

NITI Aayog presents India's Third Voluntary National Review (VNR) at the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2025

VNR is the **country-led, voluntary assessments** to facilitate the **sharing of experiences** with a view to accelerating the implementation of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

- VNR Highlights **India's Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society Approach** to Achieving the SDGs.

Implementation Strategy

- India is enhancing data-driven governance and localizing SDG implementation through key tools like the **SDG India Index, North-Eastern Region District SDG Index, and the National Multi-dimensional Poverty Index**.

About High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)

- **Genesis:** Established in 2012 at **United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)** in its outcome "The Future We Want".
- **Objective:** It is the **central United Nations platform** for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs.
- **Meeting:** It meets **every year under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council**, and **every four years under the auspices of the General Assembly**.

Key Highlights

- **Progress on Agenda 2030:** While global progress lags, India is making steady gains.
- **SDG 1 (No poverty):** Around 248 million individuals estimated to have escaped Multidimensional Poverty (MPI) between 2013-14 and 2022-23.
- **SDG 2 (Zero Hunger):** PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana has ensured nutritional support for millions.
- **SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing):** **Out of pocket expenditure** as a percentage of Total Health Expenditure has declined from 48.8% in 2017-18 to **39.4% in 2020-21**.
- **Clean Energy:** Programmes like the **National Green Hydrogen Mission, PM-KUSUM, and PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana** are strengthening India's transition to clean energy.
- **Digital Public Infrastructure:** Digital India, Aadhaar, and Unified Payments Interface (UPI) have empowered India's diverse population.
 - ☉ UPI accounts for **49% of global real-time payments**.

Union Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) is discussing the concept of a living wage

MoLE is discussing **living wage** to improve worker welfare and boost participation, especially among women.

- Currently statutes mandates **minimum wage for employees**.

Significance of Living Wages

- A globally implemented living wage **could generate \$4.6 trillion in additional GDP each year** through increased productivity and spending. (WEF)
- **Improve Female Labour Participation:** While living wages benefit all workers, they have a **greater impact on women**, who often face **higher opportunity costs** due to responsibilities like **childcare, health, and education**.
 - ☉ Covering these costs through fair pay can make it easier for women to join the workforce.
- **Other**
 - ☉ Responds to rising **inflation and living costs**
 - ☉ Helps **attract and retain talent**
 - ☉ Aligns with **emerging labour regulations and social expectations**

About Major Forms of Wages in India



Minimum Wage

- The wage must provide not only for the **bare sustenance of life**, but also for the **preservation of the workers' efficiency**.
- Payment of Minimum wages is **legally mandated under Minimum Wages Act, 1948**
- Both **Centre and States governments can** fix, review, and revise minimum wages.
- Under the **Code on Wages, 2019**, minimum wages are **applicable across all employments** in public and private sectors, and organized and unorganized sectors.



Living Wage

- A living wage is a level of pay that gives workers and their families a **decent standard of living**.
 - This includes being able to afford **basic needs** such as **food, housing, healthcare, education, transport and clothing (ILO)**
- Living wages are generally **higher than minimum wages** and should reflect **regional differences**.
- **Article 43 (DPSP):** The State shall endeavour to **secure living wages** to all workers by suitable legislation etc.

The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI 2025) report released

Key findings of the report

- **Global hunger decreased** to an estimated 8.2% in 2024 from 2022 levels.
 - ⊕ However, hunger continues to climb in most subregions of Africa and Western Asia.
- **Moderate or severe food insecurity has declined** gradually since 2021.
- **Food prices rose throughout 2023 and 2024**, pushing up the average cost of a healthy diet globally.
 - ⊕ **The pandemic and the war in Ukraine** have intensified food price inflation worldwide
 - ⊕ **Despite the increase**, people unable to afford a healthy diet in the world fell from 2.76 billion in 2019 to 2.60 billion in 2024.
- **Anaemia in women** (aged 15–49 years) and **adult obesity** (12.1% in 2012 to 15.8% in 2022) **on the rise** globally.

India related findings

- **Excluding India**, there is an **increasing trend in lower-middle-income countries** in the number of **people unable to afford a healthy diet**.
- **Mobile phone adoption** by fishermen and wholesalers in Kerala **reduced price dispersion and waste**.

