

Bypass Project Approved in Bhagirathi ESZ Despite Rejection by Supreme Court Committee

Recently, **Uttarakhand Government** granted in-Principle approval for "**Netala bypass project**" in the **fragile Bhagirathi Eco-sensitive Zone (ESZ)** despite previous rejections by the **Supreme Court's High-Powered Committee (HPC)** due to **ecological and social concerns**.

Concerns with the Project

- Though the Ministry of Defence has **classified the project as strategically important**, concerns persist regarding project's environmental impact.
- The **recent Dharali flash flood** and expert analysis strongly indicate that the proposed bypass alignment is prone to **slope instability and subsidence**, with a segment already collapsing during the flood.
- The decision highlights a **potential conflict between national security/strategic project designations** and **environmental protection mandates**, particularly in fragile ecological zones.

The Development vs. Environment Debate

- **Arguments for Developmental Parity:** Economic development is crucial for **reducing poverty and hunger**; increasing population demands more utilization of resources, without people, saving the environment becomes moot, etc.
- **Arguments for Environmental Parity:** Development becomes meaningless if the **environment, which sustains life, is destroyed** beyond recovery; even minor developmental activities, when combined, lead to major **environmental degradation**, etc.
- **Drivers of Environmental Degradation:** Economic growth imperatives, Large-scale Developmental Projects, Industrial Zones and Special Economic Zones, Urbanization, Policy Loopholes such as bypassing Environmental Impact Assessments to fast-track environmental clearances, etc.

Sustainable Development Approaches

- **Ecological Approach:** Based on biocentrism, envisages qualitative growth, with humans living within finite ecological constraint.
- **Strong Sustainable Development:** Argues **environmental protection is a precondition for economic development**, focusing on maintaining environmental assets through regulation, intervention, and community involvement.
- **Weak Sustainable Development:** Aims to **integrate economic growth with environmental concerns**, where economic growth remains the main objective, but environmental costs are accounted for through new procedures and policy tools like green taxes.
- **Treadmill Approach:** Sees sustainable development as synonymous with **sustainable economic growth**, often ignoring environmental impacts and assuming human ingenuity and technology can solve environmental problem.

UNGA Launches New Initiatives for Global AI Governance

Recently, **UN General Assembly (UNGA)** announced to establish **two mechanisms within the UN** to promote **International Cooperation on the Governance of Artificial Intelligence (AI)**.

- It builds on the "**Pact for the Future**" and the "**Global Digital Compact**," outlining a significant step towards international, **non-military AI governance**.

About the new mechanisms

- **Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence:** To promote scientific understanding of AI by issuing evidence-based scientific assessments synthesizing and analysing existing research related to the opportunities, risks and impacts of AI.
- **Global Dialogue on AI Governance:** To serve as a platform to discuss international cooperation, share best practices and lessons learned, and to facilitate open, transparent and inclusive discussions on AI governance.

Other UN Mechanisms for Global AI Governance

- **Pact for the Future:** Adopted at the **Summit of the Future in September 2024** to chart a path toward **achieving the SDGs** and responding to emerging challenges and opportunities.
- **Global Digital Compact:** Annexed as part of the Pact for Future, it is a comprehensive global framework for digital cooperation and AI governance.
- **AI for Good Global Summit (organized by ITU since 2017):** Identified AI applications to advance on the SDGs and scale such applications for global impacts.
- **Others:** Adoption of the **First Global Standard on AI ethics in 2021**; **UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI**, etc.

Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) 2024-25 Report Released by Ministry of Education

It aligns its findings as per **NEP 2020** recommendations and has shifted to individual student-wise data collection mechanism.
Major Findings for the year 2024-25

- The **total number of teachers has crossed the 1 crore mark in 2024-25 (rise of 6% from 2022-23)** for the first time since the beginning of UDISE+.
- **Pupil-Teacher Ratios (PTRs)** have surpassed NEP's recommended 1:30 ratio.
 - ⊕ Present PTR: **Foundational (10), Preparatory (13), Middle (17), and Secondary levels (21).**
- **Drop Out Rates:** It has decreased to **2.3% (Preparatory), Middle (3.5), and Secondary (8.2).**
- **Gross Enrollment Ratio:** It has improved to **90.3% (Middle)** and **68.5% (Secondary)** levels
- **Zero Enrolment (decreased by 6%) and single-teacher schools (38% decrease)** has shown progressive.

