than they consume. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ These reactors convert <b>fertile uranium-238</b> into <b>Pu-239</b>, enhancing the nuclear fuel cycle efficiency and providing a sustainable fuel source.</li> </ul>	Mixed Oxide of <b>Plutonium-239 and Uranium-238</b>	Fast Breeder Reactors (FBRs)	The <b>Prototype FBR</b> at <b>Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu</b> , is a key development in this stage.

- Led India's indigenous **supercomputer** development.

- **Leadership in Nuclear Tests:** **Smiling Buddha** (1974) and **Operation Shakti** (1998).

- **Key Positions:** Director of **BARC**, Chairman of **Atomic Energy Commission (AEC)**, Chairman of **IAEA** Board of Governors.

- Principal Scientific Advisor (2002-2018), overseeing initiatives like **RuTAG** and **National Knowledge Network (NKN)**.

- **Awards:** **Padma Shri** (1975) and **Padma Vibhushan** (1999) for contributions to science.

### What is India's 3-Stage Nuclear Power Programme?

- **About:** India's **3-Stage Nuclear Power Programme** is designed to harness the nation's nuclear resources for sustainable energy production while **ensuring long-term energy security**. It was formulated by well-known physicist **Dr. Homi Bhabha**.
- **Objective:** It focuses on **efficiently using India's limited uranium resources** while **maximizing the potential of thorium**, which is more abundant in the country.

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<b>Stage 3</b>	<p>It focuses on <b>Thorium Reactors</b>, which use <b>Thorium-232</b> to produce <b>uranium-233</b>, a fissile material.</p> <p>➤ Leveraging India's abundant thorium reserves, this stage offers a long-term solution for nuclear fuel needs, ensuring sustainable energy security.</p>	<b>Thorium-232</b> (converted into Uranium-233)	Thorium-Based Reactors (Thorium Cycle)	Research into thorium-based reactors is ongoing, with the <b>Advanced Heavy Water Reactor (AHWR)</b> being developed as part of this stage.
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#### India Nuclear Weapon Programme

- **Smiling Buddha (1974):** **Smiling Buddha** was the codename of India's **first successful nuclear test**, conducted at **Pokhran** in Rajasthan, marking India as the **sixth nuclear-capable nation** after the **US, Soviet Union, United Kingdom, France, and China**.
- **Operation Shakti (1998):** **Operation Shakti** (Pokhran-II) was a series of **five nuclear tests** under **Operation Shakti**, including a **thermonuclear bomb**.



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# Environment and Ecology

## Highlights

- India's Shift from Mitigation to Adaptation in Climate Action
- World Wetlands Day 2025
- International Big Cat Alliance

## India's Shift from Mitigation to Adaptation in Climate Action

### Why in News?

India has signaled a shift in its climate stance by prioritizing **adaptation** over **emission cuts (Mitigation)**.

- This reflects concerns over global inaction and weak financial commitments at **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties 29 (COP29)**, further underscored by its **likely delay in submitting the 2035 Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**.

### Why is India Prioritizing Adaptation Over Mitigation?

- **Reevaluation of Global Climate Commitments:** The world is not on track to meet its emissions reduction targets for 2030 or 2035 (nations must cut **greenhouse gas emissions** by 42% by 2030 and 57% by 2035).
  - **Developed nations** have failed to meet their climate finance obligations, with COP29 securing only **USD 300 billion per year (starting 2035)** instead of the **USD 1 trillion** demanded by developing nations.
  - The withdrawal of the **US from the Paris Agreement** in 2025 has further weakened global climate action momentum.

- India aims for **low-carbon growth at its own pace**, with energy transition driven by domestic priorities.
- **Immediate and Local Benefits:** India argues that global climate targets overlook **developing nations' immediate needs**.
  - Unlike **mitigation**, which requires global cooperation, adaptation like building climate-resilient infrastructure offers **direct, immediate benefits**, and local benefits.
  - **Economic development** enhances resilience, making prosperity a key factor in tackling climate change.
- **Economic Growth:** The **Economic Survey 2024-25** suggests that achieving **"developed country" status by 2047** should take precedence, allowing for a more robust and **sustainable transition to clean energy thereafter**.
  - India argues that **rapid industrialization** and **economic growth**, as seen in China, provide the resources necessary for **future decarbonization**.
- **Flexibility:** India is seeking greater autonomy in determining its energy transition pace, rather than adhering to externally imposed targets.
  - While **decarbonization remains a long-term goal**, India is unwilling to compromise economic growth through immediate restrictions on fossil fuel use.
  - A **bottom-up approach through ground-level initiatives** is seen as more effective than top-down mandates.

### Adaptation, Mitigation and Resilience

Term	Definition	Examples of Actions
Mitigation	Reducing <b>greenhouse gas emissions</b> and limiting climate change impacts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Transitioning to low-carbon energy sources</li> <li>➤ Using carbon capture technologies</li> <li>➤ Protecting forests and oceans as carbon sinks</li> <li>➤ Promoting sustainable behavior (e.g., reducing travel emissions)</li> </ul>

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<b>Adaptation</b>	Adjusting to climate change effects to <b>minimize harm or take advantage of benefits.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Building <b>sea-level rise defenses</b></li> <li>➤ Protecting infrastructure from extreme weather</li> <li>➤ Diversifying crops for <b>changing climates</b></li> <li>➤ Reducing food waste</li> </ul>
<b>Resilience</b>	Enhancing the <b>ability to anticipate, prepare for, and respond</b> to climate-related impacts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Developing early warning systems</li> <li>➤ Increasing urban green spaces for flood absorption</li> <li>➤ Planting trees to mitigate urban heat effects</li> </ul>

## How is India Balancing Growth and Clean Energy Transition?

- **Low-Carbon Development:** Despite resisting strict **coal phase-down** commitments, India is expanding its **renewable energy** sector.
  - India is on track to meet its **2030 NDC targets**: India targets **50% installed electricity capacity** from **non-fossil sources** by 2030, reaching **46.8%** as of November 2024.
  - India aims to create an additional **2.5-3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) sink** through forest expansion by 2030, based on 2005 levels.
    - The **Forest Survey of India (2024)** estimates a carbon sink of 30.43 billion tonnes in 2023, up from 28.14 billion tonnes in 2005, an addition of **2.29 billion tonnes**.
    - Projections indicate 31.71 billion tonnes by 2030, surpassing the NDC target.
  - India targets a **45% reduction in GDP emissions intensity by 2030**. As of 2019, it has already achieved a 33% reduction from 2005 levels.
  - **Solar and wind energy** investments remain a priority, with ambitious targets for hydrogen energy development.
    - The installed renewable electricity generation capacity is as follows: Solar (20.6%), Wind (10.5%), Hydro (10.3%), and Nuclear (1.8%).
- **Domestic Clean Energy:** India aims to reduce its dependence on **foreign supply chains for clean energy** technologies like **solar panels, electric batteries**, through a new **National Manufacturing Mission** (announced in **Union Budget 2025-26**).
  - Policies are being designed to support indigenous production of solar cells, wind turbines, and battery storage solutions.

- **Developing SMRs:** Recognizing its slow progress in nuclear energy, India is now pushing for indigenous **Small Modular Nuclear Reactors (SMRs)** to enhance energy security.
- **Delay in Submitting 2035 NDCs:** India has postponed its 2035 climate commitments to later in 2025, likely to negotiate better financial terms at COP30 in Brazil.
  - Holding back allows India to adjust its targets based on domestic priorities and global climate finance developments.

**Note:** NDCs are country-specific climate action plans to cut emissions and adapt to climate change under the **Paris Agreement**, updated **every five years**.

- The existing NDCs, submitted in 2020, pertain to the 2030 period, with 2035 submissions by 10<sup>th</sup> February 2025. The **2035 NDC must build on the 2030 targets**, but countries set their own progression based on resources.

How has India's Role in Global Climate Governance Evolved?

Click Here to Read: [India's Role in Global Climate Governance](#)

## What are India's Key Climate Adaptation Initiatives?

- **National Adaptation Plan (NAP):** Developed by the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** to align with **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**
  - Focuses on **climate resilience across sectors**, including agriculture, water management, and urban planning.
- **Adaptation in Agriculture:** **Heat and water stress** threaten food security, adaptation measures include:

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Note:



- Climate-resilient seeds and improved soil health practices.
- Groundwater conservation and modified cropping techniques.
- **Urban Climate Resilience:** The National Mission on Sustainable Habitat (NMSH) promotes waste and water management and green buildings.
  - AMRUT 2.0 (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation) aims to tackle urban flooding.
- **Coastal Adaptation Measures:** Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes (MISHTI) aims to restore 540 sq. km of mangroves across nine coastal states.
  - Expected to sequester 4.5 million tons of carbon and create 22.8 million jobs.
  - Seawalls, artificial reefs, and dune planting to combat coastal erosion and rising sea levels.
- **Water Resource Management:** Jal Shakti Abhiyan focuses on rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, and afforestation.
- **Mission LiFE:** Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) is an India-led global initiative, it promotes sustainable living and individual responsibility in climate action, shifting from a “use-and-dispose” mindset to a circular economy.

## International Big Cat Alliance

### Why in News?

The International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) officially became a treaty-based intergovernmental organization and international legal entity on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2025 with headquarters in India.

### What is the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)?

- **Origins:** IBCA was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2023 during the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Project Tiger, and was formally approved by the Union Cabinet in February 2024.
- **Implementation:** IBCA established through the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) under the **Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEFCC)**.
  - It functions as a global platform to share conservation expertise, fund conservation initiatives, and create a repository of technical knowledge.
- **Objective:** The initiative's main objective is the conservation of seven major big cat species: the Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar, and Puma.
- **Membership:** The Republic of Nicaragua, Kingdom of Eswatini, Republic of India, Federal Republic of Somalia, and Republic of Liberia have ratified the IBCA framework agreement.
  - **Membership is open to all United Nations member states**, including range countries where these species naturally occur and non-range countries interested in supporting big cat conservation.
- **Need for IBCA:** Big Cats are under threat due to habitat loss, poaching, climate change, and human-wildlife conflicts.
  - Conservation at a **global scale** is required to **halt population decline and reverse negative trends**.
- **Funding:** India has committed Rs. 150 crore (2023-2028) in support to the IBCA and is exploring additional funding through bilateral, multilateral, and donor organizations.
- **Role in Conservation Efforts:**
  - **Collaborative Conservation Platform:** IBCA creates a global network of conservationists, policymakers, researchers, and governments.
    - Facilitates sharing of best practices in habitat management, anti-poaching strategies, and ecological restoration.
  - **Financial and Technical Assistance:** Acts as a **common funding pool** for conservation projects worldwide.
    - Provides **technical know-how and scientific research** to under-resourced nations.
  - **Strengthening Existing Agreements & Initiatives:** Works alongside CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species), CMS (Convention on

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**Migratory Species**), and other wildlife protection treaties.

- Aims to **support national and regional big cat conservation programs**.
- **Climate Change Mitigation & Ecological Security:** Conservation of apex predators like big cats ensures **healthy ecosystems, biodiversity preservation, and climate resilience**.
- Restoration of forests and grasslands through IBCA initiatives will aid in **carbon sequestration and climate adaptation**.

### National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)

- The NTCA, a **statutory body** under the MoEFCC, was established in 2005 following the **Tiger Task Force's recommendations** and gained **legal status under Section 38L of the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act, 2006**.
- **Objectives:** Grants statutory authority to Project Tiger, ensures federal accountability in tiger reserve management and addresses local livelihood concerns around tiger reserves.

### Conservation Efforts for Big Cats in India

- **Asiatic Lion Conservation Project**
- **Project Snow Leopard**
- **Project Cheetah**
- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**
- **National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)**
- **Project Tiger**

### Habitat and Gestation Period of Big Cats

Big Cats	Habitat	Gestation Period (Days)
Tiger	Temperate, tropical and evergreen forests, mangrove and grasslands	95-110
Cheetah	Shrublands, grasslands, savannas and temperate to hot deserts	90-95
Leopard	Forests, subtropical and tropical regions, Savannas, deserts and rocky and mountainous regions	90-105
Lion	Open plains, dry thorn forests and grasslands	100-110
Snow Leopard	Northern and central Asia mountains.	90-105

## INTERNATIONAL BIG CAT ALLIANCE

The International Big Cat Alliance is a multi-country, multi-agency coalition aimed at conserving big cat species and their habitats.

**Launched by**  
India (2023)

**Headquarters**  
India

**Member states**  
**96** countries

**Structure**  
Consists of Assembly of Members  
Standing Committee & Secretariat

### FUNCTIONS

- ④ Secure the future of big cats (Tigers, Lions, Leopards, Snow Leopards, Pumas, Jaguars, and Cheetahs)
- ④ Mitigate the adverse effects of climate change
- ④ Advocate for policy initiatives
- ④ Attain the United Nations-mandated Sustainable Development Goals

### THREATS TO BIG CATS

- ④ Poaching
- ④ Human-Leopard conflict
- ④ Habitat loss & fragmentation
- ④ Climate change & Deforestation

### Conservation Status of Big Cats

Species	Scientific Name	IUCN Red List	CITES	Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972
<b>Tigers</b>	<i>Panthera tigris</i>	Endangered	Appendix-I	Schedule-I
<b>Lions</b>	<i>Panthera leo</i>	Vulnerable	Appendix-I	Schedule-I
<b>Leopards</b>	<i>Panthera pardus</i>	Vulnerable	Appendix-I	Schedule-I
<b>Snow Leopards</b>	<i>Panthera uncia</i>	Vulnerable	Appendix-I	Schedule-I
<b>Pumas</b>	<i>Puma concolor</i>	Least Concerned	Appendix II (P. c. Costaricensis and cougar: Appendix-I)	NA
<b>Jaguars</b>	<i>Panthera onca</i>	Near Threatened	Appendix-I	NA
<b>Cheetahs</b>	<i>Acinonyx jubatus</i>	Vulnerable	Appendix-I	Schedule-I

### Other Conservation Efforts in India

- Project Tiger (1973)
- Project Snow Leopard (2009)
- Asiatic Lion Reintroduction Project (2004)
- Project Cheetah (2022)



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## World Wetlands Day 2025

### Why in News?

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) organised the **World Wetlands Day 2025** celebrations at the **Parvati Arga Ramsar Site**, Gonda, Uttar Pradesh (UP) on **2<sup>nd</sup> February 2025**.

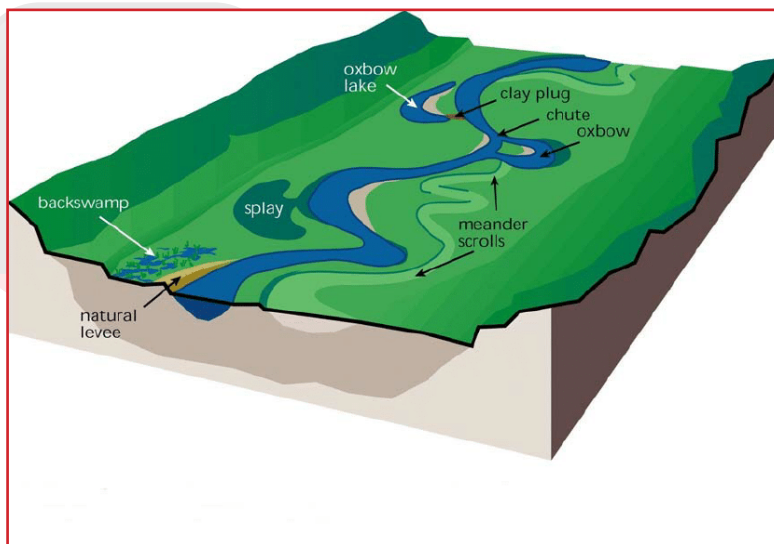
### What are the Key Facts Regarding World Wetlands Day 2025?

- **About:** It is observed annually to raise awareness about the **importance of wetlands** and marks the adoption of the **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands** in **1971** in Ramsar, Iran.
- **Theme for 2025:** Protecting Wetlands for our Common Future.
- **New Ramsar Sites:** **Udhwa Lake** in Jharkhand, **Theerthangal** and **Sakkarakottai** in Tamil Nadu and **Khecheopalri** in Sikkim are included in the list of Ramsar sites.
  - These are the **first** Ramsar Sites of **Sikkim and Jharkhand**.
  - With this, **Ramsar sites (Wetlands of International Importance)** in India increased to **89**.
  - **Tamil Nadu** continues to have the **maximum** number of Ramsar Sites (**20 sites**) followed by **Uttar Pradesh (10 sites)**.
- **New Corridor:** The government announced a new **nature-culture tourism corridor** will be developed between **Ayodhya** and **Devi Patan** in UP.

- **Amrit Dharohar Initiative:** **Amrit Dharohar** was launched in **June 2023** to conserve Ramsar Sites that focuses on **four key components** i.e., **Species and Habitat Conservation, Nature Tourism, Wetlands Livelihood and Wetlands Carbon**.
- **Threat:** The biggest threat to wetlands is **pollution from industrial and human effluents**, which degrade these ecosystems.

