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NOTE:

Dear Students,

Memorisation and recollection of information in Current Affairs is as important as understanding the articles. In order to enhance the learning outcomes from the Monthly Current Affairs Magazine, we are introducing following additions:



A thematic based colors has been used in the document in the boxes, tables etc to enable easy identification and recollection of various concepts and topics.



Questions are an important tool to assess and retain information. To enable this we are adding a Smart Quiz at the end of each section in the document for practicing the questions.



A wide variety of infographics have been added to ensure smoother learning experience and enhanced retention of the information. This will also help in effective presentation of information in the answer writing as well.



Places and persons in news are being presented in an objective manner through Maps, Tables & Pictures. This will help in easier recollection of factual information.

फाउंडेशन कोर्स सामान्य अध्ययन 2026

प्रारंभिक एवं मुख्य परीक्षा

इनोवेटिव क्लासरूम प्रोग्राम

- प्रारंभिक परीक्षा, मुख्य परीक्षा और निबंध के लिए महत्वपूर्ण सभी टॉपिक का विस्तृत कवरेज
- मौलिक अवधारणाओं की समझ के विकास एवं विश्लेषणात्मक क्षमता निर्माण पर विशेष ध्यान
- एनीमेशन, पॉवर प्वाइंट, वीडियो जैसी तकनीकी सुविधाओं का प्रयोग
- अंतर - विषयक समझ विकसित करने का प्रयास
- योजनाबद्ध तैयारी हेतु करेंट ओरिएंटेड अप्रोच
- नियमित क्लास टेस्ट एवं व्यक्तिगत मूल्यांकन
- प्री फाउंडेशन कक्षाएं
- सीसेट कक्षाएं
- PT 365 कक्षाएं
- MAINS 365 कक्षाएं
- PT टेस्ट सीरीज
- मुख्य परीक्षा टेस्ट सीरीज
- निबंध टेस्ट सीरीज
- सीसेट टेस्ट सीरीज
- निबंध लेखन - शैली की कक्षाएं
- करेंट अफेयर्स मैगजीन

नोट: ऑनलाइन छात्र हमारे पाठ्यक्रम की लाइव वीडियो कक्षाएं अपने घर पर ऑनलाइन प्लेटफॉर्म पर देख सकते हैं। छात्र लाइव चैट विकल्प के माध्यम से कक्षा के दौरान अपने संदेह और विषय संबंधी प्रश्न पूछ सकते हैं। वे अपने संदेह और प्रश्न नोट भी कर सकते हैं और दिल्ली केंद्र में हमारे कक्षा सलाहकार को बता सकते हैं और हम फोन/मेल के माध्यम से प्रश्नों का उत्तर देंगे।



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1. POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

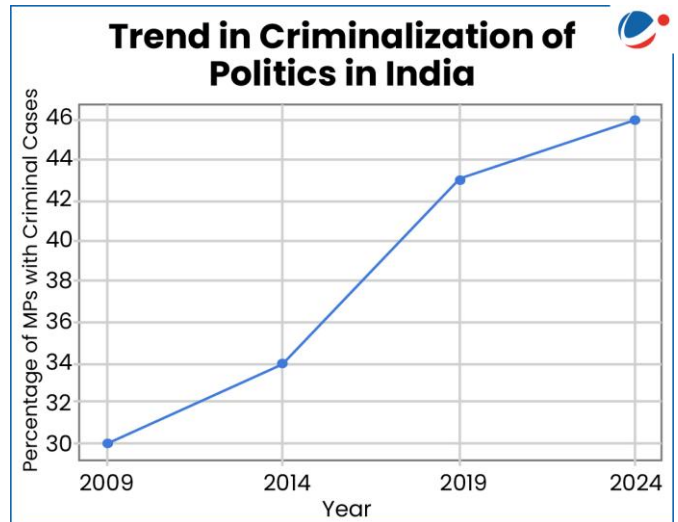
1.1. THE CONSTITUTION (ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTIETH AMENDMENT) BILL, 2025

Why in the News?

Union Home Minister introduced the Constitution (One Hundred and Thirtieth Amendment) Bill, 2025 in the Lok Sabha.

More on the News:

- Bill seeks to provide for **removal of the Prime Minister, Chief Minister or any other Minister** in central and state governments, and the Union Territory (UT) of Delhi who is held in custody for 30 consecutive days for a serious criminal offense.
 - The Bills propose significant amendments to **Articles 75, 164, and 239AA** of the Indian Constitution.
- The same provisions are **extended to UT of Puducherry** through the Government of Union Territories (Amendment) Bill, 2025 empowering the president to act similarly.
- The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization (Amendment) Bill, 2025 also applies the **same provisions to Jammu & Kashmir**, allowing the LG to remove the CM/Ministers.
- All three bills have been **referred to the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC)** for detailed examination and discussion.



Key provisions of Constitution Amendment Bill, 2025:

- **Grounds for Removal:** A Union Minister, Chief Minister (CM), or State Minister will be removed from office if they are **arrested and detained in custody for 30 consecutive days** for an offense punishable with **five or more years of imprisonment**.
 - This also applies to the Prime Minister.
- **Procedure for Removal:**
 - **For Union Ministers (excluding PM):** The President must remove the Minister on the Prime Minister's advice, to be tendered by the 31st day of detention. If no advice is given, the Minister will automatically cease to hold office from the 31st day.
 - **For State Ministers (excluding CM):** A similar provision applies, with the Governor acting on the advice of the Chief Minister. If the CM does not advise by the 31st day, the Minister automatically loses office.
 - **For Delhi Ministers (excluding CM):** The President removes the Minister on the advice of Delhi's Chief Minister. If no advice is tendered, the Minister automatically ceases to hold office.
 - **For Prime Minister or Chief Ministers (Union/State/Delhi):** The Prime Minister or Chief Minister must tender their resignation by the 31st consecutive day of custody. If they fail to resign, they will automatically cease to hold office from the day thereafter.
- **No bar on Reappointment:** Reappointment of a Minister, Prime Minister, or Chief Minister is allowed after their release from custody.