Comprehensive Data and Trends in Indian School Education (2022-23 to 2024-25)

Category	Indicator	2023-24	2024-25
Infrastructure Facilities	Computer access	57.2	64.7
	Internet	53.9	63.5
	Girls Toilet	97.2	97.3
	Playground	82.4	83.0
	Ramps with Handrails	52.3	54.9
Female Representation	Girls Enrollment	48.1	48.3
	Female Teachers	53.3	54.2

Monsoon-related Extreme Weather events increasing India's Climate and Disaster Vulnerabilities

Recent events like the Punjab floods, **landslides and flash floods** in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir highlight the **growing frequency and intensity of monsoon-related extreme weather events.**

Changing nature of Monsoon

- **Erratic Patterns of Rainfall:** Research suggests that monsoon winds are weakening. However, rising temperatures are increasing atmospheric moisture, creating **more intense bursts of rainfall separated by frequent dry spells.**
- **Changing El Niño-monsoon Relationship:** **Weakening of the correlation between El Niño and reduced monsoon rainfall over India** due to changes in global atmospheric circulation patterns.
- **Spatial Distribution of Monsoon:** **Humid** regions are becoming **drier** and dry regions are becoming wetter.
 - ⊕ E.g., decreasing rainfall along the **Ganga basin states** while increasing rainfall in **Gujarat's Saurashtra, Rajasthan.**
- **Climate Change:** **Rising sea levels and temperatures** result in changes in monsoon patterns, increasing **water vapour holding capacity of clouds**, impacting intensity of rainfall.

Impact of Changing Monsoon Patterns in India

- **Increased Monsoon Disasters:** The intensity of rains in small time periods have led to **loss of lives and infrastructure**, overwhelming the **disaster management system.**
- **Health Implications:** Changing monsoon patterns are increasing **disease risks** and reducing productivity. E.g., **Heat stress, dengue**, etc.
- **Forecasting Challenges:** Increased variability of rainfall and impact of aspects like climate change and global warming have made it **difficult to provide accurate forecasts**, hindering **disaster preparedness.**
- **Economic:** **Monsoon directly affects 51% of India's farmed area**, accounting for 40% of agricultural production, with 47% of the population dependent on agriculture for livelihood.

Conclusion

This shift in monsoon patterns highlights the need to move from a **post-disaster response** to a **pre-disaster focus** on reducing vulnerabilities through **sustainable infrastructure and effective early-warning systems.**

Road Accidents In India 2023 Report Released by Ministry Of Road Transport And Highways

The annual publication presents the current state of road safety in India.

Key Statistics

- **Total Accidents and Fatalities:** In 2023, **480,583 road accidents** occurred (increased by 4.2% compared to 2022).
 - ⊕ **Young adults** in the age group of **18 - 45 years** accounted for **66.4%** of victims during 2023.
- **Highest Share:** **Tamil Nadu** recorded the highest number of road accidents in 2023 followed by **Madhya Pradesh**.
 - ⊕ **Uttar Pradesh** had the most fatalities followed by **Tamil Nadu**.
- **Accident prone Highways:** Highways with **~5% of the total road network** accounted for **> 53% of total accidents** and **59% of fatalities**.
- **Road user categories:** **Two-wheeler riders** constituted the highest percentage of accident deaths (45%) followed by **pedestrians**.

Major Causes of Road Accidents

- **Human Error:** It includes **traffic rule violations, driving without a valid driver license** and **non-use of safety devices**.
- **Road Environment:** It includes accidents happening in a **particular geographical area (residential etc.)**, those related to **road features, weather conditions, etc.**
- **Vehicular Conditions:** E.g., Age of vehicle and Overloading.

Mitigation Measures Taken by the Ministry Of Road Transport And Highways

- **Education Measures:** It includes **Road Safety Advocacy Scheme, Observance of National Road Safety Month/Week** for raising awareness, etc.
- **Engineering Measures:** It includes **Road Safety Audits, Accident Spots Identification on National Highways, etc.**
 - ⊕ It also includes provisions of **Vehicle Engineering** such as **Airbags, Children safety, etc.**
- **Enforcement Measures:** It includes penalties through **Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019, Electronic Monitoring, etc.**
- **Emergency Care:** It includes **Protection of Good Samaritans, Compensation for Victims, Ambulance provisions, etc.**

Also in News



Index of Industrial Production

Quick Estimates of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) shows growth of **3.5% in July 2025**.

About Index of Industrial Production

- **Compiled by:** Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) to measure real industrial growth.
- **Frequency:** Monthly
- **Base year:** 2011-12
- **Scope:** Confined to **mining, manufacturing (highest weight), and electricity (lowest weight) sectors**.
 - ⊕ It **excludes construction, gas, and water supply** due to data constraints.



Extended Range Attack Munitions

The US has approved the delivery of **Extended Range Attack Munitions (ERAMs)** to Ukraine.

About ERAMs

- It is a **next-generation air-launched, precision-guided missile**.
- **Range:** 240 to 450 kilometers.
- **Warhead:** Carries a 500-pound high-explosive warhead, able to destroy hardened bunkers, fuel depots, or ammunition storage.
- **Guidance:** A **Combination of GPS, Inertial Navigation, and a terminal seeker** provides accuracy within about ten meters.