### What are Key Facts About Parvati Arga Ramsar Site?

- **About:** It is a **permanent freshwater environment**, consisting of **two oxbow lakes** i.e., **Parvati and Arga**, which are **rain-fed** and located in the **terai region** (Gangetic plains).
  - The nearby **Tikri Forest** is also being developed as an **eco-tourism site**.
  - **Oxbow lakes** are **U-shaped lakes** formed when a meander of a river is **cut off**, creating a **standalone water body**.



- **Ecological Significance:** It is a refuge for **critically endangered white-rumped vulture, Indian vulture, and endangered Egyptian vulture**.
  - Migratory birds like **Eurasian coots, mallards, greylag geese, northern pintails, and red-crested pochards** visit the site in the winter months.
- **Invasive Species:** It faces threats from **invasive species**, notably the **common water hyacinth**.
- **Cultural Landmarks:** The region is home to cultural landmarks such as the birthplaces of **Maharishi Patanjali** and **Goswami Tulsidas**, boosting religious and cultural tourism.

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# RAMSAR CONVENTION

## About

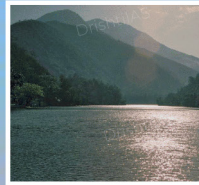
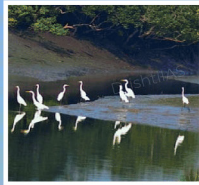
- Also known as the Convention on Wetlands.
- An intergovernmental treaty, adopted in 1971, in Ramsar, Iran.
  - Entered into force in 1975.
- Wetlands that are of international importance are declared as Ramsar sites.
- Largest Ramsar Site in World: Pantanal: South America

## Montreux Record

- Adopted in Montreux (Switzerland) in 1990.
- Identifies Ramsar sites that need priority conservation attention at national or international level.

## Wetlands

- A place in which the land is covered by water – salt, fresh, or somewhere in between – either seasonally or permanently.
- Take many forms including rivers, marshes, bogs, mangroves, mudflats, ponds, swamps, billabongs, lagoons, lakes, and floodplains.
- World Wetlands Day: 2<sup>nd</sup> February



## India & Ramsar Convention

- Came into force in India: **1982**
- Total Number of Ramsar Sites: **85**
  - Chilika Lake (Odisha), Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan), Harike Lake (Punjab), Loktak Lake (Manipur), Wular Lake (Jammu and Kashmir), etc.
- Related Framework in India
  - The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has notified Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 as regulatory framework for conservation and management of wetlands.
  - The 2017 Rules decentralise wetlands management and provide for the constitution of the State Wetlands Authority or Union Territory Wetlands Authority.

## Key Facts

- Largest Ramsar Site: Sunderbans, West Bengal
- Smallest Ramsar Site: Vembannur Wetland Complex, Tamil Nadu
- State with the maximum number of Ramsar Sites: Tamil Nadu (14)
- Wetlands in Montreux Record:
  - Keoladeo National Park: Rajasthan
  - Loktak Lake: Manipur



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Note:



# History

## Highlights

- Birth Anniversary of Swami Dayanand Saraswati

### Birth Anniversary of Swami Dayanand Saraswati

The Prime Minister paid tributes to Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883) on his 201<sup>st</sup> birth anniversary on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2025. He was a great thinker, ardent nationalist and founder of the Arya Samaj.



**Maharshi Swami Dayanand Saraswati**  
(Founder of Arya Samaj)  
(February 12, 1824 - October 30, 1883)

#### Who was Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati?

##### ➤ About:

- Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati was a prominent social reformer, philosopher, and religious leader of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

##### ➤ Birth and Early Life:

- He was born as Mool Shankar Tiwari on 12<sup>th</sup> February 1824 in Tankara, Gujarat, into an orthodox Brahmin family and his parents, Lalji Tiwari and Yashodabai, were devout followers of Hindu traditions.

- At a young age, he developed a deep interest in spiritual knowledge and questioned idol worship, rituals, and superstitions.
- Renouncing worldly life at 19, he wandered as an ascetic for nearly 15 years (1845–1860) in search of truth.
- He studied under Swami Virjanand in Mathura, who urged him to work towards purging Hinduism of corrupt practices and restoring the true meaning of the Vedas.

##### ➤ Philosophy and Social Reforms:

- He opposed idol worship, untouchability, caste-based discrimination, polygamy, child marriage, and gender inequality.
- He believed in a classless and casteless society where caste was based on merit rather than birth.
- He strongly advocated for women's education, widow remarriage, upliftment of depressed classes, Shuddhi movement for reconversion and the abolition of Sati and child marriage.
- He emphasized "Back to the Vedas", arguing that true Hinduism is rooted in the Vedas, which uphold rationality, equality, and social justice.
- His ideas were compiled in his seminal work, *Satyarth Prakash* (The Light of Truth), where he criticized social evils like infanticide and dowry and advocated Vedic wisdom.

##### ➤ Educational Contributions:

- He advocated for modern, scientific, and Vedic education while opposing the British colonial education system.
- Inspired the establishment of gurukulas, Girl's Gurukulas and Dayanand Anglo-Vedic (DAV) schools and colleges in 1886, with the first DAV school set up in Lahore under Mahatma Hansraj.

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➤ **Role in Nationalist Movement:**

- He was the **first to give the call for “Swaraj” in 1876**, influencing later leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, and Mahatma Gandhi.
- He **promoted Swadeshi (economic self-reliance), cow protection, and Hindi** as a national language.

➤ **Legacy:**

- Swami Dayanand Saraswati **faced resistance from the orthodox sections of society** for his efforts in **socio-religious reform**. However, he left behind a lasting legacy through institutions like **Arya Samaj** and **DAV schools**, which continue to have a positive impact on society.

### What is Arya Samaj?

➤ **About:**

- **Arya Samaj** (Society of nobles) is a **Hindu reform movement** that **promotes the Vedas as the ultimate source of knowledge and truth**.
- It was founded by **Swami Dayanand Saraswati** in **1875**.

➤ **Core Beliefs and Principles:**

- Emphasizes **Vedic authority** and **rejects idol worship**, priestly rituals, animal sacrifice, social evils and **superstitions**.
- Supports **karma (law of deeds)**, **samsara (cycle of rebirth)**, and the **sanctity of the cow**.
- Promotes **Vedic fire rituals (havan/yajna)** and **samskaras (sacraments)**.

➤ **Social Reforms and Contributions:**

- Advocated **female education**, inter-caste marriage, and widow remarriage.
- Established **schools, orphanages, and widow homes**.
- Played a **role in famine relief and medical aid**.
- Led the **Shuddhi Movement** to reconvert those who had embraced other religions.

What were the Major Social and Religious Reform Movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century?

Read: **Socio-Religious Reform Movements: Part I**

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Note:

# Art and Culture

## Highlights

- Indo-European Languages

- National Mission on Cultural Mapping

## Indo-European Languages

### Why in News?

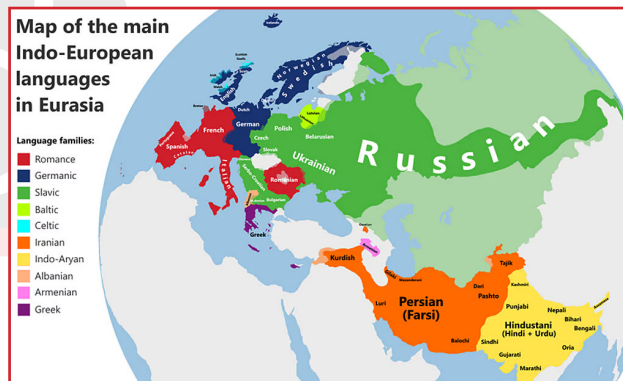
A Study published in the journal **Nature** identifies the **Caucasus Lower Volga people** as the probable originators of **Indo-European languages**, challenging the earlier **Yamnaya theory**.

### What are the Key Findings of the Study?

- **Genetic Origin:** The **Caucasus Lower Volga people**, who lived 6,500 years ago on the **Eurasian steppe**, stretching from the **Volga River** to the **Caucasus Mountains**, are identified as the **genetic progenitors of the Indo-European language family**.
- **Yamnaya People's Role:** The **Yamnaya people (5,700–5,300 years ago)**, descendants of the **Caucasus Lower Volga**, played a significant role in spreading Proto-Indo-European languages across **Europe, the Indian subcontinent, and China**.
  - These ancient populations migrated west, mixed with locals, and formed the **distinct Yamnaya genome**.
  - Earlier researches suggested the ancient **Yamnaya people of the steppe as the originators of Proto-**

**Indo-European**, the precursor to modern Indo-European languages.

- **Economic Transformation:** The Yamnaya people's new economic practices, such as **livestock herding** and the use of **oxen-drawn wagons**, enabled their migration and expansion.
  - The **Yamnaya** underwent a **demographic explosion**, expanding from a few thousand people to tens of thousands within a few centuries.



### Indo-European Language Family

- The Indo-European language family is the world's largest language family, comprising over **400 languages**. These languages are divided into several sub-families.

Indo-European Language Sub-family	Languages	Region
Celtic	Breton, Cornish, Manx, Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Welsh	Western Europe, British Isles
Germanic	English, German, Dutch, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian	Northern and Western Europe
Romance	Latin (classical), French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian	Southern and Western Europe
Hellenic	Greek (Modern and Ancient)	Greece, Cyprus

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Albanian	Albanian	Albania, Kosovo, parts of Macedonia, Montenegro
Armenian	Armenian	Armenia
Balto-Slavic	Latvian, Lithuanian, Russian, Polish, Czech, Slovak, Ukrainian, Belarusian	Eastern Europe, Baltic region
Indo-Iranian	Persian (Farsi), Kurdish, Pashto, Baloch, Sanskrit, Punjabi, Sindhi, Kashmiri, Dogri, Gujarati, Urdu, Hindi, Marathi, Maithili, Nepali, Bangla, Assamese, Odia, Sinhala, Dhivehi	Indian subcontinent, Iran, Central Asia

**Note:** In South Asia, languages belong to four major families: **Indo-European (primarily Indo-Aryan), Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic, and Sino-Tibetan.**

- **Indo-Aryan languages:** The largest group, with 574 languages spoken by 73.30% of the population.
- **Dravidian languages:** 153 languages, spoken by 24.47% of the population.
- **Sino-Tibetan languages:** 226 languages, with less than 1% of the population speaking them, including Khampti from the Siamese-Chinese subfamily.
- **Austro-Asiatic languages:** 65 languages with 6.19 million speakers.

## National Mission on Cultural Mapping

### Why in News?

The **Ministry of Culture** has established the **National Mission on Cultural Mapping (NMCM)** to **preserve and promote** India's rich cultural heritage.

### What is NMCM?

- **About:** Launched in **2017** by the **Ministry of Culture**, it aims to create a **cultural map of India**, highlighting its **diversity** and supporting the **artist community**.
  - Cultural mapping records a region's unique cultural elements, including **stories, rituals, arts, languages, heritage, and cuisines**, documenting both **tangible and intangible assets**.
- **Objectives:**
  - Documenting **India's cultural assets**.
  - Using cultural potential to promote **self-reliance in villages**.

- Highlighting the **link between heritage, development, and identity**.
- **Coverage:** The mission seeks to map the **geographical, demographic, and creative capitals** of **6.5 lakh villages** in India, with **4.5 lakh villages** already included.
- **Mission Components:**
  - **Cultural Awareness Programme:** Like **Hamari Sanskriti Hamari Pahchan** (Our Culture, Our Identity).
  - **Grading of Artists:** Introduction of **Unique Cultural-ID (UCID)** for artists.
  - **Cultural Infrastructure:** Development of **cultural hubs (Kala Grams)** and integrating knowledge centers.
  - **Artist Welfare:** Implements welfare schemes and **grants for artists**, especially veterans.
- **Implementation:** NMCM is managed by the Ministry of Culture and implemented under the **Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)**.
- **Mera Gaon Meri Dharohar (MGMD):** **MGMD** was launched to document the cultural heritage of **6.5 lakh villages** in India.
  - Under the MGMD, information is collected in **seven broad categories** like **Arts and Crafts Village, Ecologically Oriented Village** etc.

### Other Initiatives for Cultural Preservation

- **Guru-Shishya Parampara Scheme:** The Ministry of Culture runs the '**Financial Assistance for Promotion of Guru-Shishya Parampara (Repertory Grant)**' scheme, providing **financial aid to cultural organizations for training artists in music, dance, theatre, folk art, etc.**, following the **Guru-Shishya tradition**.

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- **Cultural Property Agreement (CPA):** A CPA was signed with the US in July 2024 that will make **easy retrieval of stolen antiquities**.
- **Adopt a Heritage 2.0:** Launched by the Ministry of Culture in September 2023, this initiative facilitates **collaboration with private and public entities** to develop amenities in **Protected Monuments** using **CSR funds**.
  - The amenities are categorized into **four broad categories**:
    - Hygiene (toilets, drinking water, etc.)
    - Accessibility (battery operated vehicles, signage, etc.)
    - Safety (CCTV, lighting etc)
    - Knowledge (Cultural/light and sound shows, AR/VR tools, etc).



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Note:

# Geography

## Highlights

- Arctic Warming

- Structural Changes in Earth's Inner Core

## Arctic Warming

### Why in News?

The temperatures at the North Pole (Arctic region) surged more than **20 degrees Celsius** above the average temperature, raising concerns about the **rapid warming** of the region and its **global implications**.

### What are Key Facts About Arctic Warming?

- **About:** It refers to the **rapid increase in temperatures** in the Arctic region (**area north of 66.5° N latitude**), also known as **Arctic Amplification**.
  - Since **1979**, the Arctic has **warmed four times faster** than the global average.
- **Causes:** A deep **low pressure system** over Iceland brought **warm air from lower latitudes**, causing an unusual temperature spike in the Arctic **winter**.
  - Abnormally high **North-East Atlantic ocean** temperatures intensified warming, with **wind patterns** carrying extra heat to the Arctic.
  - Reduced **albedo effect** leads to absorption of more heat and raising temperatures.
  - The Arctic's weak **convection currents** trap heat from **greenhouse gases** near the surface, intensifying warming.
- **Potential Consequences:** More ice melt could lead to **coastal flooding** and loss of land.
  - Arctic temperature shifts can disrupt **jet streams** (**fast-moving, narrow bands** of strong winds in the upper troposphere) impacting global rainfall, storms, and extreme weather.

- Species like **polar bears** and **seals** depend on ice for survival, making them vulnerable to habitat loss.

**Note:** **Arctic Circle** is an imaginary line located at approximately **66.5° North latitude**, marking the southern boundary of the **Arctic region**.

- It includes parts of **Canada, Russia, Greenland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, and the United States (Alaska)**.



### India in Arctic Region

- India engaged with the Arctic by signing the **Svalbard Treaty in 1920** and launched its **Arctic research program** in 2007.
- It established the **Himadri research base** in Svalbard (**2008, Norway**) and gained **Arctic Council** observer status in 2013.
- In **2022**, India announced its **Arctic policy**, with the **National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research** as the nodal agency.

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Note:

## Structural Changes in Earth's Inner Core

### Why in News?

A study published in **Nature Geoscience** reveals that **Earth's inner core** is undergoing **structural changes**.

### What are the Key Findings of the Study?

- **Methodology:** Researchers analyzed **seismic waves** near Antarctica's South Sandwich Islands from 1991 to 2024. Repeating earthquakes revealed subtle changes in seismic waves, offering insights into Earth's inner structures.
- **Structural Changes in Inner Core:** The **near surface of Earth's inner core** is undergoing **structural changes**, challenging the earlier belief that it is **rigid and stable**.
  - The **inner core's rotation** appears to be **slowing down**, which could subtly **alter the length of a day** on Earth.
  - Researchers suggest **viscous deformation in the inner core** is caused by dynamic interactions between the **turbulent, molten outer core** and the **solid inner core**, similar to how **magma** flows under stress.

### What are the Key Facts

#### About Earth's Inner Core?

- **Structure:** The **inner core** is a **hot, dense ball** primarily made of **iron and nickel**. Unlike the **liquid outer core**, the inner core remains **solid due to immense pressure** from Earth's upper layers.
- **Depth and Size:** Located **5,150 km beneath** the surface, at Earth's center. It has a **radius of about 1,220 km**.
  - The boundary between the inner and outer core is called the **Lehmann Discontinuity**.
- **Magnetism:** The inner core influences **Earth's magnetic field**, while the outer core's swirling liquid

iron generates it through the **geodynamo effect** (magnetic field generation).

- The inner core has **high thermal and electrical conductivity**.
- **Rotation:** The inner core rotates eastward slightly **faster than the Earth's surface**, completing an extra rotation every 1,000 years.
- **Growth:** The inner core grows by about **1 mm per year** as the liquid outer core solidifies.
  - Growth is uneven, occurring more around subduction zones and less near superplumes.
  - The core will never fully solidify due to slow crystallization and continuous radioactive decay.