Key recommendation

- **Time-bound and targeted fiscal measures**, such as temporary tax relief on essential goods and social protection Programmes.
- **Align fiscal and monetary policies** to stabilize markets.
- **Robust agricultural market information systems** are key to managing price volatility and preventing speculation.

About SOFI 2025

- The SOFI report is a joint initiative of the **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)**, the **International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)**, the **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)**, the **World Food Programme (WFP)**, and the **World Health Organization (WHO)**.
- This is the annual global **monitoring report for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 targets 2.1 and 2.2** – to end hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms.

Five Years of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

The NEP 2020 envisions a massive transformation in education through education system rooted in **Indian ethos**, contributing to transforming India into an **equitable and vibrant knowledge society**.

Key Achievements of NEP 2020









- **Curriculum Reforms:** The **5+3+3+4** structure and NCF-SE promote **experiential and competency-based learning**.
- **Foundational Skills:** **NIPUN Bharat** and **Vidya Pravesh** have reached over 4.2 crore students across 8.9 lakh schools
- **Inclusivity:** Over 1.15 lakh SEDG students and 7.58 lakh girls enrolled in residential schools; **PRASHAST App** supports disability screening.
- **Teachers' training:** 4 lakh+ teachers trained under NISHTHA.
- **Leveraging Technology:** **72% of schools** now have **internet**. Initiatives like **Vidyanjali**, **DIKSHA** (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing), **PM e VIDYA**, **e-Jaadui Pitara** (AI powered play-based learning), AI Bots (Katha Sakhi, Teacher Tara)
- **Testing:** The **Common University Entrance Test (CUET) (2022)** is now a key route to undergraduate admissions.

Challenges

- **Centre-States Policy divide:** E.g. States like Kerala, West Bengal refused to sign MoUs for PM-SHRI schools which requires full adoption of NEP.
- **Three-language formula:** Implementation challenges with states opposing.
- **Institutional Delays:** Formation of Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) as a successor to UGC and National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education delayed.

NEP 2020

National Education Policy – Salient Features

-  **Universal Access**
Ensuring access at all levels of schooling from pre-primary to Grade 12. Target: Increase Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) to 100% in preschool to secondary level by 2030.
-  **Competency-Based Learning**
New Curricular and Pedagogical Structure implementing 5+3+3+4 system with NCF-SE 2023 (National Curriculum Framework for School Education)
-  **Flexibility**
Enhanced flexibility in and between vocational and academic streams. Introduction of Academic Bank of Credit system for seamless transitions.
-  **Multilingualism**
Mother tongue/local language as medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, preferably till Grade 8 and beyond. National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy.
-  **Assessment Reforms**
Establishment of National Assessment Centre, PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development).
-  **Inclusivity**
Focus on Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs). Gender Inclusion Fund and Special Education Zones for disadvantaged regions and groups.
-  **Institutional Reforms**
Creation of MERUS (Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities), National Research Foundation (NRF), and Higher Education Commission of India (HECI).
-  **Key Initiatives**
'Light but Tight' regulation policy. Quality Vocational, Teacher and Professional education. Internationalization of Education with multidisciplinary approach and multiple entry/exit options.

Key Targets & Investment

50%	6%	100%
Higher Education GER by 2035 (from 26.3% in 2018)	Public Investment in Education (% of GDP)	GER Target for School Education by 2030

Human-Made Dams Have Shifted Earth's Poles

A recent study revealed that dam construction has shifted **Earth's rotational axis by over 1 meter** since 1835 i.e., they have driven **True Polar Wander (TPW)**.

What Is True Polar Wander (TPW)?

- **Definition:** TPW, or planetary reorientation, is the **rotation of the solid Earth** (crust and mantle) **about the liquid outer core**.
 - ⊕ It helps the Earth **maintain rotational balance** due to **mass redistribution**.
- **Natural Factors driving TPW:** Traditionally, TPW has been linked to **natural processes** such as **glacial melting, Ice sheet melt, tectonic plate shifts, and ocean swell**.

How Dams Are Driving TPW?

- **Reservoirs trap large volumes of water** that would otherwise remain in oceans.
 - ⊕ This **redistributes Earth's mass inland**, causing shifts in the planet's rotation.
- The study also revealed that the shift was **not smooth**—it varied depending on the **size and location** of dams built over time.