SEBI's Cybersecurity and Cyber Resilience Framework

SEBI clarified that its **Cybersecurity and Cyber Resilience Framework (CCSRF)** applies only to the systems of the entities **regulated by SEBI**.

- If regulated entities follow RBI or other regulators' equivalent cybersecurity rules, SEBI will accept them as compliance.

About SEBI' CCSRF

- **Issued in 2015** for **Market Infrastructure Institutions (MIIs)**.
- **Objective:** To strengthen the cybersecurity measures in the Indian securities market, and to ensure adequate **cyber resiliency** against cybersecurity **incidents/ attacks**.
- **Applicable to:** Stock Brokers and Depository Participants, Mutual Funds /Asset Management Companies, KYC Registration Agencies, Portfolio Managers, etc.



Nuakhai Festival

Prime Minister extended wishes to the people of India on the occasion of Nuakhai.

About Nuakhai Festival

- Also known as **Navanna**, is an **Agro-based religious festival** celebrated primarily in **Western Odisha**.
- **Origin:** According to Oral tradition, it was introduced by **Raja Ramai Dev of Patna (1355-1380 CE)**.
- **Significance:** It centers on the **worship of food grain or rice** and expresses gratefulness for a good harvest, symbolizing life itself.



AQLI

The **2025 Annual Update** of the **Air Quality Life Index (AQLI)** has been released.

About AQLI

- It is a **pollution index** that measures the impact of **particulate air pollution on life expectancy**.
- Developer:** Created by **Michael Greenstone** (Professor), and his team at **Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago (EPIC)**.

Key Highlights

- India:** Air pollution meeting **WHO** guidelines could extend Indian residents' lives by **3.5 years on average**, with Delhi seeing an **8.2-year gain** (highest).
- South Asia** continues to be the **most polluted region in the world**.



Liquefied Natural Gas

UAE (Abu Dhabi National Oil Company) has signed a **15-year agreement** with **Indian Oil Corporation (IOC)** to supply **1 million tonnes per annum** of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG).

About LNG

- It is a **Natural Gas** that has been **cooled** to a **liquid** state, at about **-260° F (-162° C)**.
 - The process of converting natural gas into LNG is called **liquefaction**.
 - This **reduces its volume by 600 times** compared to its gaseous state.
- It facilitates safe **transportation**, long-distance **shipping** and **storage** of natural gas.
- The **USA** is the **"largest exporter"** of **LNG** in the world followed by **Australia and Qatar**.



Cotton

In view of the persistent demand–supply gap, the Government has **extended the import duty exemption on cotton** until 31st December 2025.

Cotton

- It is also termed as **"White-Gold"**.
- Climatic Conditions:**
 - It is a **natural fiber** and a **semi-xerophyte tropical crop** grown in the **kharif season in semi-arid** regions of India.
 - It is grown on a variety of soils ranging from **well drained deep alluvial soils (North)** to **black clayey soils (Central)** and in **black red soils (South)** region in India.
 - It is **semi-tolerant to salinity** and **sensitive to water logging**.
 - Requires high temperature, light rainfall and **~210 frost-free days** and bright sunshine for its growth.
- Production in India:**
 - India is the **second largest** producer of cotton after China.
 - India is the **only country which grows all four species** of cotton.
 - Major States:** Gujarat, Maharashtra, Telangana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh



PMJDY

Prime Minister marks 11 transformative years of **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana**. It is considered one of the **biggest financial inclusion initiatives in the world** and serves as a **National Mission on Financial Inclusion**.

Major achievements

- >56 crore Jan Dhan accounts** have been opened. A total **deposit balance of 2.68 lakh crore rupees** has been garnered in these accounts.
- >38 crore free-of-cost RuPay cards** have been issued, facilitating digital transactions.
- 67% of the accounts are opened in rural or semi-urban areas**, bringing underprivileged individuals in **far-flung areas** into the formal financial sector.
- ~56% of the accounts are opened by women**.

Personality in News



Raja Prithu Rae

- He ruled **Kamrupa (Assam)** during the **early 13th century**.
- He belonged to the **Khen Dynasty**, tracing **lineage to Narakasura**.
 - They worshipped **Goddess Kamteswari** (an incarnation of **Goddess Durga**).
 - Khen rulers emerged as local chieftains after the **fall of the Pala Dynasty**.
 - The Khen dynasty marked the **beginning of the Kamata Kingdom**, also known as **Kamru, Kamrud, Kamrupa, Kamata, Koch, or Koch Hajo**.
- Contribution:**
 - Raja Prithu Rae defeated Bakhtiyar Khilji** who attacked Kamrupa.
 - The **Kanai Varasi rock inscription** is proof of the destruction of the **Turks**.
 - He **pardoned prisoners of war** and followed the principles of **Dharma Yuddha**.



AHMEDABAD



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI



SIKAR