#### Earth's Interior

- The Earth's interior is structured in concentric layers, similar to an onion. These layers are:
  - **Crust (Outermost Layer):** The **thinnest** layer, varying in thickness:
    - **Continental crust:** ~35 km thick, composed mainly of **silica (Si)** and **alumina (Al)**, referred to as "**sial**" for the continental crust.
    - **Oceanic crust:** ~5 km thick, oceanic crust contains **silica (Si)** and **magnesium (Mg)**, called "**sima**".
  - **Mantle (Thickest Layer):** Extends up to **2900 km** below the crust. Composed of silicate minerals rich in **iron and magnesium**.
    - The upper part contains the **asthenosphere**, a semi-molten layer responsible for **plate movements**.
  - **Core (Innermost Layer):** Extends up to **3500 km** in radius. Composed of **nickel (Ni)** and **iron (Fe)**, called "**nife**".
    - **Divided into Outer Core** (liquid state, generates Earth's magnetic field) and **Inner Core**.

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# INTERIOR OF THE EARTH

## 1 THE CRUST

- Thin, outermost layer
- Oceanic crust – thinner
  - Mean thickness - 5 km
  - Made up of Silica and Magnesium (SiMa)
- Continental crust – thicker
  - Mean thickness - 30 km
  - Made up of Silica and Aluminum (SiAl)
  - Thicker in the areas of major mountain systems.
    - Around 70 km thick in the Himalayan region.
- Temperature increases with depth (rises by up to 30° C for every km)

### Lithosphere

- Rigid outer layer, thickness: 100 km
- Consists of the crust and the upper mantle
- Divided into tectonic plates responsible for large-scale changes in the earth's geological structure (folding, faulting)

## 3 THE CORE

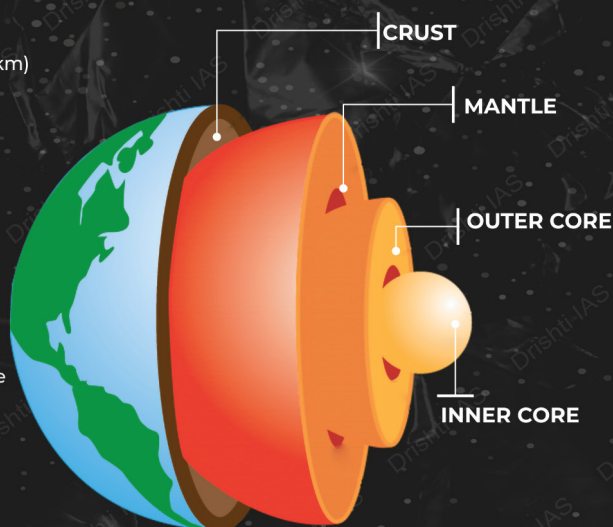
- Lies between 2900-6370 km below the earth's surface
- Made up of heavy materials, primarily nickel (Ni) and iron (Fe) - NiFe
- Outer core –
  - Between 2900-5100 kms
  - **Liquid** because of not enough pressure to solidify
- Inner core –
  - Between 5100-6370 kms
  - **Solid – it can transmit secondary waves** (earthquake) which outer core can't
- **Denser than Mantle**

### Boundaries/discontinuities between Earth's layers

1. **Conorod Discontinuity**– between upper and lower crust
2. **Mohorovicic Discontinuity (Moho)** – separates the crust from the mantle, its average depth being about 35 km.
3. **Repiti Discontinuity** – between the upper and lower mantle
4. **Gutenberg Discontinuity** – lies between the mantle and the outer core.
5. **Lehman Discontinuity**- between inner and outer core

## 2 THE MANTLE

- Extends from Moho's discontinuity to a depth of 2,900 km
- Upper portion is called **asthenosphere**
  - Zone of weak rocks; in semi molten or jelly like state
- Extends upto 400 kms
- **Main source of magma** that comes out of volcanic eruptions



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# Security

## Highlights

- *Evolving Warfare and Need for India's Defence Transformation*
- *Changing Nature of Terrorism*

## Evolving Warfare and Need for India's Defence Transformation

### Why in News?

At Aero India 2025, **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan** emphasized the need for the Indian Army to evolve to adapt the **emerging warfare trends**, stressing the importance of **holistic transformation beyond technological advancement**.

#### Aero India

- Aero India, organized by the **Defence Exhibition Organisation**, Ministry of Defence, is India's premier **biennial aerospace and Defence exhibition** held at **Yelahanka Air Force Station, Bengaluru**.
- Aero India features global aero vendors and aerobatic displays by the Indian Air Force, it was first held in 1996.

### How is Warfare Evolving in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

- **Multi-Dimensional Conflicts:** Warfare now extends beyond **land, sea, and air** to **cyberspace, the electromagnetic spectrum, and outer space**.
  - The emergence of **unmanned platforms and autonomous weapons** is redefining battlefield engagements.
- **Rise of Non-Contact Warfare:** Precision-guided munitions, cyberattacks, and electronic warfare (EW) have reduced direct combat engagements.
  - The use of **long-range missiles, drones, and AI-powered systems** allows adversaries to strike without direct confrontation.

- **Technologies in Warfare:** The US, China, and Russia are at the forefront of advancing **Quantum computing, Artificial intelligence (AI)**, and hypersonic weapons that are transforming war strategies and are set to redefine combat scenarios, potentially leading to **machine-vs-machine warfare**.
  - Additionally, **sixth-generation fighter jets** and autonomous weapons systems are expected to play a crucial role in future battles.
  - However, the exact impact of these technologies **remains uncertain, necessitating adaptable military strategies**.
- **Perpetual and Irrational Wars:** Earlier, wars were **finite** with political negotiations following combat.
  - Today, conflicts have become **prolonged, hybrid in nature** (involving a mix of conventional warfare, cyber operations, and information warfare), and **driven by technological asymmetry** (uneven distribution of technological capabilities between different countries).

### Why Does the Indian Defence Need a Holistic Transformation?

- **Evolving Security Challenges:** India faces a **two-front threat** from **China and Pakistan**, with persistent border tensions (e.g., Eastern Ladakh, Doklam) and **Pakistan's proxy war in Jammu & Kashmir**.
  - Their strategic collaboration, including **China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**, raises the risk of a collusive two-front war.
  - China's growing presence in the **Indian Ocean** requires India to strengthen its maritime power and **out-of-area contingency (OOAC) operations**.
- **Structural and Doctrinal Limitations:** India's Defence faces structural challenges, including the **Indian Army's dominance in Defence planning** and a **large standing**

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force of over 1.4 million, straining the budget and hindering modernization.

- India's doctrinal limitations, marked by reactive responses to threats (e.g., [Kargil War](#), [Mumbai 26/11](#)), highlight the need for **proactive deterrence** and updated operational doctrines for enhanced security.
- **Modernization Deficiencies:** India's Defence inventory is **outdated**, affecting operational efficiency. The **Indian Army still uses T-72 tanks (over 40 years old)** and Bofors howitzers from the 1980s, despite modern advancements.
  - Despite the '[Make in India](#)' initiative, India remains the **world's largest arms importer** (9.8% of global imports from 2019 to 2023), relying on **Russia, France, and the U.S. for advanced weaponry**.
  - This is due to delays in **modern equipment induction**, such as **Tejas fighters** and [Future Infantry Combat Vehicles](#).
  - Lack of synergy between the **Indian Army, Air Force, and Navy** hinders **integrated air-land-sea warfare** and expeditionary strategies.
- **Budgetary Constraints:** India's 2025-26 Defence budget is **USD 78.7 billion**, very less compared to **China's USD 236 billion in 2023**.
  - Since 2001, India's Defence sector has attracted only Rs 5,077 crore in [Foreign Direct Investment \(FDI\)](#), despite the FDI limit being raised to **74% via the Automatic Route and up to 100% through the Government Route**.
  - **Manpower costs (salaries and pensions)** consume a large portion of the Defence budget, leaving little for capital acquisitions. Balancing Defence needs with financial constraints remains a challenge for India.

#### India's Progress in Defence Modernisation

- As part of the Make in India initiative, India has developed major defence systems such as the **Dhanush Artillery Gun System**, [Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System \(ATAGS\)](#), [Main Battle Tank \(MBT\) Arjun](#), [Light Combat Aircraft \(LCA\) Tejas](#), [Fifth-generation \(5G\) Fighter Aircraft](#), submarines, frigates, corvettes, and the recently commissioned [INS Vikrant](#), showcasing the nation's growing defence capabilities.

- The [Defence Acquisition Procedure \(DAP\) 2020](#) boosted defence production to **Rs 1.27 lakh crore in 2023-24**, with a target of Rs 3 lakh crore by 2029, positioning India as a global defence manufacturing hub.
  - India's defence exports soared from **Rs 686 crore in 2013-14 to Rs 21,083 crore in 2023-24**, a 30-fold increase in a decade.
- The industrial licensing process has been streamlined, and the [iDEX scheme](#) encourages startups and MSMEs to innovate in defence. The [SRIJAN portal](#) aids indigenization ("[Make](#)" procedure), while Defence Industrial Corridors in **Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu** boost regional manufacturing.
  - **Defence R&D is now open to private players** for enhanced collaboration.

#### What Steps Can India Take to Align with Emerging Warfare Trends?

- **Indigenous Defence Innovation:** Increasing funding for [Defence Research and Development Organisation](#) technology clusters, **private defence startups**, and academia to develop cutting-edge military technologies.
- **Technology in Defence:** AI-powered [autonomous drones](#), decision-making systems, and **cyber warfare tools** need faster integration. **Quantum communication & cryptography** will secure India's strategic military assets.
  - A unified command structure will improve **strategic coordination and operational efficiency**.
- **Cyber and Electromagnetic Warfare Force:** Establishing dedicated **Cyber and Electromagnetic Commands** to counter **digital warfare threats** and expanding [NavIC satellite](#) surveillance and electronic warfare capabilities for a tactical advantage.
- **Military Training and Strategy:** Revising military training to incorporate **AI, robotics, and asymmetric warfare strategies**. Conducting joint military exercises with **global tech-driven armies** like the **US, Israel, and France**.
- **Enhancing India's Global Defence Standing:** Competing with Western military standards requires **investment in indigenous defence production and innovation**.

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- Aligning with emerging **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** and **QUAD** military doctrines will help India prepare for global security challenges.
- **Future-Ready Military Strategy:** India's future-ready military strategy should balance **land, sea, air, cyber, and space capabilities**. Leveraging the planned **Bharatiya Antariksha Station (BAS)** will enhance **space surveillance and communication**.
- To stay ahead, India must prepare for emerging threats, including "robot warfare," "drone battles," "autonomous vehicle engagements," and "mechanized clashes."

## Changing Nature of Terrorism

### Why in News?

New terror methods and terror attacks are evolving, influenced by **geopolitical instability**, **digital radicalization**, and **evolving strategies** of extremist groups.

### How is the Nature of Terrorism is Changing?

- **Unpredictability:** Terrorism trends are **unpredictable**, allowing dormant groups like **Hamas** and **Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)** (Syrian terrorist organization) to resurface with major impact.
  - The earlier belief that **terror groups would not engage in full-scale war** but Hamas attack on Israel in **October 2023** has **blurred this predictability**.
  - **Self indoctrinated and radicalised youths** are leading to unpredictable **Lone-wolf attacks**. E.g., **New Orleans attacks 2025** in the US.
- **State Sponsored:** Both **Syria and Afghanistan** now governed by terrorist groups (**HTS and the Taliban**, respectively) prolonging terrorism.
- **Evolving Tactics:** Modern terrorism relies on **sympathizers, sleeper cells, ideological debates on use of violence**, unconventional attacks like **vehicle ramming**, and a rising number of **educated professionals** joining extremist networks.
- **Expanding Geographic Reach:** **ISIS-K's** growing presence in **Afghanistan** threatens South Asia.

- **Technology as a Force Multiplier:** Terrorists are using advanced technology like **drones, 3D printing**, and **cyber tools** to boost their capabilities, potentially enabling high-profile attacks that **amplify propaganda**.
  - E.g., **Houthi attack on Saudi Aramco's oil facilities** in 2019 showcased use of **precision drones**.
- **Cross-Group Cooperation:** Terrorist groups are collaborating to increase their area of influence and threaten regional stability.
  - E.g., Iran's **Axis of Resistance (Hezbollah, Hamas, and Iraqi militias)** working against Israel.
- **Domestic Terrorism in the West:** **Political polarization** in the US and Europe is driving extremism, while **immigration tensions** risk violence, as seen in the **El Paso shooting 2019** in US

What are the Reasons for Changing the Nature of Terrorism?

- **Weakened Global Governance:** Institutions like the **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** and the **International Court of Justice (ICJ)** are proving **ineffective** in **dismantling terror groups** and **preventing their funding**, making global counter-terrorism efforts **weak**.
- **Emergence of Terror Regime:** The collapse of the **Assad regime** and rise of **HTS** in Syria indicate potential for **strengthening of terror infrastructure** due to political shifts.
- **Global Terrorist Networks:** Increased globalization has facilitated the **movement of people, money, and weapons** across borders.
  - E.g., **Al-Qaeda and ISIS** presence in **Africa, South Asia, and Europe** beyond the Middle East.
- **Shift in Ideological Motivations:** Terrorism now stems from **religious extremism, identity grievances, and personal motives**, not just political goals.
  - E.g., the **Christchurch shootings 2019** were driven by **white supremacist extremism**.
- **Proxy Warfare:** State-backed terrorist groups complicate terrorism by **fueling instability** in rival countries. E.g., **Jaish-e-Mohammed** carried out attacks in **India** with **Pakistan's** support.

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## How the Changing Nature of Terrorism Impacting India?

- **Homegrown Radicalization:** Terror organisations have recruited **Indian youth**, with radicalization cases in **Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka**.
  - E.g., India identified **62 locals and 68 overseas Indians** linked to **ISIS**, with **95% from South India**.
- **Low-Cost Attacks:** Low-cost, high-impact attacks are rising e.g., low key attacks like **Coimbatore car blast 2022** for which **resources** can be arranged **locally**.
- **Radicalization in Local Dialects:** Terrorists use social media and **encrypted apps** for propaganda, recruitment, and planning, while **deepfake technology** and **AI** pose rising misinformation threats in **local dialects**

which are **hard to detect** on the **formal social media platforms**.

- **UAV-Based Terrorism:** Drones are now used to **drop arms, explosives, and drugs** across the India-Pakistan border.
  - E.g., Two **explosives-laden drones** crashed into the **Indian Air Force station** at Jammu in 2021.
- **Hawala Transactions:** Increased reliance on **hawala networks, cryptocurrency transactions, and fake NGOs** run by fugitive people like **Zakir Naik** to fund terrorism.
  - E.g., channeling of foreign funds for unlawful activities by the now banned **Popular Front of India (PFI)**.



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# Rapid Fire Current Affairs

## Highlights

- Revised MIS Guidelines
- FMR Along the India-Myanmar Border
- International Conference on Unani Medicine
- India Energy Week 2025
- Corruption Perceptions Index 2024
- Exercise CYCLONE
- Fort Williams Renamed as Vijay Durg
- Cheetah Cubs Birth in Kuno National Park
- Birth Anniversary of Sant Guru Ravidas
- Death Anniversary of Pt Deendayal Upadhyaya
- Vishwamitri River and Mugger Crocodiles
- India-EFTA Desk
- Nari Adalat Program
- International Epilepsy Day
- Asian Elephants
- HS Code for GI-Tagged Rice Exports
- WAVES 2025 and Creative Economy
- Campaign to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis
- National Commission for Safai Karamcharis
- TROPEX-25
- BIMSTEC Youth Summit 2025
- 100 GW Solar Power Capacity
- Eurasian Otters in Kashmir Valley
- Taranaki Maunga Mountain Gains Legal Personhood
- SARAT Version 2
- Polar Bear Sebum Sustainable Alternative to Forever Chemicals
- Beggar-thy-Neighbour Policy
- Sahitya Akademi Award 2024
- 3<sup>rd</sup> India-Japan Steel Dialogue
- Gaia BH3 Black Hole
- Very Short-Range Air Defence System
- Santorini Islands
- Jal Jeevan Mission Extended Till 2028
- Breach of Parliamentary Privileges
- India Won ICC Under-19 Women's T20 World Cup 2025
- Haiti
- Grameen Credit Score
- SC/ST Act to Include Intellectual Property
- CSIR-IICT's Breakthrough in Clean Energy
- Gyan Bharatam Mission and NMM
- Karnataka Allows Right to Die with Dignity
- Potomac River
- Guillain-Barré Syndrome and BBE
- Inter-State Committees for Workers' Social Security
- First Indian to Pilot Axiom Mission
- Card Tokenization in India

## Revised MIS Guidelines

The government has revised **Market Intervention Scheme (MIS)** guidelines to encourage more States to implement MIS.

- MIS supports **perishable crops (fruits, vegetables, spices, etc.)** that are not covered under **MSP**, preventing **distress sales** during **price drops** from **excess production**.
- **Revised Provisions of MIS:**
  - Made MIS a **component** of the integrated scheme of **PM-AASHA**.