Effects of Shifting Poles

- **Navigation Problems:** Shifting poles can affect satellites and space telescopes, which depend on Earth's rotation for accurate positioning.
- **Longer Days:** The days on Earth are growing slightly longer, and this change is accelerating.



New Rules for Contaminated Site Management Notified

Using the power under Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, the MoEFCC has notified the **Environment Protection (Management of Contaminated Sites) Rules, 2025**.

- **Rules will ensure** that polluted sites are cleaned up (remediation) by those responsible.
- Contaminated sites are areas where **hazardous waste has been previously disposed of**, polluting the soil and water and posing risks to health and the environment.

Key highlights of the Rules

- **Contaminants Covered:** 189 hazardous substances as per Hazardous and Other Wastes (Management and Transboundary Movement) Rules, 2016.
 - **Exclusions:** Contamination from **radioactive waste, mining, oil spills at sea, and solid waste dumps** (governed by separate legislation).
 - **Response levels:** Different response levels are set for **agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial areas**.
 - **Contaminated Site Management**
 - ⊕ **Site Identification:** Local bodies/District Administrations must report **suspected sites twice a year to State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs)**
 - ⊕ **Site Assessment:** SPCBs shall inspect the **suspected sites** and list of probable contaminated sites and inform to the CPCB on the centralised online portal.
 - ⊕ **Polluter Identification:** SPCBs identify the polluter. If land is sold, the new owner is liable.
 - ⊕ **Clean-Up Plan:** **Polluter must** carry out a clean-up plan using an approved agency, and pay for it.
 - ◆ **However, if the polluter is not identified**, SPCB execute this.
 - **Funding** for assessment and remediation: Initial assessment costs may be covered by the Central Government from the **Environmental Relief Fund under Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991** and also by the State Government.
 - ⊕ If the polluter is found, these costs must be repaid within 3 months.
 - **Penalties:** The **State Board may impose fines for failure to clean up**, especially if health is at risk.
- Rules address the legal vacuum around the remediation of legacy pollution sites while also providing **provision for voluntary remediation**.

Also In News



Zonal Cultural Centres

The government reviewed the status of setting up **7 Zonal Cultural Centres (ZCCs)**.

About Zonal Cultural Centres

- **Autonomous bodies** under the **Ministry of Culture**.
- Aim to **preserve and promote folk, tribal, and vanishing art forms**.
- Focus on **youth engagement** and showcasing the **diversity of Indian culture**.
- **Headquarters:** Patiala (Punjab), Nagpur (Maharashtra), Udaipur (Rajasthan), Prayagraj (Uttar Pradesh), Kolkata (West Bengal), Dimapur (Nagaland) and Thanjavur (Tamil Nadu)

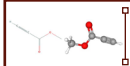


BRICS Culture Ministers' Meeting

Recently, the BRICS Ministers of Culture Meeting was held in Brasilia, Brazil.

Key highlights

- **New BRICS Cultural Platform:** Agreed to set up a platform to promote **cultural and creative industries** within the BRICS group.
 - ⊕ Aim to develop **cultural infrastructure**, boost **content sharing**, support **artist exchange**, and launch **joint projects**.
- **Culture in Post-2030 Development Agenda:** Backs including **culture as a separate goal in the post-2030 development agenda**, in line with **UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development (MONDIACULT)**.
 - ⊕ BRICS also took note of **UNFCCC's Group of Friends of Culture-Based Climate Action (GFCBCA)**.



N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA)

The CDSCO requested that **NDMA levels** in the antacid **Ranitidine** (a medicine that reduces acid production in stomach) be checked after reports of contamination.

What is NDMA?

- A **yellow, odorless liquid** at room temperature.
- Forms **unintentionally** during manufacturing and is found in **air, water, soil, and some foods**.
- **Possibly cancer-causing** (carcinogen).
- **Previously used in rocket fuel**, but stopped due to environmental contamination.
- Also used in **cosmetics, lubricants, and plastics** as an additive or softener



Geelong Treaty

- Australia, United Kingdom (UK) signed the **bilateral Nuclear-Powered Submarine Partnership and Collaboration Treaty (the Geelong Treaty)** under AUKUS Pillar I.
 - ⊕ The US is not a signatory to this treaty.
 - ⊕ Earlier, Trump administration launched a review to examine whether Aukus submarine pact aligns with his "America first" agenda.
- The treaty **enables 50 years of strategic cooperation** to design and build a new class of nuclear-powered submarine.
- AUKUS is security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States that **focuses on technology sharing in the Indo-Pacific region**.