Arguments in favor of Bills:

- **Constitutional Morality and Ethical Governance:** SC in **Manoj Narula v. Union of India (2014)** had indicated that **morality is intrinsic to constitutional framework**, urging against appointing persons with serious criminal charges as Ministers.
- **Protecting Public Trust:** This measure is seen as a strong stance against corruption and the criminalization of politics, potentially enhancing public trust in institutions.

- **Good Governance:** It seeks to eliminate anomaly of "governance from jail," aligning executive functions with accountability and addressing constitutional gaps in accountability.
- **Bridging Legal Gap:** The existing Representation of People Act (RP Act) disqualifies elected representatives only after conviction. This Bill addresses the interim period of arrest and detention, bridging a crucial legal gap.
- **Fairness with Other Employees:** Ordinary government employees face suspension after 48 hours in custody; similar standards should apply to Ministers.
- **Other:** Uniform party application, advances political decriminalization, Balancing Frivolous Arrests and Judicial Scrutiny etc.

Arguments against the Bills:

- **Political Weaponization and Threat to Federalism:** Central agencies like the ED and CBI could be misused to arrest leaders on flimsy charges, providing a "legal shortcut" to destabilize governments without electoral contest.
- **Presumption of Innocence at Stake:** The Bill is against the principle of "innocent until proven guilty" and natural justice by triggering removal based on detention alone, without conviction or even the framing of charges.
 - The SC in *Lily Thomas v. Union of India* held that disqualification begins only upon conviction, not arrest or detention.
- **Inconsistency in Treatment:** There is an inconsistency between legislators and Ministers.
 - While Members of Parliament (MPs) and State Legislatures (MLAs) are disqualified only upon conviction under the RP Act, 1951 Ministers under this Bill could be forced to resign on mere detention.
 - This creates a paradox where a convicted legislator might continue as a Minister longer than an arrested Minister.
- **"Revolving Door" Problem:** The provision allowing reappointment after release from custody could lead to cycles of resignation and reinstatement, causing political instability and potentially incentivizing tactical legal maneuvers.
- **Executive Discretion and Politicization:** The dual mechanism of removal (PM/CM's advice or automatic cessation) could politicize the process, allowing a Prime Minister to protect allies or remove a hostile Chief Minister to target rivals.
- **Lack of Safeguards:** No provision for compensation if the arrest is found to be malicious.
 - It can encourage misuse of preventive detention and laws like **Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 1967 (UAPA)** and **Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA)**.
 - > E.g. of the 5,000 cases registered by ED in past five years, there were less than 10% convictions.

Existing legal framework and Judgments for disqualification after crimes

- **Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RPA):** Under **Section 8(3) of the RPA**, legislators are disqualified from contesting elections or continuing in office upon conviction for certain criminal offenses with **imprisonment of two years or more**.
- **Lily Thomas (2013) judgment:** SC struck down Section 8(4) of the RPA, which had allowed sitting members to avoid disqualification if an appeal was filed against their conviction.
- **Manoj Narula v. Union of India (2014):** Court noted no legal bar against appointing Ministers with criminal backgrounds, but stated that PM should consider avoiding individuals with criminal antecedents, especially for serious offenses.
- **PIL of Public Interest Foundation (2018):** Courts cannot add new disqualification grounds beyond laws. Recommended Parliament should enact laws requiring political parties to revoke membership and deny tickets to serious criminals.
- **Election Commission of India:** In 2016, it recommended amending the RPA to bar persons against whom charges are framed by court for an offence punishable with at least five years' imprisonment from contesting elections.

Way Forward:

- **Interim Suspension:** Rather than outright removal, law could provide for **interim suspension of ministerial functions** during ongoing trials, allowing governance to continue without compromising accountability.
- **Strengthening Political Parties' Role:** Political parties must instill self-discipline and commit to **not fielding candidates with criminal records**, focusing on integrity rather than mere "winnability".

- **Law Commission Recommendations:** Recommended that the **framing of a charge for offences punishable by up to five years' imprisonment** should be made an additional ground for disqualification.
 - This would filter out frivolous or politically motivated arrests by ensuring initial judicial scrutiny.
- **Making Bail a Rule:** It is suggested to make bail a rule **except in heinous violent crimes** so that new provisions regarding removal have wider acceptability.
- **Fast-tracking Criminal Cases:** Instead of disqualifying Ministers merely based on arrest, the focus should shift to **fast-tracking serious criminal cases against Ministers**, ensuring impartial investigations and swifter trials.
- **Establishing an Independent Review Mechanism:** Like a tribunal or a judicial panel, could examine whether conditions for removal have been met, preventing executive overreach and ensuring impartial application.

1.2. THE PROMOTION AND REGULATION OF ONLINE GAMING ACT, 2025

Why in the News?

The Parliament has passed **the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025** effectively banning online money games while promoting and regulating other kinds of online games.

More on the News

- Act aims to establish a robust legal framework and **regulate, promote** and encourage the **online gaming sector** for innovation and economic growth and ensure a developed, safe and **responsible digital environment for all citizens**.
- It was introduced in the House as a **Finance bill** under **Article 117(1) and 117(3)** of the Constitution of India with the due **recommendation of the President**.

Article 117: Special provisions as to financial Bills

- **Article 117(1):** Covers matters, in addition to other legislative provisions, related to Article 110 (Money Bill) which requires President's recommendation and can only be introduced in the Lok Sabha.
- **Article 117(3):** States that a Bill involving expenditure from Consolidated Fund of India shall not be passed by either House of Parliament unless the President has recommended to that House the consideration of the Bill.