- MIS is activated only if **market prices fall by at least 10%** from the previous normal year.
- The **coverage limit for procurement** has been **raised from 20% to 25%** of total production.
- Instead of physical procurement, states can **transfer the price difference** between the **Market Intervention Price (MIP)** and the **selling price** directly to farmers' **bank accounts**.
- **NAFED** and **NCCF** will reimburse **storage and transport costs** for TOP crops (tomato, onion and potato) when **price gaps** exist between **producing and consuming states**.

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- **FPOs, FPCs**, and state-nominated agencies will handle **procurement, storage, and transport** to stabilize market fluctuations.

Read More: [Measures for Farmers' Welfare](#)

## FMR Along the India-Myanmar Border

The revised **Free Movement Regime (FMR)** has led to the activation of 22 border gates out of the 43 planned crossing points along the **India-Myanmar border**, aimed at regulating movement while maintaining border security.

- India's **1,643-km border with Myanmar** runs through Arunachal Pradesh (520 km), Nagaland (215 km), Manipur (398 km), and Mizoram (510 km). **1,472 km** of the border has been **demarcated**.
- **FMR**: Introduced in 1968 to facilitate **movement due to ethnic and familial ties** across the largely unfenced northeastern border.
  - The **free movement limit** was **reduced from 40 km to 16 km in 2004** and is now **10 km**.
  - **Border residents can travel** without a **visa or passport** but require a **QR code-enabled border pass**. **Biometric data is recorded** and uploaded to a centralized portal to check against a **negative list**.
  - **Assam Rifles** responsible for issuing border passes and conducting initial security verification. Border pass validity is up to 7 days.
- **Assam Rifles: Oldest paramilitary force** in India, established in **1835**. Evolved from protecting **British Tea estates** to maintaining **internal security in the Northeast** and **guarding the Indo-Myanmar Border**.
  - Assam Rifles played key roles in the **Sino-India War (1962)**, and were known as 'Sentinel of the North East' and 'Friend of the Hill People'.
  - **Headquarters: Directorate General of Assam Rifles in Shillong**.



Read more: [Free Movement Regime](#)

## International Conference on Unani Medicine

The President inaugurated an **international conference on Unani medicines**, hosted by the **Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine (CCRUM)** on **Unani Day (11<sup>th</sup> February)**.

- Its theme was **"Innovations in Unani Medicine for Integrative Health Solutions – A Way Forward."**
- Established in **1978**, CCRUM is an autonomous body under the **Ministry of Ayush** and serves as the **apex government organization** for research in **Unani medicine**.
- **About Unani Medicine**: It is a **traditional healing system** that originated in **Greece** and was popularised by **Arab and Persian scholars**.
  - It is based on the concept of balance in the **body's four humors** i.e., **blood, phlegm (mucus), yellow bile, and black bile**, that is central to **diagnosing and treating illnesses**.
  - **Disease** occurs when the humors are **out of balance**, and treatment aims to **restore this balance** through various methods.

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# AYUSH Systems of Medicine

AYUSH encompasses Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa Rigpa, and Homeopathy, with Ayurveda having a documented history of 5000+ years.

## Ayurveda

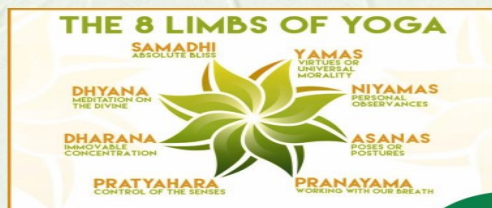
- ③ **Samhita Period (1000 BC):** Emerged as mature medical system
  - ③ **Charaka Samhita:** Oldest and most authoritative text
  - ③ **Sushruta Samhita:** Gives fundamental principles and therapeutic methods in eight specialties
- ③ **Main Schools:**
  - ③ **Punarvasu Athreya** - School of physicians
  - ③ **Divodasa Dhanvantari** - School of surgeons

### Branches of Ayurveda:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ■ Kayachikitsa (internal medicine)                     | ■ Agada Tantra (toxicology)                      |
| ■ Shalya Tantra (surgery)                              | ■ Bhootavidya (psychiatry)                       |
| ■ Shalakya Tantra (disease of supra-clavicular origin) | ■ Rasayana Tantra (rejuvenation and geriatrics)  |
| ■ Kaumarabhritya (paediatrics)                         | ■ Vajikarana (eugenics & science of aphrodisiac) |

Lord Brahma is believed to be the 1<sup>st</sup> proponent of Ayurveda

## Yoga & Naturopathy



- ③ **Naturopathy:** Healing with help of 5 natural elements - Earth, Water, Air, Fire and Ether
  - ③ Based on theories of self-healing capacity of body and principles of healthy living
  - ③ Encourages a **person-centred approach** rather than disease-centred

Yoga first propounded by Maharishi Patanjali in systematic form Yogsutra

## Unani

- ③ **Pioneered in Greece, developed by Arabs as 7 principles (Umoor-e-Tabbiya)**
  - ③ Based on the framework of teachings of **Buqrat** (Hippocrates) and **Jalinoos** (Galen)
  - ③ Hippocratic theory of **four humors** viz. blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile
  - ③ **Recognised by WHO** and granted official status by India as an alternative health system

## Siddha

- ③ **Dates back to 10000 – 4000 BC; Siddhar Agasthiyar - Father of Siddha Medicine**
  - ③ Preventive, promotive, curative, rejuvenative, and rehabilitative health care
  - ③ **4 Components:** Latro-chemistry, Medical practice, Yogic practice & Wisdom
  - ③ Diagnosis based on 3 humors (**Mukkutram**) and 8 vital tests (**Ennvagai Thervu**)

## Sowa Rigpa

- ③ **Origin: Lord Buddha in India before 2500 years**
  - ③ Traditional medicine in Himalayan regions of Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, etc.
  - ③ Recognised in India by Indian Medicine Central Council Act, 1970 (As amended in 2010)

## Homeopathy

- ③ **German physician Dr. Christian F. S. Hahnemann codified its fundamental principles**
  - ③ Medicines prepared mainly from natural substances (plant products, minerals, animal sources)
  - ③ Brought in India by European missionaries - 1810; official recognition - 1948
  - ③ **3 Key Principles:**
    - ③ **Similia Similibus Curentur** (let likes be cured by likes)
    - ③ Single Medicine
    - ③ Minimum Dose



Read More: [First All-India Survey on AYUSH](#)

## India Energy Week 2025

At **India Energy Week 2025**, India signed multiple strategic agreements and MoUs aimed at enhancing **energy security, diversifying supply sources**.

- **India Energy Week:** India Energy Week 2025, held in **New Delhi** organized under the patronage of the **Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas** and jointly by the **Federation of Indian Petroleum Industry (FIPI)**, it features over 700 exhibitors from across the global energy sector.
  - The event emphasizes **energy access, security, sustainability, and decarbonization efforts**.

- FIP is an apex Society of entities in the **hydrocarbon** sector and acts as an industry interface with the Government.
- **Key MoUs Signed:** Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) partnered with Petrobras (Brazil) to import up to **6 million barrels of crude**, diversifying India's oil imports.
  - **BPCL and Eco Wave Power (Israel)** to set up **India's first wave energy pilot in Mumbai**.
  - To strengthen India's transition to a natural gas-based economy, **Indian Oil Corporation (IOCL)** and **ADNOC (UAE)** signed a USD 7 billion contract for 1.2 million metric tons per annum (MMTPA) **liquefied natural gas (LNG)** over 14 years starting 2026.

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Read more: [Tapping Renewable Energy Potential in India](#)

## Corruption Perceptions Index 2024

India ranked 96<sup>th</sup> in the [Corruption Perceptions Index \(CPI\)](#) for 2024, down from 93<sup>rd</sup> in 2023, with a score of 38, a decline from 39 in 2023.

- **CPI:** Published annually by the non-governmental organization **Transparency International** since 1995.
  - It ranks 180 countries based on perceived levels of public sector corruption, using a scale from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean).
  - **Denmark** topped the CPI 2024 as the least corrupt nation, followed by **Finland** and **Singapore**. Among India's neighbors, **Pakistan (135)**, **Sri Lanka (121)**, and **Bangladesh (149)** ranked poorly, while **China** stood at 76.
  - While 32 countries have significantly reduced their corruption levels since 2012, 148 countries have either stagnated or worsened during the same period, highlighting the ongoing challenge.
- According to the **Transparency International**, Corruption hampers **climate action by misusing funds** meant for mitigation and adaptation, with **fossil-fuel** interests obstructing policies.
  - It also links to **declining democracy, instability, and human rights violations**, necessitating urgent global action.

Read more: [Corruption Perception Index 2023](#)

## Exercise CYCLONE

The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the India-Egypt Joint Special Forces Exercise **CYCLONE** commenced at Rajasthan.

**About Exercise CYCLONE:**

- **Annual Exercise:** Conducted alternatively in India and Egypt, with the last edition held in Egypt (January 2024).
- **Objectives:**
  - Strengthening **military-to-military relations** between India and Egypt.
  - Enhancing **interoperability, joint operational capabilities** and exchange of special warfare operations tactics.

- Counter-terrorism operations in desert/semi-desert terrain aligning with [Chapter VII of the UN Charter](#).

**India and Egypt:**

- **India** is one of **Egypt's** key trading partners in Africa, with a Bilateral Trade Agreement (1978) based on the Most Favored Nation clause.
- **India and Egypt** established a **Strategic Partnership** in 2023 spanning **political, security, defence, energy, and economic cooperation**.

### Joint Exercises with India:

Country	Exercise
Australia	Austra Hindbah
Bangladesh	Sampriti
China	Hand in Hand
France	Shakti
Indonesia	Garuda Shakti
Kazakhstan	Prabal Dostyk
Kyrgyzstan	Khanjar
Maldives	Ekuverin
Mongolia	Nomadic Elephant
Myanmar	Imbex
Nepal	Surya Kiran
Oman	Al Nagah
Russia	Indra
Seychelles	Lamitiye
Sri Lanka	Mitra Shakti
Thailand	Maitree
UK	Ajeya Warrior
USA	Yudhabhayas, Vajra Prahar

Read More: [Major Military Exercises of India](#)

## Fort Williams Renamed as Vijay Durg

**Fort William**, the Indian Army's Eastern Command HQ in Kolkata, has been renamed **Vijay Durg** to remove colonial imprints. It is named after **Maharashtra's oldest Sindhudurg fort**, a former **Maratha** naval base under **Chhatrapati Shivaji**.

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Note:



- Other changes include renaming **Kitchener House**, inside the fort to **Manekshaw House** and **St. George's Gate** to **Shivaji Gate**.

### About Fort Williams:

- The fort is located in Kolkata on the eastern banks of the Hooghly River and was originally named after King William III of England.
  - The original fort was built by the British in 1696 under Sir John Goldsborough and completed in 1706.
  - It was damaged during the Siege of Calcutta (1756) when Siraj-ud-Daulah defeated the British.
  - After the **Battle of Plassey (1757)**, Robert Clive rebuilt it at a new location between 1758 and 1781.
- **Significance:**
  - Site of the **Black Hole of Calcutta incident** (1756).
  - It houses a war memorial with artifacts from the **1971 Indo-Pak War** and **Bangladesh Liberation War**.

### Other Similar Renamings:

- Renaming **Rajpath to Kartavya Path** and **Port Blair to Sri Vijaya Puram**.
- The Indian Navy adopted a new ensign, removing colonial symbols (2022).

Read More: [British Conquest for Bengal: Battles of Plassey and Buxar](#)

## Cheetah Cubs Birth in Kuno National Park

A cheetah at Madhya Pradesh's **Kuno National Park (NP)** gave birth to **two cubs**, bringing the total to **26 cheetahs**, including **14 cubs**.

- **About Kuno NP:** Kuno NP (Sheopur, Madhya Pradesh) was established as a **wildlife sanctuary** in 1981 and upgraded to a **national park** in 2018.

- **Geography:** It primarily consists of **dry deciduous forest** and the **Kuno River**, a major **Chambal** tributary, flows through the park.
  - It is located in the **Vindhyan Hills**.
- **Fauna:** **Leopard**, **Striped hyena**, **Indian wolf**, **Blackbuck**, **Sambar deer**, **Gharial** (Kuno river).
  - It was selected under the **Action Plan for Introduction of Cheetah in India**.
- **Vegetation:** The primary tree species are **Kardhai**, **Khair**, and **Salai**.



Read More: [One Year of Project Cheetah](#)

## Birth Anniversary of Sant Guru Ravidas

The Prime Minister paid tribute to **Sant Guru Ravidas** on his **648<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary**, celebrated on **Purnima Tithi of Magha Month** (which falls on **12<sup>th</sup> February** in 2025).

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### About Sant Guru Ravidas:

- Born in 1377 CE in Seer Goverdhanpur (UP), he was a **Bhakti movement** saint, poet, and social reformer.
- Also known as Raidas, Rohidas, and Ruhidas, he belonged to a **marginalized community** but emphasized human rights, equality, and spiritual enlightenment.
- His **verses are included in Guru Granth Sahib**, and he was revered by Meera Bai as her spiritual guide.
- The day is widely celebrated in **Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Haryana**.
  - The **Doaba region of Punjab** is home to a significant **Ravidassia Dalit community** that adheres to the teachings of Sant Ravidas.

### Bhakti Movement:

- It was a **spiritual and social reform movement** between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, emphasizing **devotion (bhakti) to a personal god**, rejecting rituals and caste hierarchies.
- It spread across India, influencing **Hinduism, Sikhism, and Sufism**.
- Notable Bhakti saints include **Kabir, Guru Nanak and Meera Bai** in North India, and **Alvars, Nayanars, Ramanuja, and Basava** in South India.

Read More: [Bhakti and Sufi Movements](#)

## Death Anniversary of Pt Deendayal Upadhyaya

The **Prime Minister** has paid tributes to **Pt Deendayal Upadhyaya** on his **death anniversary (punya tithi)**. He passed away on **11<sup>th</sup> February 1968**.



- **About Pt Deendayal Upadhyaya:** Born on **25<sup>th</sup> of September 1916**, he was an **Indian politician, philosopher, and ideologue** of the **RSS and Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS)** (the predecessor of the Bharatiya Janata Party).
- **Contributions:** He focused on **Antyodaya** i.e., uplifting the last person and addressing the needs of the **most disadvantaged**.
  - His philosophy of “**Integral Humanism**” emphasized welfare, social justice, economic equality, and self-reliance.
- **Recognition:** Since **25<sup>th</sup> September 2014**, his birth anniversary is observed as **Antyodaya Diwas** to honor his contributions to the nation.
  - In **2015**, **National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)** was renamed **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-NRLM**.
  - In **2018**, **Mughalsarai Junction** in Uttar Pradesh was renamed after him.

Read More: [Sangathan se Samridhi: DAY-NRLM](#)

## Vishwamitri River and Mugger Crocodiles

The Government of **Gujarat** conducted a **crocodile census** in the **Vishwamitri river** of **Vadodara**, to estimate the population of **mugger or marsh crocodiles (*Crocodylus palustris*)**.

- **Vishwamitri River:** Originates from the **Pavagadh hills** (part of **Western Ghats**) in **Gujarat**, flows through **Vadodara**, and joins the **Gulf of Khambhat**, fed by tributaries **Dhadhar and Khanpur**.
  - Its banks had ancient settlements dating back to **1000 B.C.**, including **Ankotakka (now Akota)**, which developed during the **Guptas and Vallabhi rule**.
  - It hosts **mugger crocodiles**, freshwater turtles, and **monitor lizards**, making it ecologically unique among urban rivers.
- **Mugger Crocodiles:** Found in **India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Nepal**, with its range extending westwards into **eastern Iran**, mainly in **freshwater habitats** like rivers, lakes, and marshes.

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- Found in 15 Indian states, mainly in the **Ganga River basin** (Bihar and Jharkhand), **Chambal River** (Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh) and **Gujarat**.
- They feed on fish, reptiles, birds, and mammals. They are hole-nesting species, laying 25-30 eggs during the dry season, with an incubation period of 55-75 days.
- Face threats from **habitat destruction, poaching, and human-wildlife conflict**.
- **Conservation:** Vulnerable (**IUCN**), **CITES** (Appendix I), and Schedule I (**Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**).

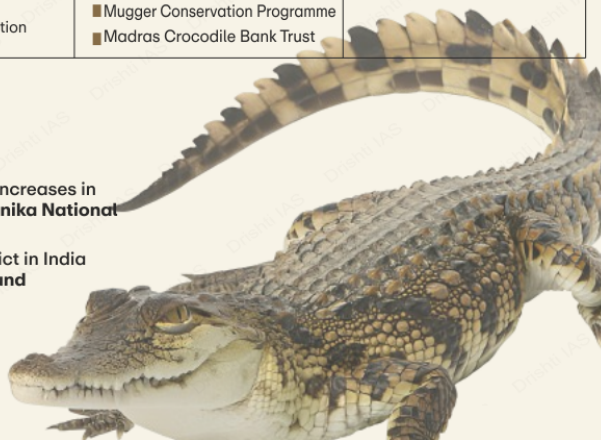
## CROCODILE SPECIES IN INDIA

India harbours three diverse crocodile species—Mugger, Saltwater, and Gharial—found in distinct habitats nationwide.