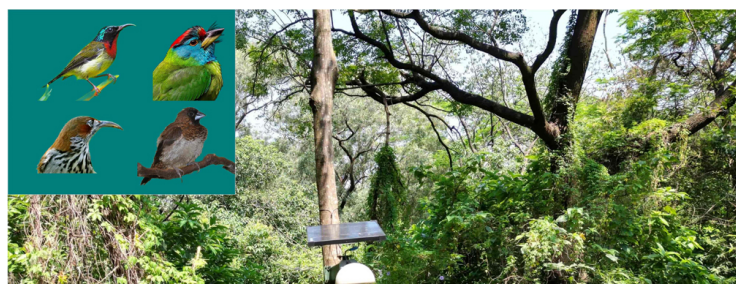
Acoustic Monitoring Technique

The Prime Minister praised the **first-ever grassland bird census** held in **Kaziranga National Park, Assam** using Acoustic Monitoring Technique.

- The census focused on **10 rare or threatened bird species**, including the **Bengal Florican** and **Black-breasted Parrotbill**.

Acoustic Monitoring Technique

- Since traditional bird surveys (like visual spotting) don't work well for **small, shy, and camouflaged birds** an Acoustic Monitoring Technique was used.
- **Acoustic recorders** were placed on tall trees near grasslands during the **breeding season (March–May)** to capture **bird songs and calls**.
- **Sounds were analysed using:**
 - ⊕ **Spectrograms** (graphical representation of the sound)
 - ⊕ **BirdNET** (AI tool to identify bird calls)



Preah Vihear Temple

At the centre of the dispute between Thailand and Cambodia is Preah Vihear temple, which is called Phra Viharn in Thai.

About Preah Vihear Temple

- It is an ancient temple complex perched atop the **Dangrek Mountains**, straddling the Thai-Cambodian border.
- **Historical Origin:** Built in the **11th–12th centuries** during the **Khmer Empire's golden age**.
- **Significance:** It is a **Lord Shiva temple** and is a **sacred and symbolic site** for both nations.
- In 2008, listed as **UNESCO World Heritage Site in Cambodia**.



FIDE Women's World Chess Champion 2025

- **Divya Deshmukh becomes third Women's World Cup Winner**, defeats Humpy Koneru in FIDE Women's World Cup 2025 at Batumi, Georgia.
- She is now eligible to be India's fourth woman to become a grandmaster.
 - ⊕ Earlier three are **Koneru Humpy, Harika Dronavalli and Vaishali Rameshbabu**.
- **FIDE Women's World Cup** is a tournament, different from the World Chess Championship, organized by **FIDE (The International Chess Federation)**.
 - ⊕ **FIDE** is the governing body of the sport of chess, and it regulates all international chess competitions.
 - ⊕ 'FIDE currently has its headquarters in Lausanne, but it was initially founded in 1924 in Paris.'



UN Nelson Mandela Award

The **UN Secretary-General** presented the **Nelson Mandela Prize** to **Brenda Reynolds (Canada)** and **Kennedy Odede (Kenya)**.

About the Prize

- Established by the **UN General Assembly in 2015**.
- Awarded **every 5 years** to one male and one female from different regions.
- Recognizes individuals who have **dedicated their lives to serving humanity**, especially in **reconciliation, social cohesion, and community development**.
- Winners receive a **plaque with a citation and Mandela quote**—no cash award.
- **UN staff are not eligible**.
- No Indian received the award yet



Setubandha Scholar Scheme

Setubandha Scholar Scheme enables students from traditional gurukuls to obtain recognised degrees and research scholarships at top IITs.

About Setubandha Scholar Scheme

- The scheme marks a significant **institutional recognition of traditional knowledge systems, which for decades have operated outside formal academic structures**.
- The scheme facilitates their integration into mainstream academia **through the award of postgraduate and doctoral degrees**.
- Backed by the ministry of education and implemented by the **Indian Knowledge System (IKS) division of the Central Sanskrit University (CSU)**
- It offers **fellowships of up to Rs 65,000 per month**.



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