Why was the Act needed?

- **Addiction and financial ruin:** Online money games encourage **compulsive playing** and create an **illusion of quick profits**. This leads to **addiction**, pushing families into **debt and distress**.
 - According to Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology, online money gaming has **negatively affected 45 crore people** who faced a **loss of more than ₹20,000 crores**.
- **Mental Health:** **World Health Organization** classifies **gaming disorder** as a health condition in its International Classification of Diseases.
 - **Gaming disorder** is a pattern of **play** marked by **loss of control, neglect** of other daily activities, and **persistence** despite **harmful consequences**.
- **Closing Legal Loopholes:** **Gambling and betting** are already restricted under laws such as the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023**, and by various state legislations. But the **online** domain remained largely **unregulated**.
 - Many gaming platforms operate from **offshore jurisdictions** presented challenges in terms of **extra-territorial jurisdiction and inter-state inconsistencies**.
- **Threat to National Security:** Investigations have shown that some gaming platforms were being used for **terror financing, illegal messaging, and money laundering** effectively compromising the country's security.
- **Encouraging e-sports:** The Act promotes **positive digital engagement** and boosts **creative economy and innovation** in the e-sports sector.

Key Provisions of the Act

- **Key Definitions:**
 - **Online Games:** Any game, which is played on an electronic or a digital device and is managed and operated as a software through the internet or any other kind of technology facilitating electronic communication.

- **Categorization of the Online Games**
 - **E-Sport: Competitive digital sports** where teams or individuals participate in organised tournaments, requiring strategy, coordination, and advanced decision-making skills.
 - > E.g., Ved “Beelzeboy” Bamb became the first Indian player to win the **Pokémon GO World Championship 2025**.
 - **Online Social Games:** Games that form part of everyday recreation, primarily skill-based and designed for **entertainment, learning, or social interaction**. E.g., Wordle online word game, Kahoot!, etc.
 - **Online Money Games:** Online games, whether based on chance, skill, or both, where financial stakes are involved. **Financial stakes** include paying fees or depositing money for playing in expectation of winning linked to monetary or other gains. E.g. Dream11, Rummy, Poker, WinZO, etc.
- **Applicability:** It will apply to the **whole of India** and to online money gaming service offered within the **territory of India or operated from outside** the territory of India.
- **Absolute prohibition of online money games:** Online money games, also called **real money games** and related services to be prohibited.
 - Further, **advertisements and financial transactions by banks or financial institutions** towards payment for any online money gaming service are also prohibited.
 - Authorities have also been empowered to **block access to unlawful platforms** under the **Information Technology Act, 2000**.
- **Promotion of E-Sports:** Recognized as a "**legitimate competitive sport**." The **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports** will develop guidelines, and infrastructure like training academies and research centers will be established.
- **Promotion of Social and Educational Games:** Union Government empowered to **recognise and register social games that are safe and age-appropriate** with dedicated platforms for content distribution.
- **Online Gaming Authority:** Establishment of a **national-level regulatory authority** to categorize and register games, determine if a game is a "money game," and address grievances.
- **Offences and Penalties:** Offences under key provisions are **cognisable and non-bailable**.
 - Imprisonment of **up to 3 years** and a fine of up to **1 crore rupees** for offering online money games. **Advertising** such games shall attract imprisonment **up to 2 years** and a fine of up to **50 lakh rupees**.
- **Corporate and Institutional Liability:** Companies and their officers can be held accountable, with specific safeguards for independent and non-executive directors who act with due diligence.
- **Investigation and Enforcement Powers:** **Central Government** can authorize officers for investigation, search, and seizure, including **arrests without a warrant in certain cases**.

Other Notable Initiatives to Counter the Risks of Online Gaming

- **Section 69A of Information Technology Act, 2000:** Empowers the Government to block access to illegal websites or links. E.g., 1,524 betting and gambling websites and mobile apps were blocked during 2022-25.
- **IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021:** Provide norms for online gaming platforms. E.g., Registration of Intermediaries with Self-regulatory bodies (SRBs).
- **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023:** Section 111 and 112 penalise unlawful economic activities and cybercrimes and unauthorised betting and gambling respectively.
- **Integrated Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017 (IGST Act):** Illegal and offshore gaming platforms are regulated under the IGST Act.
- **Consumer Protection Act, 2019:** Prohibits **misleading and surrogate advertisements**. The **Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)** has issued advisories to prevent celebrities and influencers from endorsing betting platforms.

While the Act offers several advantages in terms of promoting e-sports and safeguarding citizens in the digital era, it also raises **concerns about policy volatility and uncertainty**. The abrupt ban on the rapidly growing online money gaming sector risks creating a perception of policy inconsistency. It can undermine industry and investor confidence, particularly affecting the inflow of foreign investment into India.

Conclusion

The **Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025** represents a significant milestone in shaping India's digital landscape. It seeks to safeguard citizens from the exploitative practices of the online money-gaming industry while simultaneously encouraging the growth of legitimate e-sports and social gaming. In doing so, it aims to strengthen the country's creative economy, foster innovation, and, above all, ensure that technology becomes a tool for societal good rather than harm.