Aspects	Gharial	Mugger/Indian Crocodile	Saltwater Crocodile
<b>Scientific Name</b>	<i>Gavialis Gangeticus</i> 	<i>Crocodylus Palustris</i> 	<i>Crocodylus Porosus</i> 
<b>Distribution: India</b>	<b>Viable Population:</b> National Chambal Sanctuary (U.P, Raj, M.P) <b>Small Non-Breeding Population:</b> Son, Gandak, Hooghly, Ghagra & Satkosia WLS (Odisha)	Throughout India	East Coast (Odisha's Bhitarkanika WLS, Andaman & Nicobar Islands coast & Sundarbans)
<b>Distribution: Neighbourhood</b>	Brahmaputra of Bhutan & Bangladesh & Irrawaddy River	Extinct in Bhutan and Myanmar	Across Southeast Asia
<b>Special Feature</b>	Longest of all Crocodile, Long and thin Snout	Egg-laying, Hole-nesting, Wide & U-shaped Snout	Largest living reptile, Pointed & V-shaped Snout
<b>Habitat</b>	Freshwater	Freshwater	Saltwater, Brackish & Wetlands
<b>IUCN Status</b>	CR	VU	LC
<b>CITES Status</b>	Appendix I	Appendix I	Appendix I
<b>CMS Status</b>	Appendix I	-	Appendix II
<b>WPA, 1972 Status</b>	Schedule I	Schedule I	Schedule I
<b>Threats</b>	Dams, Pollution, Sand mining	Habitat Destruction	Hunted for its skin and Habitat loss
<b>Government Initiatives</b>	■ Odisha: Rs. 1000 award to conserve Gharial in Mahanadi River Basin ■ Indian Crocodile Conservation Project, 1975	■ Indian Crocodile Conservation Project, 1975 ■ Mugger Conservation Programme ■ Madras Crocodile Bank Trust	Indian Crocodile Conservation Project, 1975

### MISCELLANEOUS FACTS

- ➡ **17th June:** World Crocodile Day
- ➡ **Annual Reptile Census, 2023:** Marginal Increases in number of saltwater crocodiles (Bhitarkanika National Park and its nearby areas)
- ➡ **Odisha's Kendrapara District:** Only district in India where all three species of crocodiles found



Read more: [Mugger Crocodile](#)

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## India-EFTA Desk

India and the **European Free Trade Association (EFTA)** launched the **India-EFTA Desk** to strengthen economic ties and facilitate investments under the **Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA)**.

### India-EFTA Desk

- **About:** It is a **dedicated investment facilitation mechanism** established by **Invest India** to serve as a **single-window platform** for businesses from the EFTA nations to **invest in India**.
- **Objectives:** The **India-EFTA Desk** aims to **facilitate realising the objective of TEPA** such as:
  - **USD 100 billion FDI** over **15 years**, generating over **1 million direct jobs** in India.

- Commitments related to **Intellectual Property Rights** in TEPA.
- **Technology Collaboration** aligning with **Make in India & Atma Nirbhar Bharat**.
- **India-EFTA TEPA** is a **comprehensive FTA** signed in **March 2024**.

### European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

- EFTA is an intergovernmental organization of **Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland**, established under the **Stockholm Convention (1960)**.
- **India** is EFTA's **5<sup>th</sup>-largest trading partner** (after the EU, US, UK, and China).
- **Two-way trade:** **USD 24 billion (2023-24)**, up from **USD 18.65 billion (2022-23)**, with a trade gap favoring EFTA.
- **Key partners:** **Switzerland (largest)**, followed by **Norway**.

## MAJOR TRADE AGREEMENTS OF INDIA

### Free Trade Agreement (FTA) With Neighbouring Countries

- India-Sri Lanka FTA
- India-Nepal Treaty of Trade
- India-Bhutan Agreement on Trade, Commerce, and Transit

*A free trade agreement is a comprehensive deal between countries, offering preferential trade terms and tariff concessions, with a negative list excluding specific products and services.*

### Regional FTA's of India

- **India ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (11):** 10 ASEAN countries + India
- **South Asia Free Trade Agreement (7):** India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and the Maldives
- **Global System of Trade Preferences** (41 countries + India)

### India's CECAs and CEPAs

CECA/CEPA is broader than FTAs, addressing regulatory, trade, and economic aspects comprehensively, with CEPA having the widest scope including services, investment, etc while CECA mainly focuses on tariff and TQR rates negotiation.

- CEPA with **UAE, South Korea, Japan**
- CECA with **Singapore, Malaysia**

### Others:

- India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA)
- India-Thailand Early Harvest Scheme (EHS)
- India-Mauritius Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA)

An EHS precedes an FTA/CECA/CEPA, where negotiating countries select products for tariff liberalisation, paving way for broader trade agreements and fostering confidence.

### Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs)

Partners in a PTA grant preferential access to specific products by lowering duties on agreed tariff lines, maintaining a positive list of products eligible for reduced or zero tariffs.

- **Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA):** Bangladesh, China, India, S. Korea, Lao PDR, Sri Lanka, and Mongolia
- **SAARC Preferential Trading Agreement (SAPTA):** Same as SAFTA
- **India-MERCOSUR PTA:** Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and India
- India's PTA with **Chile, Afghanistan**



Read More: [India-EFTA Trade Deal](#)

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## Nari Adalat Program

The Government of India is inviting proposals from other states and Union territories to expand the **Nari Adalat Program**.

- **About:** Nari Adalat, under the 'Sambal' sub-scheme of **Mission Shakti**, provides an **alternative grievance redressal mechanism** for women at the **gram panchayat level**, resolving minor disputes (e.g., domestic violence, dowry, child custody) through **negotiation, mediation, and reconciliation**.
- **Structure and Functioning:**
  - **Members:** Comprises **7 to 11 members** known as '**Nyaya Sakhis**', nominated by the **gram panchayat**.
  - **Implementation:** Started in 2023 on a pilot basis in 50 gram panchayats each in **Assam and Jammu & Kashmir**, with plans to expand to other states.
- **Mission Shakti:** It has two sub-schemes.
  - **Sambal:** Focuses on women's safety and security, including **One Stop Centres (OSC)**, **Women Helplines**, **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)**, and Nari Adalat.
  - **Samarthya:** Focuses on women's empowerment, including **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)**, **Palna**, **Shakti Sadan**, **Sakhi Niwas**, and **Hub for Empowerment of Women**.

Read more: [Mission Shakti](#)

## International Epilepsy Day

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment conducted nationwide programs on **International Epilepsy Day (2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of February)** to promote effective epilepsy management and treatment awareness.

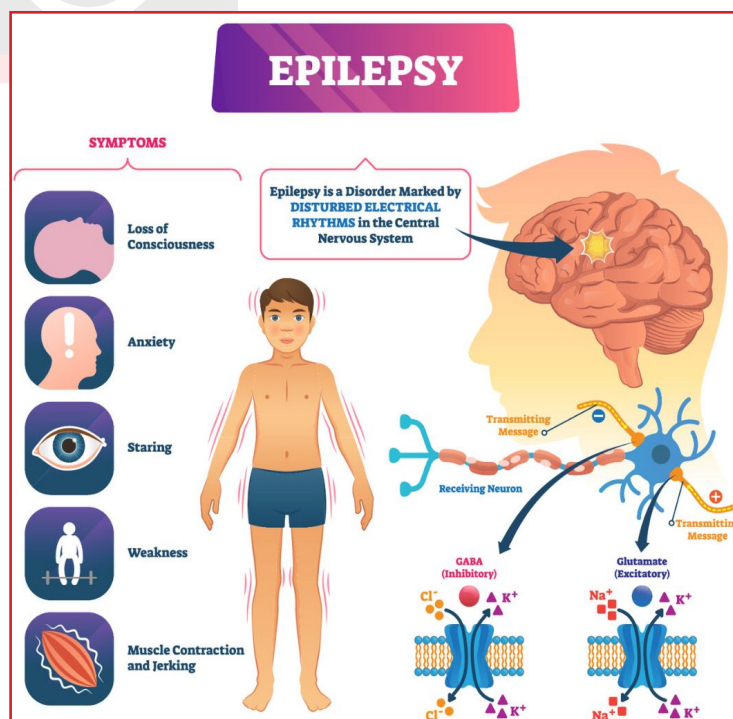
- **National Epilepsy Day (India)** is observed on **17<sup>th</sup> November**.

### Epilepsy

- **About:** Epilepsy is a **chronic brain disorder** caused by abnormal electrical activity in

the brain, leading to **seizures**—brief episodes of **involuntary movement** and loss of consciousness.

- It is recognised by the **WHO** as a **neurological disorder**.
- **Causes:** The disease has **no identifiable cause** in nearly 50% of the cases. However, it is linked to **genetics, brain injuries, infections, stroke, tumors**.
- **Symptoms:** It is varying with some losing awareness, some stare blankly, while others experience **convulsions** (twitching movements).
- **Treatment Options:**
  - **First-line treatment** for epilepsy includes **anti-seizure medications**, while a **ketogenic diet (high-fat, low-carb)** is effective for **drug-resistant cases**.
  - Surgical options include **removing seizure-affected brain regions** or **corpus callosotomy** to prevent seizure spread.
  - **DBS Brain Implant:** Implanting a medical device with electrodes to specific brain regions linked to seizures.
- **Global Context:** **50 million people** worldwide have epilepsy, with **80% in low- and middle-income countries**.
  - **Proper diagnosis and timely treatment** can manage **70% of cases**, allowing seizure-free lives.



Read More: [DBS Brain Implant Surgery for Epilepsy Treatment](#)

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Note:

## Asian Elephants

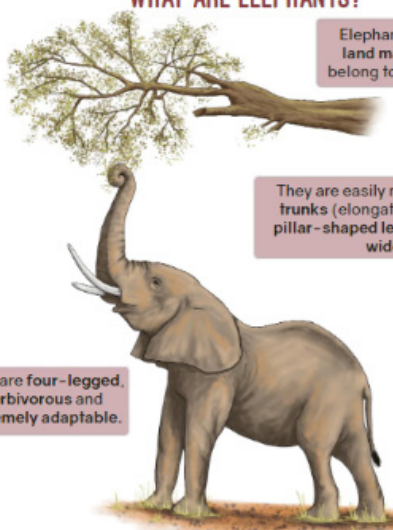
A study on **Asian Elephants (*Elephas maximus*)** reveals new insights about their vocalizations.

- **Key Findings:** Asian elephants communicate using **trumpets, roars, rumbles, and chirps** to seek attention and express emotions.
  - Earlier beliefs suggested **trumpeting was mainly a response to human disturbances**, but new findings show it is used in social interactions and play.
- **Asian Elephants:**
  - **Subspecies:** Three subspecies of Asian elephants include **Indian, Sumatran, and Sri Lankan**.
  - **Population:** Fewer than 50,000 remain in fragmented populations across 13 countries.
  - **Habitat:** Found in grasslands, scrublands, evergreen and deciduous forests.

- **Size and Appearance:** Smaller than African elephants with proportionally smaller ears.
- **Importance:** Elephants, **India's Natural Heritage Animal**, are a **Keystone Species** vital for forest health. They create clearings for forest regeneration and dig for water, aiding other wildlife.
- **Protection Status:**
  - **IUCN Red List:** Endangered
  - **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule I
  - **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES):** Appendix I
- **India's Initiatives:** **Project Tiger & Elephant** was introduced by merging the previous **Project Tiger** and **Project Elephant** schemes, focusing on protecting elephants and their habitats.
  - **33 Elephant Reserves** have been established in **14 major elephant States** (highest population in Karnataka, followed by Assam and Kerala).

### LARGEST LAND MAMMALS

#### WHAT ARE ELEPHANTS?



Elephants are the largest living land mammals on earth – they belong to the family Elephantidae.

They are easily recognised by their long trunks (elongated upper lip and nose), pillar-shaped legs, and huge head, with wide, flat ears.

Elephants are grayish to brown in colour, and their body hair is sparse and coarse.

They are four-legged, herbivorous and extremely adaptable.

There are 3 different species of elephants

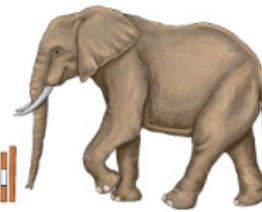
- ⑤ They are found most often in savannas, grasslands, and forests but occupy a wide range of habitats, including deserts, swamps, and highlands in tropical and subtropical regions in both Africa and Asia.
- ⑤ Only one hundred years ago, there were 10 million African elephants inhabiting the African continent. By 2016, however, their numbers were reduced to only about 450,000.

### ELEPHANT SPECIES

THERE ARE 3 DIFFERENT SPECIES OF ELEPHANTS:

#### AFRICAN SAVANNAH ELEPHANT

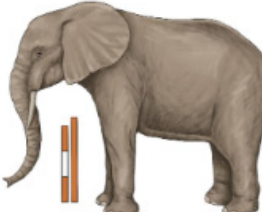
*Loxodonta africana*



- The African Savanna elephant weighs up to 7,000 kg and stands 3.5 to 4 metres at the shoulder.
- Adult bulls have wide rounded heads compared to narrow pointed heads of female elephants.
- They have long curved tusks.

#### AFRICAN FOREST ELEPHANT

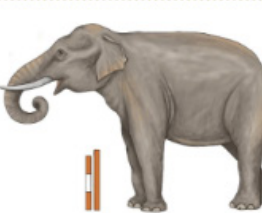
*Loxodonta cyclotis*



- Forest elephants live in rainforests, and were recognized as a separate species in 2021. They are slightly smaller than Savanna elephants and rarely larger than 5,000 kg.
- They have slender, downward-pointing tusks and rounder ears.

#### ASIAN ELEPHANT

*Elephas maximus*



- The Asian elephant includes three subspecies: the Indian, or mainland (*E. maximus indicus*), the Sumatran (*E. maximus sumatranus*), and the Sri Lankan (*E. maximus maximus*).
- They weigh about 4,000 kg and have a shoulder height of up to 3 metres.

Read more: [World Elephant Day 2023](#)

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Note:

## HS Code for GI-Tagged Rice Exports

India has amended the [Customs Tariff Act, 1975](#), and became the first country to introduce an **Harmonised System (HS) code for [Geographical Indication \(GI\)](#) tagged rice varieties**.

- Announced in the [2025-26 Budget](#), the amendment includes **HS Code 1006-30-11 (parboiled rice)** and **1006-30-91 (white rice)** for exports.
  - The **HS Code** allows **uninterrupted exports of GI-tagged rice**, even during general rice export bans, without requiring special government notifications.
- **HS Code:** The HS managed by the [World Customs Organization \(WCO\)](#) and updated every **five years**, is a global standard for **classifying traded goods** using **six-digit codes**, with countries adding extensions for further classification.
  - It helps in **identification, duties, and trade statistics**.
- **Recognized GI Rice Varieties:** The **Indian Patent Office** has given a GI tag to 20 rice varieties including Navara, Palakkadan Matta, Pokkali, Wayanad Jeerakasala, and others.
- **Pending GI Applications:** 20 rice varieties, including **Seeraga Samba, Jammu and Kashmir Red Rice, and Wada Kolam Paddy**, await GI recognition.
- **WCO:** Founded in 1952, is an **intergovernmental body** enhancing customs efficiency worldwide. It represents 183 customs administrations (including India) handling 98% of global trade. Headquartered in **Brussels, Belgium**.

Read more: [Minimum Export Price for Rice](#)

## WAVES 2025 and Creative Economy

The [Prime Minister](#) chaired a virtual meeting of [WAVES \(World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit\)](#) to amplify India's **creative media and economy**.

### WAVES:

- WAVES is a **global summit** for the [media and entertainment \(M&E\) industry](#), organized by the **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting**.
- The summit aims to **bring together industry leaders, stakeholders, and innovators** to **address challenges, explore prospects, and promote global trade**, thereby influencing the future of the sector.
- The summit launched the **"Create in India Challenge,"** aimed at fostering innovation and creativity in India's creative and media economy.

### Creative Economy (Orange Economy):

- The creative economy is a **knowledge-based sector** involving the **creation, production, and distribution of creative goods and services**.
  - It includes industries like **advertising, architecture, arts, fashion, film, music, photography, publishing, R&D, and software**.
- India's creative industry is valued at **USD 30 billion** and **employs nearly 8%** of the country's working population. In 2023, India had over **100 million content creators**.

### India's Media and Entertainment (M&E):

- India's M&E industry, the **world's fifth-largest** (1<sup>st</sup> is US), is projected to **grow to USD 44.2 billion by 2028**.