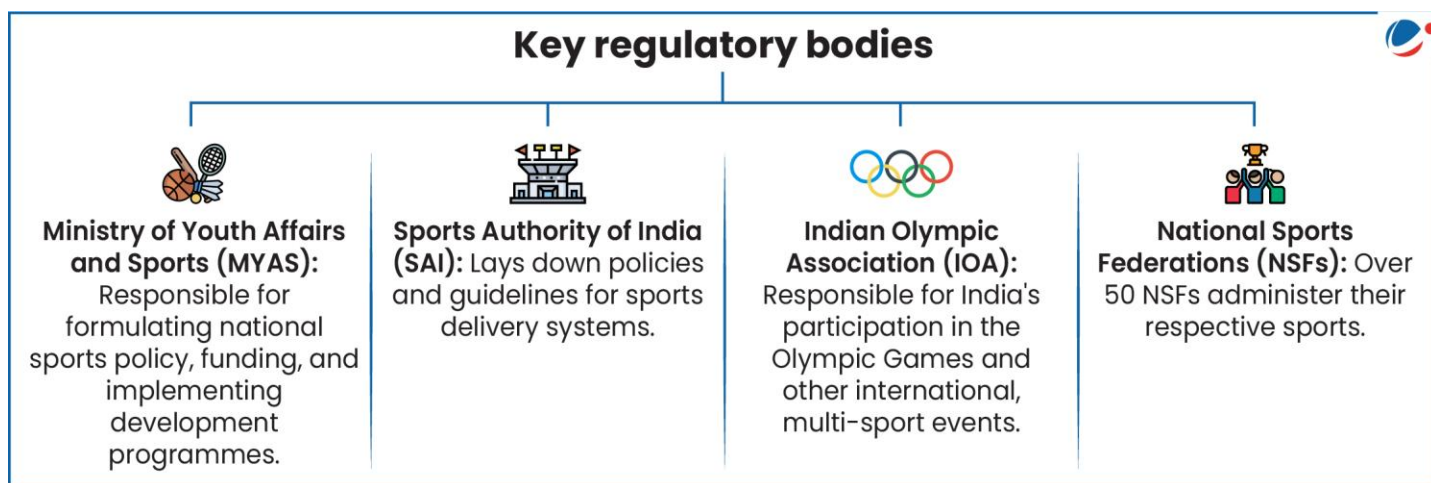
1.3. NATIONAL SPORTS GOVERNANCE ACT, 2025

Why in the news?

Recently, the **National Sports Governance Bill, 2025**, was given assent by the President.

Sports governance in India

- Sports regulation falls within the **jurisdiction of the states**, as per Entry 33 of the State List of the Seventh Schedule.
- Existing policies include the **National Sports Policy (NSP) (1984, revised 2001)** and the **Sports Broadcasting Signals (Mandatory Sharing with Prasar Bharati) Act, 2007**.
 - Recently, the **Cabinet approved the NSP 2025**, superseding the 2001 policy.
 - > It is structured **around five core pillars**, focusing on global excellence, economic and social development through sports, making sports a people movement, and integrating sports with education.



Key highlights of the Act

- **National sports bodies:** provide for establishing the National Olympic Committee, National Paralympic Committee, and National and Regional Sports Federations for each designated sport.
 - These bodies will be **affiliated** with respective **international bodies** and will have affiliated units at the state and district levels.
 - These bodies will be **governed by international charters and statutes**.
- **National sports board (NSB) :** It will grant recognition to sports bodies and register their affiliate unit. Only recognised bodies will receive funds from the central government.
 - National Sports Body must formulate a **Code of Ethics for its stakeholders, setting minimum standards for ethical and appropriate conduct**.
 - A recognised organisation shall be considered a **public authority under the RTI Act, 2005**
 - **The central government** will decide its composition and appoint members on the recommendations of search-cum-selection committee.
 - **To be appointed to NSB**, a person must have special knowledge or experience in public administration, sports governance, sports law, and other related fields.

- **National Sports Tribunal:** To adjudicate “**sports-related disputes**”.
 - It will not have jurisdiction over specified disputes such as those in relation to games organised by international bodies and internal disputes of national sports bodies.
- **Oversight of elections:** The **central government** will establish a **national panel of electoral officers** to oversee elections of national sports bodies.
 - **Every national sports body** must also constitute an electoral panel to oversee elections of its affiliates.
- **Powers of the central government:** The Central government may exempt a national body or its affiliates from any provision of Act, if necessary in the public interest for promotion of that sport.

Need for a comprehensive sports Law in India

- **Absence of a comprehensive and uniform sports law:** leading to inconsistent and often outdated regulations
 - The National Sports Development Bill, 2013, was not enacted.
- **Politician Domination in NSFs: Politicians with minimal sports expertise** often occupy key positions in NSFs.
 - Earlier, FIFA suspended All India Football Federation (AIFF) due to undue influence from third parties.
- **Overlapping roles and responsibilities of key organizations:** like the SAI, the IOA, and NSFs create confusion and delays.
- **Inadequate Funding and Utilisation: Less than 40% of the allocated budget for 2022-2023 was utilised for athlete development.**
- **Ineffective Policy Implementation:** The National Sports Policy (1984, revised 2001) has not been successfully put into practice.
- **Olympics 2036 Preparation:** The legislation supports India’s bid for the 2036 Olympics by ensuring compliance with the Olympic Charter and global best practices.

Conclusion

The National Sports Governance Act, 2025, aims to create a transparent, accountable, and athlete-centric sports ecosystem, aligning with global best practices and ensuring robust oversight for sustained excellence in Indian sports.

Related News

National Anti-Doping (Amendment) Bill, 2025 was also given assent by the President, seeks to amend the National Anti-Doping Act 2022.

Key Highlights of the Act

- **Aim** - It prohibits doping in sports, and provides a framework for testing, enforcement, and adjudication of violations.
- It gives effect to the **UNESCO convention against doping in sports**.
- **It establishes**
 - **National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA)** to implement anti-doping rules.
 - **National Board for Anti-Doping in Sports** to oversee activities of NADA and advise the central government on anti-doping regulations.
- **Changes made from the earlier Act**
 - **Appeal panel:** The Power to constitute the Appeal Panel (AP) and prescribe appeal procedures has shifted from the National Board to the central government.
 - **Autonomy of Anti-Doping Bodies:** Any member of **NADA will have operational independence** (in line with WADA norms and UNESCO standards).
 - **Specified bodies can appeal to CAS:** Earlier any person could file an appeal before the **Court of Arbitration of Sports (CAS) in Switzerland**.
 - **Mandatory accreditation of testing labs:** From WADA unlike the earlier voluntary provision
 - **Anti-doping rule violations:** It adopts the **World Anti-Doping Code’s definitions and schedules**, giving them the **force of law** in India.

1.4. JAN VISHWAS (AMENDMENT OF PROVISIONS) BILL, 2025

Why in the News?

Recently, the **Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2025** was introduced in Lok Sabha to amend certain enactments to decriminalize and rationalize offences to further enhance **trust-based governance for ease of living and doing business**.

More on the News

- The bill builds on the success of **the Jan Vishwas Act, 2023**, which had decriminalized **183 provisions in 42 Central Acts** administered by 19 Ministries and Departments.
- The 2025 Bill expands these reforms, **addressing 16 Central Acts** administered by 10 Ministries/Departments.
- The Bill **exemplifies process reforms** by replacing rigid, punitive compliances with **rationalized, trust-based mechanisms** to streamline procedures, reduce judicial burden, and create an enabling environment for citizens and businesses alike.

Key Features of the Bill

- **First-time contraventions:** For 76 offences under 10 different Acts, the Bill provides that first-time violations will attract **only an advisory or warning** instead of **punishment**.
- **Decriminalization of minor offences: Removes imprisonment clauses with monetary penalties or warnings** for minor, technical, and procedural defaults. E.g., Some Acts like the Tea Act, 1953, Legal Metrology Act, 2009 (**already amended in 2023 are further decriminalized**).
- **Rationalization of penalties:** Fines are **rationalized and made proportionate**, with **incremental penalties for repeat offences**.
- **Adjudication mechanism:** Designates **officers with the authority to impose penalties** through administrative processes to **ensure quicker resolution** of cases and **reduce the burden on the judiciary**.
- **Automatic revision of fines:** Provides for an **automatic increase of 10 per cent in fines and penalties every three year** which ensures that **penalties remain effective as a deterrent** without the need for **frequent legislative amendments**.

What Are Process Reforms?

- Process reforms are described as **"nuts and bolts reforms"** that involve **changing specific rules or procedures**, such as altering a subsection of a rule.
 - **Unlike "structural reforms"** (e.g., GST, Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, monetary policy committee) which change the **underlying architecture of an economic activity**, process reforms improve the **operation of a given structure**.
- They are **micro-level, targeted changes** to improve **operational efficiency in specific sectors** or activities within **public policy**.
- **Economic Survey 2020-21** also advocated the merits of simpler regulations and smoother processes as against over-regulation and opacity in Indian administrative and legal processes.

Significance of Process Reforms

- **Sustaining Economic Growth:** As the world's fastest-growing economy, **India needs ongoing reforms to maintain momentum**.
 - Process reforms fill the space **between major structural changes, keeping the wheels of progress turning**.
- **Ease of Doing Business, Living, and Science:** These reforms **directly remove day-to-day irritations for citizens, businesses, and researchers**. E.g., new procurement rules for scientific institutions make it easier for **scientists to work efficiently**.
- **Unblocking bottlenecks and delays:** Many government processes in India have **legacy inefficiencies due to old rules, cumbersome paperwork**, unnecessary approvals, slow delivery of services creating barriers for citizens and businesses.

- **Enhancing sectoral competitiveness:** E.g., Liberalization of telecom rules for **Other Service Providers (OSP)** fueled a boom in IT-enabled and BPO sectors.
- **Reducing corruption & rent-Seeking:** By making systems **transparent and removing unnecessary steps**, process reforms help reduce scope of **corruption and arbitrary enforcement**.
- **Institutionalizing a problem-solving mindset:** Systematic process reforms **build a culture of continual problem-solving within government**, making institutions agile and responsive, **rather than assuming systems are "God-given"**.

Guiding principles for Process Reforms



Simplification of complex processes and clear communication
E.g., **National Single Window Systems** to start a business.



Clearly define goals and align all efforts towards achieving them.
E.g., **PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation)** initiative.



Agile and responsive processes design to adapt to changing circumstances and incorporate new technologies.
E.g., **Quality-cum-Cost-Based Selection criteria in government tendering**.



Culture of ongoing process review and refinement.
E.g., Incremental adoption of **Digital Public Infrastructure and India Stack** in governance.



Involve all stakeholders in the process, including those who perform the tasks and those affected by the outcome.
E.g., **Community Forest Management** initiative.

Case Studies of successful Process Reforms

- **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT):** Digitizing subsidy and welfare payments directly to beneficiaries has **cut leakages and duplication, saving huge resources** and improving service delivery.
- **Voluntary Company Liquidation:** Earlier voluntary liquidation took over **4 years with multiple delays**. Streamlining the advertisement process and clarifying that certain NOCs were not required **have drastically cut it down in some cases**, creating one of **the fastest exit regimes globally**.
- **Rationalization of Autonomous Bodies:** Closure or merger of **many outdated or overlapping government institutions** like All India Handloom Board, All India Handicrafts Board, and multiple film units into a single corporation.
- **Government eMarketplace (GeM) Portal:** Introduced to **increase transparency and reduce procurement costs** by 15-20% through an online platform.
- **Legal and Dispute Resolution Reforms:** Focus on reducing delays and **costs in courts, incorporating Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)** and debt recovery mechanisms.
- **Legal Metrology Amendments:** Criminal penalties for many minor offences were decriminalized **through the Jan Vishwas Act, 2023** to reduce **rent-seeking and harassment**.