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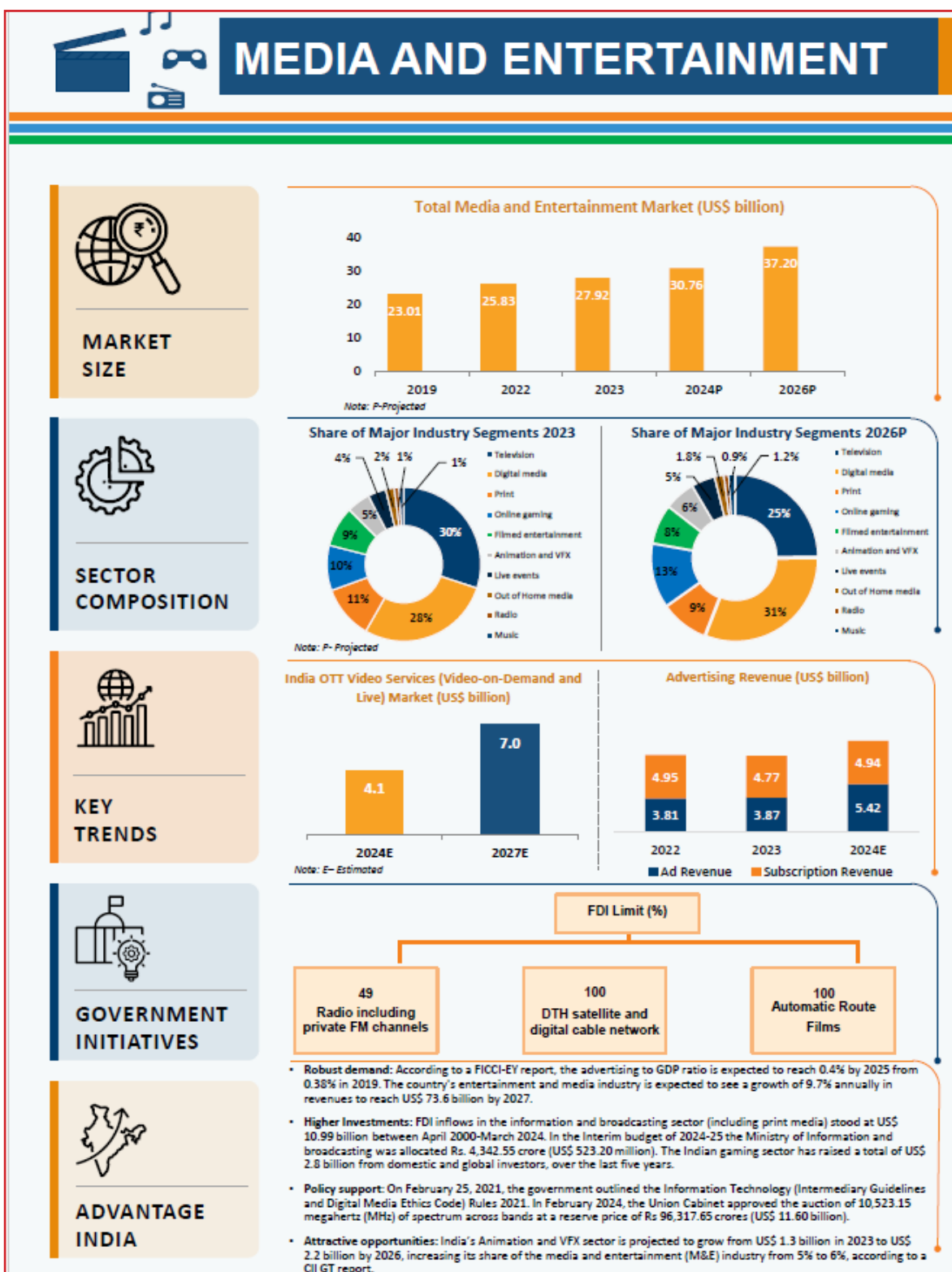


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Note:







## Campaign to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare launched the Annual **Nationwide Mass Drug Administration (MDA)** Campaign for **Lymphatic Filariasis (LF)** elimination.

- **Lymphatic Filariasis:** LF (elephantiasis), is a neglected tropical disease caused by **parasitic filarial worms** (like *Wuchereria bancrofti*) and transmitted by **mosquitoes**.
  - Leads to lifelong disabilities like **lymphoedema (swollen limbs)** and **hydrocele (scrotal swelling)**.
  - **Morbidity Management & Disability Prevention (MMDP) services** (hygiene, skin care, and hydrocele surgeries) help prevent severe disability.
- **MDA Campaign:** Covers **111 endemic districts in 13 states**, aiming to **protect over 17.5 crore people** and **eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis by 2027**.
  - The **MDA campaign** ensures **supervised administration** of anti-filarial medicines in **LF-endemic areas**, using **Double (Diethylcarbamazine Citrate and Albendazole)** and **Triple Drug Regimen (Ivermectin, DEC, and Albendazole)**
  - MDA aims to stop LF transmission by eliminating **filarial parasites** from the **bloodstream**, preventing mosquito transmission.
    - The medication is not for **children under 2, pregnant women, or seriously ill individuals**.
- **India's MMDP Services:** Integrated into **Ayushman Arogya Mandir (AAM)**, with hydrocelectomy (remove a **hydrocele**) covered under **National Health Mission** and **Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana**.

- In 2024, nearly 50% of hydrocele surgeries were done in endemic states.

Read more: **Lymphatic Filariasis**

## National Commission for Safai Karamcharis

The **Union Cabinet** has extended the **National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK)** for three years until **31<sup>st</sup> March 2028**.

### National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK)

- **Established:** **1994** under the **NCSK Act, 1993**; became a **non-statutory body in 2004** under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.
- **Structure:** Chairperson (MoS rank), Vice-Chairperson, 5 members (including 1 woman).
- **Mandate:**
  - Recommends policies for **welfare and rehabilitation** of Safai Karamcharis.
  - Monitors implementation of schemes and laws like **The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers Act, 2013**.
  - Investigates grievances and policy lapses.
  - Ensures **Rs 30 lakh** compensation for sewer deaths, **Rs 10-20 lakh** for disabilities (SC ruling, 2023).
- **Working:** Field visits, grievance redressal, policy reviews, suo-motu actions, meetings, and reports to the ministry.

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Note:

### Schemes for Sanitation Workers:

- **NAMASTE scheme:** Aimed at profiling of Septic Tanks Workers, provide occupational safety training, protective kits, and health insurance ([AB-PMJAY](#)).
- **National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC):** Offers concessional loans and financial aid for the socio-economic upliftment of Safai Karamcharis and their families.

Read More: [National Commission for Safai Karamcharis](#)

### TROPEX-25

The Indian Navy's [Theatre Level Operational Exercise \(TROPEX\)](#) 2025 is being conducted in the [Indian Ocean Region \(IOR\)](#) over a duration of 3 months (Jan - Mar 2025).

- **About TROPEX:** It is the Indian Navy's biennial and largest maritime exercise that strengthens joint operations against [maritime threats](#) with participation from the **Army, Air Force, and Coast Guard**.
  - **Objective:** Validate the Indian Navy's **warfighting skills** and ensure an **integrated response** to conventional, asymmetric, and hybrid maritime threats posed by countries like **China**.
    - **China**, the **world's largest navy** with over 360 warships and submarines, deploys **7-8 naval vessels and spy ships** in the **IOR at all times**.
  - **Phases:** It includes **Harbour and Sea Phases**, featuring **combat operations**, cyber & electronic warfare, live weapon firings, and **Amphibious Exercise (AMPHEX)**.

Read More: [Securing India's Interests in the Indian Ocean Region](#)

### BIMSTEC Youth Summit 2025

The first-ever [Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation \(BIMSTEC\)](#) Youth Summit 2025 was inaugurated in **Gandhinagar, Gujarat**, the event emphasized **skill development, entrepreneurship, and regional cooperation**.

#### ➤ Key Highlights of Summit:

- **Theme:** "Youth as a Bridge for Intra-BIMSTEC Exchange."
- **Youth-Centric Focus:** The summit highlighted that over 60% of BIMSTEC's 1.8 billion population comprises youth, underlining their role in regional growth.
  - Highlighted India's goal of becoming a [developed nation by 2047](#), stressing youth participation.
- **Startup Network:** India proposed a **BIMSTEC-wide startup network** to boost innovation and entrepreneurship.
- **BIMSTEC:** The **BIMSTEC** is a regional organization comprising **India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal, and Bhutan**.
  - It tackles climate change, [poverty](#), and sustainability while strengthening cooperation in the [Bay of Bengal region](#).
- **India's Commitment to Youth Empowerment:** India's [Skill India Mission](#), [National Education Policy \(NEP\) 2020](#), and [PM Internship Scheme](#) have trained **15 million youth** in AI, robotics, and digital technologies.
  - India's [startup ecosystem](#) is the **world's third-largest**, with **157,000 startups**, nearly half women-led.

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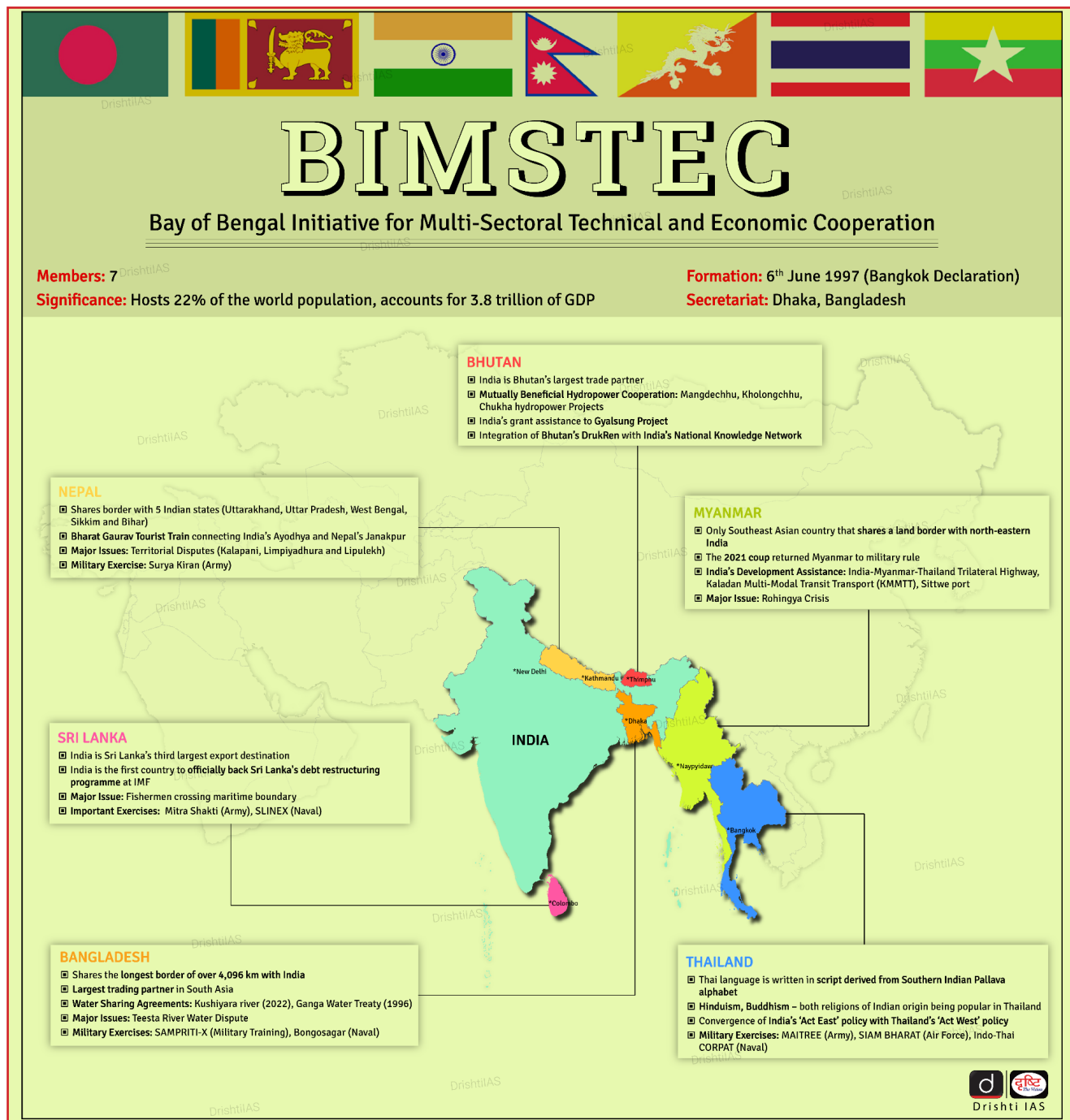
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Note:



**BIMSTEC**  
Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation

**Members:** 7  
**Significance:** Hosts 22% of the world population, accounts for 3.8 trillion of GDP

**Formation:** 6<sup>th</sup> June 1997 (Bangkok Declaration)  
**Secretariat:** Dhaka, Bangladesh

**BHUTAN**

- India is Bhutan's largest trade partner
- Mutually Beneficial Hydropower Cooperation: Mangdechhu, Kholongchhu, Chukha hydropower Projects
- India's grant assistance to Gyalsung Project
- Integration of Bhutan's DrukRen with India's National Knowledge Network

**NEPAL**

- Shares border with 5 Indian states (Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Sikkim and Bihar)
- Bharat Gaurav Tourist Train connecting India's Ayodhya and Nepal's Janakpur
- Major Issues: Territorial Disputes (Kalapani, Limpiyadhura and Lipulekh)
- Military Exercise: Surya Kiran (Army)

**MYANMAR**

- Only Southeast Asian country that shares a land border with north-eastern India
- The 2021 coup returned Myanmar to military rule
- India's Development Assistance: India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport (KMMTT), Sittwe port
- Major Issue: Rohingya Crisis

**SRI LANKA**

- India is Sri Lanka's third largest export destination
- India is the first country to officially back Sri Lanka's debt restructuring programme at IMF
- Major Issue: Fishermen crossing maritime boundary
- Important Exercises: Mitra Shakti (Army), SLINEX (Naval)

**INDIA**

**THAILAND**

- Thai language is written in script derived from Southern Indian Pallava alphabet
- Hinduism, Buddhism – both religions of Indian origin being popular in Thailand
- Convergence of India's 'Act East' policy with Thailand's 'Act West' policy
- Military Exercises: MAITREE (Army), SIAM BHARAT (Air Force), Indo-Thai CORPAT (Naval)

**BANGLADESH**

- Shares the longest border of over 4,096 km with India
- Largest trading partner in South Asia
- Water Sharing Agreements: Kushiara river (2022), Ganga Water Treaty (1996)
- Major Issues: Teesta River Water Dispute
- Military Exercises: SAMPRITI-X (Military Training), Bongosagar (Naval)

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Read more: [BIMSTEC Charter](#)

## 100 GW Solar Power Capacity

India has crossed **100 GW** of installed **solar capacity**, marking a key milestone toward its **500 GW non-fossil energy goal** by 2030.

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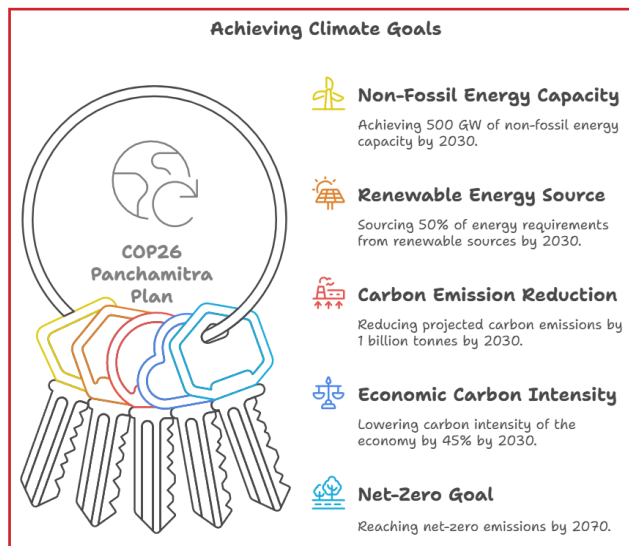


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Note:

- **Growth in Solar Capacity:** It surged over **35 times** in the last decade, rising from **2.82 GW** in 2014 to **100 GW** in 2025.
  - The **grand total** of solar and hybrid projects stands at **296.59 GW**.
  - **PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana** enabled **9 lakh rooftop solar installations** across households.
- **Solar Contribution to Climate Goals:** Solar power contributes **47%** of India's total **renewable energy capacity**.
- **Top Solar States:** Rajasthan, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh.
- **Growth in Manufacturing:** **Solar module** production capacity surged from **2 GW** in 2014 to **60 GW** in 2024.



Read More: [India's Quest for Solar Dominance](#)

## Eurasian Otters in Kashmir Valley

- Eurasian otters** have been spotted in **Gurez Valley** (Kashmir) with the **first live documentation in 25 years**.
- It was spotted feasting on fish in the **Kishanganga River** (Originating from **Krishansar lake**, Ganderbal district (J&K)).
    - The river flows northwards through the **Tulail and Gurez Valleys** of Kashmir before entering PoK.