Conclusion

As India continues to evolve into a dynamic, innovation-driven economy, reforms like the Jan Vishwas Bill must be seen not as endpoints but as milestones in a longer journey of governance transformation. By **embracing technology, continuous simplification, and citizen-centric governance**, these reforms can translate into a **culture of responsiveness, transparency, and adaptability within institutions**.

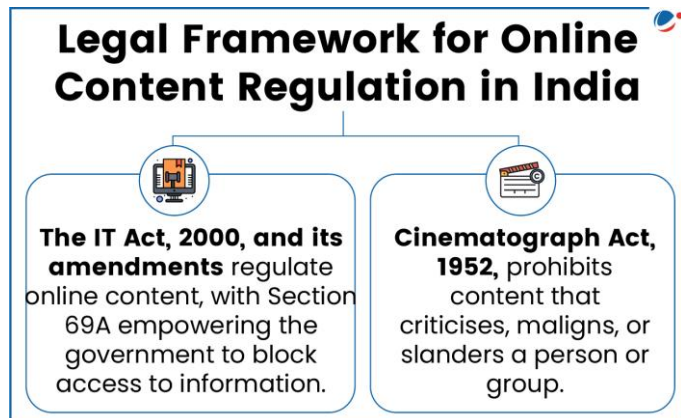
1.5. NEWS IN SHORTS

1.5.1. COMMERCIAL, PROHIBITED SPEECHES NOT PART OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS: SC

The court was hearing a case against social media comedians for “abusing freedom of speech and expression” by making insensitive jokes about persons with disabilities.

Key Judicial Observations

- **Commercial & Prohibited Speech Not Protected:** Freedom of speech (**Art. 19(1)(a)**) does not cover commercial speech or prohibited speech.
 - **Hate speech/Prohibited speech:** Expressions that promote or incite **enmity, hatred, or violence against a group** based on inherent characteristics such as **religion, race, caste, or ethnicity**.
 - **Commercial speech:** Advertising and related **forms of speech with economic intent**.
- **Accountability of Influencers:** Influencers with a large following **must act responsibly**.
- **Penal Action & Compensation:** Suggested proportionate **punitive measures under IT Rules and Cinematograph Act**.
- **Social Media Guidelines:** Court asked government to draft **comprehensive guidelines for regulating online content**.



SC Judgement related to free speech

- **Amish Devgan v. Union of India (2020):** It differentiated between free speech and hate/prohibited speech and **emphasised the responsibility of influencers with wide reach**.
- **Shreya Singhal v. Union of India (2015):** SC held that legitimate online expression cannot be **curtailed in the absence of imminent harm**.

1.5.2. RULES FOR OCI CARD TIGHTENED

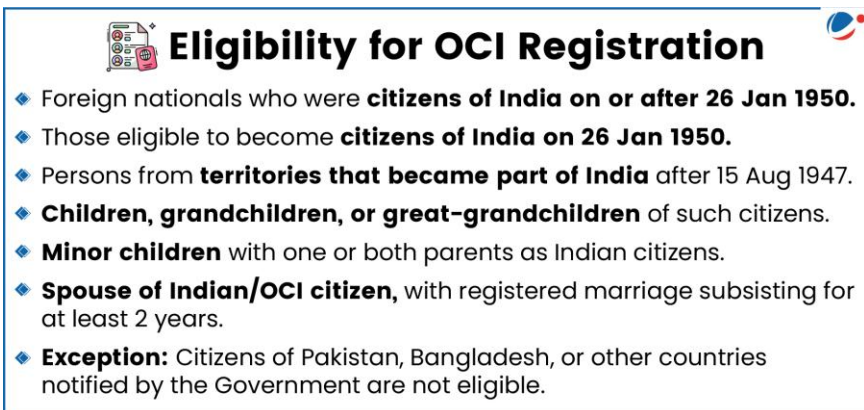
Union Ministry of Home Affairs has issued the notification under **Section 7D of the Citizenship Act, 1955**.

Key Highlights of the Notification

- OCI (Overseas Citizens of India) registration **can be revoked if –**
 - an individual is **sentenced to at least two years in prison**; or
 - **if a charge sheet** is filed against them for an offense **carrying a sentence of seven or more years** of imprisonment.

About OCI Cards

- Introduced in **2005** through an **amendment in the Citizenship Act, 1955**.
 - In **2015**, **Person of Indian Origin (PIO) card scheme was merged with OCI**, and all PIO cardholders were deemed to be OCI cardholders.
- OCI is **not to be misconstrued as 'dual citizenship'**. It **does not confer political rights**.
- **Ground for cancellation of OCI registration:** Registration obtained by fraud; OCI shows shown disaffection towards the Constitution of India; it is necessary to do so in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of India, friendly relations of India with any foreign country, or in the interests of the general public; etc.
- **Benefits for OCI Cardholders**
 - Multiple entries, multipurpose, life-long visa for visiting India, exempted from registration with Foreign Regional Registration Officer or Foreign Registration Officer for any length of stay in India.



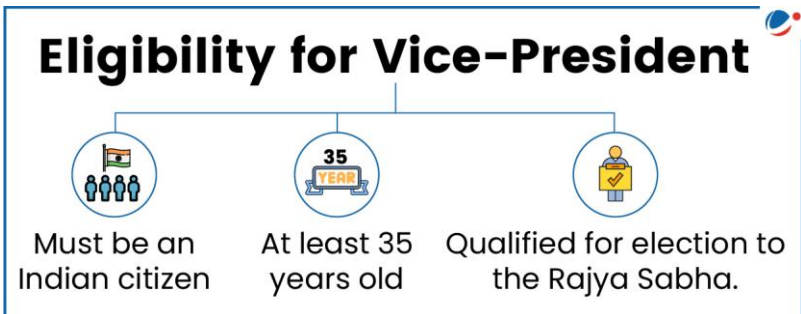
- o Entitled to general '**parity with Non-Resident Indians** in respect of all facilities available to them in economic, financial and educational fields **except in matters relating to the acquisition of agricultural or plantation properties**'.

1.5.3. ELECTION TO THE OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT OF INDIA

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has announced the election date for the 17th Vice-Presidential Election.

Constitutional Provisions related to Vice President:

- **Term & Vacancy:** As per Article 67, the Vice President serves for five years. Article 68(2) mandates a prompt election in case of vacancy.
- **Electoral College:** Comprises members of both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha (elected + nominated).
 - o Present strength: 782 MPs.
- **Voting System:** Proportional Representation by **Single Transferable Vote** and **secret ballot** (Article 66(1)).
- **Authority:** Election Commission of India (ECI) under Article 324 and through powers under Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Act, 1952.



Election Procedure of Vice President:

- **Nomination:** Requires 20 proposers and 20 seconders; ₹15,000 deposit is mandatory.
- **Voting:** Conducted in Parliament House using special ECI-supplied pens. First preference vote is compulsory.
- **Supervision:** ECI appoints the Returning Officer (Secretary General, Rajya Sabha) and observers.

Key Safeguards Followed in Elections:

- **No party whip** allowed.
- Violation of **secrecy** or use of **unauthorized pen** invalidates the vote.
- **Bribery** or **undue influence** is grounds for election challenge under the **Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Act, 1952**.

1.5.4. NATIONAL COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (NCDC)

The Union Cabinet has approved the **Central Sector Scheme “Grant in aid to National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC)”**.

- **About the Grant in Aid to NCDC**
 - o The scheme has an **outlay of Rs.2000 crore** for a period of **four years (2025-2029)** with an allocation of **Rs.500 crore each year**.
 - o The NCDC will serve as the **executive agency** for the scheme, handling fund disbursement, project monitoring, and loan recovery.
- **Grant-in-aid** are payments in the nature of assistance, donations or contributions made by one government to another government.
 - o They are guided by **Article 275 (Statutory Grants) and Article 282 (Discretionary Grants) of the Constitution**.



National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC)



- Genesis:** The NCDC was **established in 1963** by an Act of Parliament as a **statutory Corporation** under the **Ministry of Cooperation**.
- Functions:** The NCDC Act has been amended to **expand the corporation's area of operation**, allowing it to **assist different types of cooperatives and broaden its financial base**.
- Management:** The NCDC is managed by a **General Council**, which has 51 members who **shape its policies and programs**. **Day-to-day activities** are handled by a 12-member **Board of Management**.

Conclusion

This scheme funds **modernization and new projects**, benefiting millions of farmers by improving their economic conditions, creating **widespread employment**, and strengthening India's vital cooperative sector.

Note: For more information on Co-operatives in India, refer to Article 1.3 National Cooperative Policy 2025 of July 2025 Vision IAS Monthly Current Affairs Magazine.



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2. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

2.1. FAIR AND REPRESENTATIVE GLOBAL ORDER

Why in the News?

India's External Affairs Minister called for a **fair and representative global order** at the first BIMSTEC Traditional Music Festival.

Why global order is not fair and representative?

- **Unequal Representation in Global Institutions:** E.g., The P5 countries (China, France, Russia, UK, and US) hold **permanent status and veto powers**, disproportionately influencing United Nations Security Council (UNSC) decisions and sidelining non-permanent members.
- **Marginalization of the Global South:** Global North (industrialized countries) has **9 times** more Voting Power at the IMF Than the Global South (Developing or underdeveloped countries).
 - E.g., United States has **16.49%** of the votes on the IMF's board despite representing only **4.22%** of the world population.
- **Ineffective Multilateralism:** Powerful nations bypass multilateral forums undermining truly global cooperation leading to fragmented and interest-driven global responses.
 - E.g., **United States** is set to officially withdraw from **Paris Climate Agreement** and World Health Organization (WHO).
- **Trade as Instrument of Geopolitical Power:** E.g., United States' 25 % tariff on goods imported from India, EU's carbon tax etc. highlight the asymmetry in trade relationships.
- **Climate Change Inequities:** Industrialised countries like United States, account for 20% of all historical emissions and the consequences disproportionately affect countries in Global South.
 - E.g., In 2024, the Philippines faced an extreme heatwave causing drought and heat-related deaths.
- **Technology and Knowledge Divide:** E.g., 100 companies, mostly in the United States and China, are behind **40 %** of world's private investment in research and development, highlighting a sharp concentration of power. (Technology and Innovation Report 2025).

Know the term

- **Global Order or World order:** It refers to the **arrangement of power and authority** that provides the framework for the conduct of diplomacy and world politics on a global scale.
 - In the world affairs, '**order**' brings a certain method in the way one country conducts its affairs with other countries.

Way forward for a Fair & Representative Global Order

- **Multilateral Reforms:** E.g., **G4** Ministers representing **Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan** support each other's bids for permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).
- **Decolonising Multilateralism:** Initiatives such as **Voice of the Global South Summit** exemplify India's potential as a champion for a more equitable world order.
- **Implement Rio de Janeiro Declaration:** Adopted in the 17th BRICS Summit, it advocates for inclusive AI governance and realignment of IMF quotas to better reflect current global realities and sovereign interests.
- **Bridging the Digital & Technology Divide:** Promote open-source, inclusive digital public infrastructure.
 - E.g., India's model of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) was held up as a blueprint for the Global South.
- **Climate Justice:** Strengthen frameworks like **Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)**, updating them to meet contemporary economic and climate challenges.

Conclusion

A fair global order needs inclusive institutions, equitable finance, and balanced North–South cooperation, with emerging powers like India bridging gaps for a just and effective world system.