### About Eurasian Otters:

- **About:** Otters are members of the **mammalian family** called **Mustelidae** and inhabit both **marine and freshwater**.
  - In J&K, they are locally known as **Vodur** and help maintain aquatic ecosystem health.
  - Otters are mainly **active around dawn and dusk** (crepuscular).
- **Habitat:** Found in the **Himalayas, northeast India, and Western Ghats**.
- **Carnivorous Diet:** Feeds on **fish, crustaceans, amphibians**, and sometimes **reptiles, birds, eggs, insects, and worms**.
- **Conservation Status:** Near threatened (**IUCN**), **Schedule I** (**Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**), **Appendix I** (**CITES**).
- **Other Otter Species in India:** Smooth-coated Otter (throughout India), and Small-clawed Otter (Himalayas and southern India).

Read More: [Fishing Cat and Otters](#)

## Taranaki Maunga Mountain Gains Legal Personhood

**Taranaki Maunga** (New Zealand's **2<sup>nd</sup>-highest mountain in North Island**) was granted **legal personhood** becoming the third natural feature (after **Te Urewera park** in 2014 and **Whanganui River** in 2017) in the country to receive this status.

- It will now be officially recognized by its **Māori name**, replacing the colonial name **Mount Egmont**.
  - **Māori** are the **indigenous tribes (Iwi)** of New Zealand.

### About Mount Taranaki:

- **Type:** **Stratovolcano** (composite cone) with a symmetrical shape.
- **Formation:** Result of **Pacific Plate** subducting beneath the **Australian Plate**.
- **Status:** **Snow-capped dormant volcano**.
- **Aoraki/Mount Cook (3724 m)**, located in the **Southern Alps** is the **highest mountain in New Zealand**, while **Mount Tasman** is **second-highest (3,497m)**.

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Note:



## Legal Rights to Natural Entities in India:

- **Uttarakhand HC (2017 & 2018):** Granted legal personhood to Ganga & Yamuna rivers, Gangotri & Yamunotri glaciers, and later extended equal rights to all animals. The Supreme Court stayed the river ruling.
- **Punjab & Haryana HC (2020):** Declared Sukhna Lake, Chandigarh, a living entity for environmental protection.
- The ***Doctrine of Parens Patriae*** empowers the state (judiciary) to act as a guardian for those unable to protect themselves, including natural entities like rivers, forests, and wildlife.

Read More: [Human Rights and Environment](#)

## SARAT Version 2

The Ministry of Earth Sciences launched **SARAT (Search and Rescue Aid Tool)** Version 2 to enhance search-and-rescue efficiency in the Indian Ocean.

- **Key Enhancements:** More accurate search areas, enhanced data visualization, and future upgrades (e.g., **surface current** and **wind prediction** accuracy).
- **About SARAT:** It is a **satellite-based distress alert system** aiding vessels, aircraft, and individuals in remote or high-risk areas at sea.
  - **Developed by:** **ESSO-INCOIS** under the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) as part of the **Make in India** initiative.
  - **Key Features:**
    - **Customizable Tracking:** Tracks 60 object types, including people, rafts, boats, and aircraft.
    - **Accurate Predictions:** Forecasts search areas up to 10 days using wind, currents, and drifting buoys.
    - **User-Friendly Interface:** Interactive maps, SMS/email alerts, and local language support for fishermen.
- INCOIS, a top tsunami service provider recognized by **UNESCO**, specializes in ocean disaster management and early warnings.

- INCOIS won the **Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar 2025** (Institutional Category) for excellence in disaster management.

Read More: [SC Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar 2025 to INCOIS](#)

## Polar Bear Sebum Sustainable Alternative to Forever Chemicals

A study published in **Science Advances**, reveals that **polar bear** fur contains an oily substance called **sebum** with **anti-icing properties**, which could provide a natural alternative to harmful 'forever chemicals' like **Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)**.

- **Study Focus:** Researchers tested the resistance of polar bear fur and **human hair** to ice, finding that sebum in the fur has **unique properties**, lacking **squalene (organic compound)** found in human sebum.
- **Sebum Properties:** Polar bear fur **sebum** helps keep them dry and enables them to **slide on ice and dive into water**, which is similar to **fluorinated ski skins** used for **ice resistance**, but without the harmful PFAS.
- **PFAS:** Group of forever chemicals that are resistant to water, oil, grease, and heat.
- **Health Concerns:** PFAS, widely used in cookware, food packaging, and food processing, do not degrade in the environment and pose serious health risks.
- **Potential Applications:** The study suggests that the **properties of sebum** could be used to create **naturally sourced coatings**, reducing reliance on PFAS and offering a more **environmentally friendly solution**.

Read more: [Forever Chemicals](#)

## Beggar-thy-Neighbour Policy

The US imposed **tariffs** on imports from **China, Canada and Mexico** as part of **Beggar-thy-neighbour policy**.

- **About Beggar-thy-Neighbour Policy:** It is a **protectionist strategy** that involves measures like **trade barriers**, **currency devaluation**, and **subsidies**, to improve its own economic situation at the **expense of other nations**.

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Note:

- **Origins:** Adam Smith coined the term in **The Wealth of Nations (1776)**, criticizing mercantilism that impoverishes others and advocating free trade for all nations' benefit.
  - **Supporters' Arguments:** Help boost the domestic economy by protecting important industries and jobs.
    - Currency devaluation can **reduce export costs and increase import prices**, possibly resulting in a **trade surplus**.
  - **Critics' Arguments:** Countries imposing such policies often face **retaliatory tariffs**, leading to a **decline in global trade and investment**. E.g., the **Great Depression (1929-39)**.
    - Benefit domestic producers but **harm consumers** due to higher prices from **reduced foreign competition**.
  - **Alternative View:** Countries should **refrain from retaliating** and instead adopt **unilateral free trade**.
- Read More: [Trade War](#)

## Sahitya Akademi Award 2024

The [Sahitya Akademi Awards 2024](#) have announced **22 winners**, with **Bengali and Urdu awards pending**, bringing the total to **24**.

- **About:** The Sahitya Akademi Awards honor exceptional literary contributions in categories like **novels, poetry, essays, and plays**.
  - It is the **2<sup>nd</sup>-highest literary honor** in India, after the [Jnanpith Award](#).
  - It was established in **1954** as an autonomous body under the **Ministry of Culture**.
- **Eligibility:** Award categories include works in **22 languages** of the [Eighth Schedule](#), along with **English and Rajasthani (total: 24 languages)**, and translations of Indian literary works.
  - The author must be an **Indian citizen**.
- **Other Sahitya Akademi Awards:** [Bal Sahitya Puraskar](#) for children's literature and [Yuva Puraskar](#) for works by authors under the age of **35**.

- **Other Initiatives:** The Akademi also runs programs like **Gramalok** (for remote writers) and **Dalit Chetna** (for Dalit writers).

Read More: [Sahitya Akademi Awards 2023](#)

## 3<sup>rd</sup> India-Japan Steel Dialogue

The 3<sup>rd</sup> [India-Japan Steel Dialogue](#), held in New Delhi, brought both nations to discuss economic developments, steel trade, and technological collaboration.

- **Institutional Mechanism:** The dialogue is part of the **Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC)** on the steel sector, signed between the two countries in 2020, to promote sustainable growth, innovation, and workplace safety.
- **Outcomes:** India assured **ease of doing business for Japanese companies**, while Japan reaffirmed its support for investments in new steel technologies.
  - Both sides shared perspectives on the [European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism \(EU CBAM\)](#) and its impact on steel trade.
- **EU CBAM:** It is the EU's mechanism to price **carbon emissions** on imported goods and promote cleaner industrial production globally.
  - **CBAM's transitional phase (2023-2025)** involves reporting obligations, with **full financial implementation from 2026**, covering iron, steel, cement, fertilizers, aluminum, electricity, and hydrogen.

Read more: [Green Steel Policy](#)

## Gaia BH3 Black Hole

Astronomers have discovered [Gaia BH3](#), the **largest known stellar-mass black hole** in the **Milky Way**, located in the [constellation Aquila](#).

- This marks the **3<sup>rd</sup> black hole** found using the [Gaia telescope](#) of the **European Space Agency**. (Previous discoveries: **Gaia BH1 in 2022** and **Gaia BH2 in 2023**)
- **Gaia BH3** has a mass **33 times that of the Sun**, making it the most massive stellar-mass black hole in the Milky Way.

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Note:

- A stellar-mass black hole is a type of black hole that forms when massive stars, weighing 5 to 10 times the Sun, collapse.
- Gaia BH3 is not actively pulling in matter and does not emit X-rays showing evidence of “silent” black holes without X-ray emissions.
- Rings of gas and dust around black holes emit light, including X-rays, making them detectable.
- The 2020 Nobel Prize in Physics was awarded for confirming black hole formation as a key prediction of general theory of relativity and discovering a supermassive compact object at the center of our Milky Way galaxy.

# BLACK HOLES

## ABOUT

- A place in space with **extremely high gravity pull**; even light can't escape (hence, **invisible**)
- The strong gravity is due to matter being squeezed into a tiny space

The term 'black hole' was coined in the mid-1960s by American physicist John Archibald Wheeler

## DETECTION

- By seeing how stars very close to black holes act differently than other stars
- In April 2019, scientists at the **Event Horizon Telescope Project** released the first-ever image of a Black Hole (shadow, more precisely)

## Albert Einstein and Black Hole

- First predicted their existences in **Theory of General Relativity**
- It showed that when a massive star dies, it leaves behind a small, dense remnant core

India's first dedicated satellite, **AstroSat** observed for the very first-time rapid variability of high energy X-ray emission from a black hole system

## TYPES

- **Miniature (Hypothetical):**
  - The smallest; size of just 1 atom
  - Mass: varies from 1/100th of a milligram to the mass of a large mountain
  - Believed to be formed when universe began
- **Stellar:**
  - Mass: **20x the mass of sun**
  - Believed to be formed due to **Supernovae explosion**
- **Supernova is an exploding star that has reached the end of its life**
- **Supermassive**
  - The largest
  - Mass: >1 million suns together
  - Every large galaxy has a supermassive black hole at its centre
  - Believed to be made at the same time as their home galaxy

**Sagittarius A is the supermassive black hole at the centre of Milky Way (mass: ~about 4 mn suns)**

**The Sun will never turn into a black hole as it is not big enough to make a black hole**

**Singularity**  
At the very centre of a black hole, matter has collapsed into a region of infinite density called a singularity. All the matter and energy that fall into the black hole ends up here. The prediction of infinite density by general relativity is thought to indicate the breakdown of the theory where quantum effects become significant.

**Event horizon**  
This is the radius around a singularity where matter and energy cannot escape the black hole's gravity: the point of no return. This is the "black" part of the black hole.

**Photon sphere**  
Although the black hole itself is dark, photons are emitted from nearby hot plasma in jets or an accretion disc (see below). In the absence of gravity, these photons would travel in straight lines, but just outside the event horizon of a black hole, gravity is strong enough to bend their paths so that we see a bright ring surrounding a roughly circular dark "shadow".

**Relativistic jets**  
When a black hole feeds on stars, gas or dust, the meal produces jets of particles and radiation blasting out from the black hole's poles at near light speed. They can extend for thousands of light-years into space.

**Innermost stable orbit**  
The inner edge of an accretion disc is the last place that material can orbit safely without the risk of falling past the point of no return.

**Accretion disc**  
A disc of superheated gas and dust whirls around a black hole at immense speeds, producing electromagnetic radiation (X-rays, optical, infrared and radio) that reveal the black hole's location. Some of this material is doomed to cross the event horizon, while other parts may be forced out to create jets.

**Labels in diagram:** Singularity, Event horizon, Accretion disc, Relativistic Jet, Photon sphere, Innermost stable orbit.

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Read More: [Ultramassive Black Hole](#)

## Very Short-Range Air Defence System

The **Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO)** has successfully completed three successive flight trials of the **Very Short-Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS)** off the Odisha coast.

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Note:

- **VSHORADS:** It is a **man-portable system** developed by **Research Center Imarat** in collaboration with other DRDO laboratories.
  - It is lightweight, and has a **maximum range of 8 km** and can engage targets at **altitudes of up to 4.5 km**.
  - The system has the ability to neutralize aerial threats, including drones, flying at very low altitudes and high speeds.
  - It is designed to meet the needs of all three branches of the **Indian Armed Forces: the Army, Navy, and Air Force**.
  - The VSHORADS missile incorporates advanced technologies like the **miniaturized Reaction Control System (RCS)** (a system used for attitude control) and **integrated avionics** (missile control and navigation), successfully tested for neutralizing low-altitude aerial threats.
- **Importance:** The VSHORADS system is a **critical air defence tool**, offering close protection against aerial threats in battlefield scenarios.
  - It is especially vital in combating the **emerging threat of drones** and other **loitering munitions**, which are increasingly used in modern warfare.

Read more: [Very Short-Range Air Defence System \(VSHORADS\)](#)

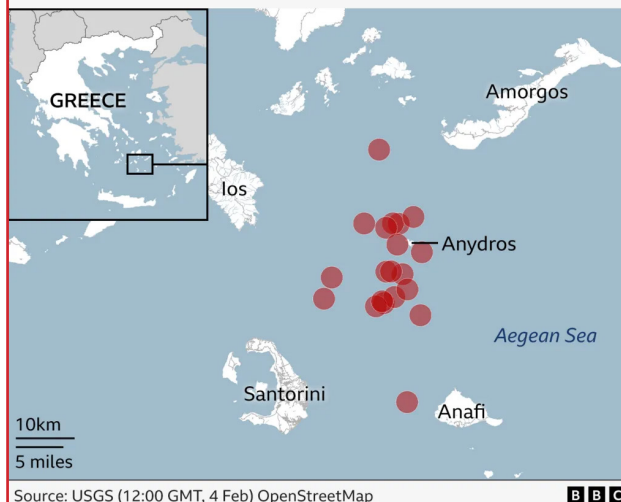
## Santorini Islands

Santorini, a popular **tourist destination** in Greece's **volcanic island**, has experienced frequent **earthquakes**.

- These tremors have been linked to **tectonic plate movements from the African-Eurasian Plate interaction**, rather than **volcanic activity**.
- **Santorini:** It lies in the **southern Aegean Sea**, **200 km southeast from the mainland**. Its capital is Fira.
  - It is a part of the **southern Cyclades** (group of around 2200 Greek islands in the southern Aegean Sea), with an area of approximately **73 km<sup>2</sup>** located on the **Hellenic Volcanic Arc**, a chain of islands formed by **volcanic activity**.
- **Other Unique Features:** Santorini is also famous for its **beaches, wines, Akrotiri ruins**, and year-round **Mediterranean climate**.

## Cyclades Islands hit by multiple shocks

● Earthquakes of more than 4.5 magnitude in the last week



Read More: [Samos Island](#)

## Jal Jeevan Mission Extended Till 2028

**Union Budget 2025-26** has extended the **Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)** till **2028** with the aim of benefiting the remaining (20%) rural households.

### Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)

- **About:** The JJM was **launched in 2019** with the aim to **provide drinking tap water supply to every rural household by 2024**, targeting **55 liters per person per day**.
- **Progress:** In 2019, only **3.23 crore (17%)** of rural households had tap water connections.
  - As of 2024, it covered **15 crore households (80%)** of rural India).
- **Focus:** The extension of the Mission will focus on **improving the quality of infrastructure** and ensuring the **operation and maintenance** of rural piped water supply systems, with a strong emphasis on **public participation**.
- **Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs):** New MoUs will be signed with states and union territories to ensure the sustainability and **citizen-centric water service delivery**.

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Note:



➤ **Impact of JJM:**

- **Time Savings:** **WHO** estimates JJM will save over **5.5 crore hours daily**, primarily for women, spent collecting water.
- **Health Benefits:** JJM could prevent nearly **400,000 deaths** from diarrheal diseases and save **14 million Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs)**.
- **Child Mortality Reduction:** Research suggests safe water could reduce child mortality by **30%**, saving **136,000 lives** annually.



Read More: [Jal Jeevan Mission \(JJM\)](#)

## Breach of Parliamentary Privileges

Formal notices of **breach of parliamentary privilege** were filed against some **MPs** following their comment on the **President address**.

- **Breach of Parliamentary Privilege:** A breach of privilege occurs when someone **disregards or attacks the privileges, rights, or immunities** of a **member** or the **House** itself.
- **About Parliamentary Privilege:** **Parliamentary privileges and immunities** are **special rights** granted to **MPs** and **MLAs** to ensure their effective functioning **without external interference**.
- **Sources:**
  - Constitution i.e., **Article 105**, **Article 122**, **Article 194**, and **Article 212**.

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Note:

- **Parliamentary Conventions** (based on British parliamentary practices as of 1947).
- **Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business** (**Lok Sabha** and **Rajya Sabha**)
- Judicial Interpretations (**Supreme Court** and **High Court** rulings)
- **Statutory Laws** (laws enacted by **Parliament**) (Currently, there is no act of the Parliament defining parliamentary privileges).
- **Parliamentary Privilege Includes:**
  - **Individual Privileges:** Freedom of Speech, Immunity from Legal Proceedings, Freedom from Arrest etc.
  - **Collective Privileges:** Secret Sitings, Inquiry Powers, Judicial Immunity etc.
- Under **Article 87**, the President addresses both Houses of **Parliament** at the start of the first session **after each general election** and at the commencement of the **first session of each year**.

Read More: [Parliamentary Privileges and Immunities](#)

## India Won ICC Under-19 Women's T20 World Cup 2025

India won the [International Cricket Council \(ICC\) Under-19 Women's T20 World Cup 2025](#), defeating South Africa in Malaysia.

- It is organised by the ICC, it features national women's under-19 teams competing in the **Twenty20 format**.
- **First Edition:** The inaugural ICC Under-19 Women's T20 World Cup was held in **2023**, with **South Africa** as the host. India won the maiden title, defeating **England**.
- **ICC:** It is the **global governing body for cricket**, responsible for overseeing **108 members (including India)** and managing the sport worldwide.
  - Enforces the **ICC Code of Conduct** and playing conditions, and appoints match officials for international matches.
  - ICC plays a crucial role in **combating corruption** and **match-fixing** through its Anti-Corruption Unit, ensuring the integrity of the sport.
- **Formats of Cricket:** The ICC recognizes three main formats of cricket at the international level (**Test**

**matches, One-Day Internationals (ODIs), and Twenty20 Internationals (T20Is)).**

- **Test cricket:** The oldest format (since 1877), lasting five days with two innings per team.
- **ODIs:** Introduced in 1971, these 50-over matches blend technique, speed, and skill.
- **T20Is:** Introduced in 2005, **T20Is** are the newest, shortest (usually competed in three hours) and fastest form of cricket, with each team playing 20 overs.

Read more: [India Won the 2024 T20 World Cup](#)

## Haiti

Haiti faces a surge in **gang violence**, with over **5,600 deaths** in 2024. The [United Nations \(UN\)](#) highlighted **human rights violations** and **corruption** exacerbating the crisis.

- It is driven by **political instability**, **corruption**, weak governance, **economic hardship**, **impunity**, and the **flow of illegal arms**, compounded by **widespread displacement**.

### Haiti:

- **Location:** Between the [Caribbean Sea](#) and the **North Atlantic Ocean**.
  - It occupies the western third of **Hispaniola Island**, bordered by the **Dominican Republic** to the east, **Jamaica** to the west, and **Cuba** to the northwest.
- **Official Languages:** **French** and **Haitian Creole**
- **Historical Significance:** World's **first independent Black-led republic**, after over 200 years of Spanish rule and more than 100 years of French rule.

### India-Haiti Relations:

- India and Haiti maintain friendly relations and diplomatic ties were established in **1996**.
- In 1995, India sent a 140-member [CRPF](#) troop to Haiti on a [UN](#) peace mission.
- India has been offering assistance to Haiti under the [ITEC](#) programme.

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Note:



Read More: [Assassination of Haiti's President](#)

## Grameen Credit Score

**Union Budget 2025-26** has introduced the **Grameen Credit Score (GCS)** framework to address the credit needs of **Self Help Groups (SHGs)** and rural populations.

### ➤ Grameen Credit Score:

- **About:** It is developed by public sector banks to **assess the creditworthiness of rural individuals**, facilitating easier access to loans.
  - It aims to **improve repayment discipline** and **reduce fraud** by providing a more **accurate evaluation of borrowers** in rural areas.
- **Impact:** It will strengthen **microfinance**, boost **financial inclusion**, and support sectors like **agriculture, rural development, and MSMEs**.
  - GCS will complement existing **microfinance models** and work alongside credit scores like **CIBIL** and **CRIF Highmark** for assessing loans.
  - This score will be integrated with the **SVAMITVA Scheme**.

### ➤ Other Initiatives:

- **Transformation of India Post:** The **Union Budget 2025** proposed **transforming India Post** into a

major **public logistics organization**, utilizing its vast rural network of **1.5 lakh post offices** and **2.4 lakh Dak Sevaks**.

- **Support for National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC):** Rs 500 crore **Grant-in-aid** allocated for strengthening **cooperative sugar mills** to boost **cooperative sector lending**.

Read More: [Union Budget 2025-26](#), [Economic Survey 2024-25](#), [SVAMITVA Scheme](#)

## SC/ST Act to Include Intellectual Property

In the *Principal Secretary Government of Maharashtra v. Kshipra Kamlesh Uke Case, 2024*, the **Supreme Court** upholds the **Bombay High Court's** ruling, expanding the definition of "property" in the **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989** to include **intellectual property**.

- The aggrieved sought compensation for the theft of their **research data, laptops, and intellectual property** under the provisions of the **SC/ST Act, 1989**.
- The **Bombay High Court** ruled that the term "property" should be interpreted broadly to include **intellectual property** such as **data, electronic material, and intellectual rights**, whether **tangible or intangible**.
- **Patents, copyrights, and designs**, are property, even though they lack physical existence, and are capable of being valued for **compensation under the SC/ST Act, 1989**.
- The SC/ST Act, 1989 defines **specific offenses** against SC/ST members, including **physical violence, harassment, and social discrimination**.
  - The SC/ST Act, 1989, **does not allow anticipatory bail**, unless a **prima facie case** is made against the accused.
  - It mandates **special courts for swift trials** and **SC/ST Protection Cells** at the state level, led by **senior police officers**, to oversee its implementation.

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Note:



# INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS (IPRs)

*IP refers to intangible assets owned/legally protected by an individual/company from outside use or implementation without consent.*



## NEED FOR IPR

- Encourages Innovation
- Economic growth
- Safeguard rights of creators
- Enhances ease of doing business



## RELATED CONVENTIONS/TREATIES (INDIA SIGNATORY TO ALL)

- WIPO Administered (first recognised IPR under):
  - Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property 1883 (Patents, Industrial Designs)
  - Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works 1886 (Copyrights)
- WTO - TRIPS Agreement:
  - Ensures adequate standard of protection
  - Argues for incentives for technology transfer to developing countries
- Budapest Treaty 1977:
  - International recognition of the deposit of micro-organisms for the purposes of patent procedure
- Marrakesh VIP Treaty 2016:
  - Facilitate access to published works by visually impaired persons and persons with print disabilities
- IPR also outlined in Article 27 (Universal Declaration of Human Rights)



## INDIA AND IPRS - INITIATIVES

- National IPR Policy 2016:
  - Motto: "Creative India; Innovative India"
  - Compliant with TRIPS Agreement
  - Brings all IPRs to single platform
  - Nodal Dept - Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (Ministry of Commerce)
- National (IP) Awareness Mission (NIPAM)
- Kalam Program for Intellectual Property Literacy and Awareness Campaign (KAPILA)

**World Intellectual Property Day: 26th April**

Intellectual Property	Protection	Law in India	Duration
Copyright	Expression of Ideas	Copyright Act 1957	Variable
Patent	Inventions- New Processes, Machines, etc.	Indian Patent Act 1970	20 years Generally
Trademarks	Sign to distinguish business goods or services	Trade Marks Act 1999	Can last Indefinitely
Trade Secrets	Confidential Business Information	Protected without Registration	Unlimited time
Geographical Indication (GI)	Sign used on specific geographical origin and possess qualities due to site of origin	Geographical Indications of Goods (R & P) Act, 1999	10 years (Renewable)
Industrial Design	Ornamental or aesthetic aspect of an article	Design Act, 2000	10 years



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Read More: [Supreme Court Ruling on the SC and ST Act 1989](#)

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## CSIR-IICT's Breakthrough in Clean Energy

Researchers at the [Council of Scientific & Industrial Research \(CSIR\)](#) - Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IICT) have produced [biohydrogen \(bioH<sub>2</sub>\)](#) from [food waste](#).

- **BioH<sub>2</sub> Production:** Food waste undergoes microbial fermentation in an **upflow reactor** with a **self-regulating buffering system**, optimizing **bioH<sub>2</sub>** yield and minimizing **methane** and **Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>)** emissions compared to traditional **biogas methods**.
  - Fermentation is the **anaerobic (absence of oxygen) breakdown** of compounds by **microorganisms (such as bacteria or yeast)**, releasing energy.
  - The study addresses both **waste management and clean energy needs**, supporting **net-zero targets**.
- Another study led by the chief scientist at IICT demonstrated an efficient method to convert **CO<sub>2</sub>** into **ethanol** and **acetic acid**, reducing **greenhouse gas emissions**.
- **CO<sub>2</sub> Conversion:** Traditionally, **H<sub>2</sub>** is needed for **CO<sub>2</sub>** conversion into products like methane, ethanol, or acetic acid.
  - The study used **high-pressure gas fermentation (HPGF) reactor**, eliminating the need for **H<sub>2</sub>**, making the process more sustainable, energy-efficient, and cost-effective, yielding **higher ethanol and acetic acid**.
- **CSIR-IICT:** Established in 1944, **CSIR-IICT** in Hyderabad is one of the oldest **National Laboratories** recognized for its expertise in **chemical technology, applied research, and commercialization**.

Read more: [Biofuels](#)

## Gyan Bharatam Mission and NMM

The [Union Budget 2025-26](#) has introduced the 'Gyan Bharatam Mission', aimed at **surveying, documenting, and conserving India's vast manuscript heritage**.

- **Objective:** The initiative seeks to conserve over **one crore manuscripts** housed in academic institutions, museums, libraries, and private collections.
- **Budget Allocation:** To accommodate this new initiative, the budget allocation for the [National Manuscripts Mission \(NMM\)](#), has been increased from **Rs 3.5 crore to Rs 60 crore**.

### National Manuscripts Mission (NMM):

- **NMM** was launched by the Ministry of Culture in **2003** under the **Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts (IGNCA)**.
- It aims to **preserve and make accessible India's vast manuscript heritage**.
  - **IGNCA** was established in **1987** as an **autonomous institution for research, academic pursuit, and dissemination in the arts**.

### Manuscript:

- A manuscript is a **handwritten composition** created on materials such as **paper, bark, cloth, metal, or palm leaf**, and it must be at least **75 years old**.
- India holds an estimated **5 million manuscripts**, probably the largest collection in the world.

Read More: [Revival of National Mission for Manuscripts \(NMM\)](#), [National Mission for Manuscripts and National Culture Fund](#)

## Karnataka Allows Right to Die with Dignity

**Karnataka** allowed the setting up **medical boards** in hospitals to facilitate **requests for dignified deaths**.

- It has been done as per **Supreme Court verdict** in the [Common Cause vs. Union of India Case, 2018](#) that upheld legal validity of **passive euthanasia**.
  - **Passive euthanasia** involves **withholding or stopping life-sustaining treatments**, letting a person die naturally from their condition.
- The **Supreme Court's 2023 order** affirms the right to die with dignity under [Article 21](#) and eases norms for passive euthanasia.

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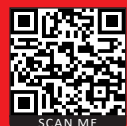
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➤ **Supreme Court Guidelines 2023:**

- **Withdrawal of WLST: Primary and Secondary Medical Boards** to review requests for **Withdrawal of Life-Sustaining Therapy (WLST)** based on living wills.
- **Living Will:** Living will (Advance Medical Directive) allows patients to **document** their **treatment wishes**, ensuring dignity in end-of-life decisions.
- **Approval:** Procedure requires approval from the **treating doctor, two medical boards (three practitioners each)**, and the **District Health Officer's nominated practitioner**.
- **Consent:** Medical boards' decisions require **consent from the next of kin** and approval from the **Judicial Magistrate of the First Class (JMFC)**.
- **Advanced Medical Directive (AMD):** AMD mandates appointing at **least two individuals** for healthcare decisions if the patient loses capacity.
  - AMD can be executed by **adults of sound mind**, filed digitally or on paper, and maintained in health records.

Read More: [SC Eases Norms for Passive Euthanasia](#)

## Potomac River

A US military helicopter and a passenger plane collided mid-air over Washington, crashing into the **Potomac River** and leaving no known survivors.

- Potomac River originates in the **Potomac River Highlands** of West

Virginia, US and flows through Virginia, Maryland, Washington, D.C., and emptying into the **Chesapeake Bay**.

- Chesapeake Bay is the largest **estuary** in the US and the third largest in the world.
  - An estuary is a **semi-enclosed coastal area** where freshwater from rivers meets saltwater from the ocean, creating a unique ecosystem.
- The **Potomac River**, often referred to as **"America's River,"** holds profound historical, cultural, and ecological significance.



Read more: [Renaming Gulf of Mexico and Denali](#)

## Guillain-Barré Syndrome and BBE

Pune reported a case of **Bickerstaff's Brainstem Encephalitis (BBE)**, a rare variant of [Guillain-Barré syndrome \(GBS\)](#).

- **GBS:** It is a rare **neurological disorder** where the body's immune system attacks the **peripheral nervous system (PNS)** (controls muscle movement and sensory functions).
- **Symptoms:** Range from mild weakness to severe paralysis, including breathing difficulties.
  - **Treatment:** No known cure for GBS. **Intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIG)**, derived from healthy blood donations, can aid in recovery.
- **BBE:** It is a rare, rapidly progressive, **post-infectious neurological disorder** where the **brainstem becomes inflamed**.
- **Symptoms:** **Mild respiratory infections** or **diarrheal illness**, ataxia (loss of muscle control), ophthalmoplegia (paralysis of eye muscles), and weakness of limbs.

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- **Treatment:** IVIG is commonly used to treat the condition.
- **BBE and GBS:** BBE affects the [central nervous system \(CNS\)](#), while GBS impacts the PNS.
  - BBE is caused by an **autoimmune response** (the body's immune system attacks its own tissues) after an infection, while GBS is triggered by infection, vaccination, or surgery.
- **Precautions:** Precautions for BBE and GBS include getting the flu vaccine, practicing hygiene, and seeking immediate medical help for neurological symptoms like weakness or numbness.

Read more: [Guillain-Barre Syndrome](#)

## Inter-State Committees for Workers' Social Security

Labour Ministers and Secretaries from Union and State governments concluded with major discussions on [labour reforms](#) and workers' welfare.

- It focused on the **implementation of the new Labour Codes** and expanding [social security coverage](#).
- **Three committees** comprising **five states** each will develop a **sustainable model for social security** for workers, with reports due in **March 2025**.
- A key labor reform proposed **shifting** from a **labor inspector model** to an **inspector-cum-facilitator** to reduce compliance burden and enhance [ease of doing business](#).
- It emphasized the need for **sustainable models** to utilize the [cess funds](#) for [pension schemes](#) and **education for children of construction workers**.
  - The welfare of **construction workers** was prioritized, with concerns over **Rs 70,744.16 crore** in **unused cess funds**.
- The government is also working on a **dedicated Social Security Scheme** for [gig and platform workers](#), focusing on **funding, data collection**, and **registration** on the [eShram portal](#).

Read More: [India's Labour Reforms](#)

## First Indian to Pilot Axiom Mission

Indian Air Force Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla is set to become the **first Indian** astronaut to travel to the [International Space Station \(ISS\)](#) on a **private mission** in 2025.

- It is led by NASA astronaut **Peggy Whitson**, and **Shubhanshu Shukla** will serve as the **mission pilot**.
  - He is also the **astronaut-designate** for India's human spaceflight program, [Gaganyaan](#).
- He will board the [SpaceX Dragon](#) spacecraft from **Kennedy Space Center** in Florida as part of the [Axiom Mission 4 \(Ax-4\)](#), a joint venture between [NASA](#) and [ISRO](#).
- The **Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-4)** will involve astronauts from **India, Poland, and Hungary** and is the **first such collaboration in over 40 years**.
- The astronauts will spend **14 days aboard the ISS** conducting **scientific experiments**, educational outreach, and commercial activities with **NASA and ISRO**.
- **Rakesh Sharma** was the **first Indian** to travel to space in **1984** aboard the [Soviet Soyuz T-11](#) mission under the **Interkosmos program**.

Read More: [Gaganyaan Astronauts Selected for Axiom-4 Mission](#)

## Card Tokenization in India

[Card tokenization](#) has become a significant technological advancement in India, enhancing security and customer convenience in [digital payments](#).

- **Over 91 crore tokens** were issued by December 2024 and has enabled nearly **98% of e-commerce transactions** to be processed without actual card data, **reducing the risk of data breaches**.
- **Tokenization:** It **substitutes** actual card details with a **unique code, or "token,"** which acts as a **secure identifier** during transactions.

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- **Types:** **Device tokenization** (specific to each device) and **Card-on-File tokenization** (specific to each merchant).
- **Security Benefits:** Tokens **prevent** merchants from storing **sensitive card details**, safeguarding customers' information in case of a security breach.
- **Future Expansion:** Tokenization is expected to grow **beyond e-commerce** into contactless payments,

recurring transactions, and potentially **UPI-linked credit card payments**.

- **Cybersecurity Regulations:** In **October 2022**, RBI mandated that **merchants and payment processors** no longer store customer card data, relying entirely on tokenization.

Read more: [Tokenization of Cards in India](#)



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