Scan the QR code to know more about the World Order

WEEKLY FOCUS #90

World Order–The Rise and Potential Decline



2.2. INDIA'S STRATEGY IN INDIAN OCEAN

Why in the News?

Parliamentary Committee on External Affairs presented report on 'Evaluation of India's Indian Ocean Strategy' in Lok Sabha.

Why Indian Ocean matters?

- Indian Ocean is **3rd-largest** oceanic division in the world.
- Hosts **1/3rd of the world's population**.
- Over **2/3rd of the world's oil shipments** transit through it.
- **90% of India's trade by volume**, including nearly all oil imports, passes through the Indian Ocean.
- India has a **2.4 million sq. km Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

India's Strategy in the Indian Ocean

- **Strategic Partnerships:** India's approach to the IOR has been guided by '**Neighbourhood First**' policy and **SAGAR** (Security and Growth for All in the Region) doctrine.
 - In March 2025, India outlined **MAHASAGAR** (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) doctrine, an **extension of SAGAR doctrine**.

MAHASAGAR focuses on

 Maritime Leadership Promote India's leadership in IOR as Net Security Provider & First Responder	 Maritime Capabilities By expanding scope of our engagement and other activities.	 Global South Strengthen maritime security ties with Global South beyond IOR.	 Operational Effectiveness Enhance effectiveness via joint training, best practices & advanced technologies.	 Maritime Security Framework Formulate responsive and resilient maritime security framework.
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- **Net Security Provider:** India has established itself as the net security provider in the IOR.
 - India actively engages in **counter-piracy operations** and cooperates with other nations to **combat IUU fishing, maritime terrorism and maritime criminal activities**.
 - India also conducts **joint EEZ surveillance exercises** and shares information through **Information Fusion Centre (IFC-IOR)**.
- **Engagement with Littoral States:** India has fostered strong bilateral partnerships with IOR littoral states such as Mauritius, Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Seychelles.
 - **Developmental assistance, capacity building programmes, HADR support and defence and maritime security cooperation** are the **core pillars** of such partnerships.
- **Regional Leadership:** India plays a **key role in multilateral platforms** in the IORA including Indian Ocean Rim Association, Indian Ocean Commission, etc.

- **Infrastructure and Connectivity:** India has been investing in the **development of ports**, such as Chabahar Port, across the Indian Ocean, such as in Sri Lanka, Mauritius, and Seychelles, to enhance connectivity and strategic presence.
 - **Sagarmala 2.0:** India's flagship initiative to enhance port connectivity, develop inland waterways, and promote industrial growth to further enhance India's maritime competitiveness.
- **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief:** India plays the role of a reliable **'first responder'**.
 - For instance, in the wake of floods caused by **Typhoon Yagi**, India launched **Operation 'Sadbhav'** and provided disaster relief material and medical supplies to Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam.

Important Multilateral Platforms in the IORA

- **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA):** India is a founding member of the 23-member IORA, a regional grouping aimed at **strengthening economic cooperation, maritime safety, and environmental security**.
- **Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS):** Launched in 2008 by India, it seeks to increase maritime co-operation among navies of the littoral states.
- **Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI):** Announced by India in 2019, is an open, non-treaty based global initiative that seeks to manage, conserve, sustain, and secure the maritime domain.
- **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD):** It addresses maritime security, safety, HADR, environment protection, connectivity, strategic technologies, supply chain resilience, health, education and cyber security, amongst others.
- **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC):** India is the **lead country for the Security pillar** of BIMSTEC, which covers counterterrorism and transnational crime, disaster management and energy security.
- **Indian Ocean Commission (IOC):** A smaller organization, it focuses on economic, environmental issues and maritime security. India is an observer state.

Challenges and Threats to the Indian Strategy

- **Geopolitical:** Increasing **presence of extra regional players** with investments in ports and infrastructure (e.g., strategic competition in Sri Lanka and Maldives with China) thereby expanding their strategic footprint and adversely impacting our security interests.
 - **Island states' hedging between partners** is a challenge in steady economic and security engagement.
- **Maritime Security:** Region faces issues like piracy, terrorism, illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing), drug trafficking, and smuggling.
- **Infrastructure and Connectivity Gaps:** Several IOR countries, including India's key partners like Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles, face infrastructural and financial limitations.

Way Forward

- **Tailored strategic engagement plan:** India should formulate a comprehensive and flexible strategic engagement plan covering all 35 littoral states with **key focus areas** including maritime security, climate resilience, infrastructure development, defence cooperation, etc.
- **Institutionalise strategy execution:** Establish a dedicated **Inter-Ministerial Task Force** comprising key ministries to address existing institutional silos, streamline decision-making, and enable faster, better-coordinated execution of India's interests in the region.
- **Integrating Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific strategies:** Develop a unified and coherent maritime strategy integrating Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific policies including strengthening cooperation through key multilateral platforms such as the Quad, IORA, and ASEAN.
- **Green MAHASAGAR:** Integrate environmental sustainability into India's regional strategy with focus on marine ecosystem protection, pollution reduction, disaster response, and promotion of the Blue Economy.
- **Strengthen maritime strategy: Enhancing India's maritime deterrence** through advanced technologies, including satellite surveillance and AI-driven Maritime Domain Awareness.

- **Role of Indian Navy:** Improve fleet readiness, personnel training, logistics support, and accelerate the **modernization of naval forces** by prioritizing indigenous development under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative.
- **Enhancing India's cultural footprint:** Increase funding of Indian Missions to undertake initiatives such as Cultural Centers, art performances, and heritage promotion.

Conclusion

India's policy in the Indian Ocean region (IOR) is centered on maintaining security, fostering regional cooperation, and promoting strategic and economic interests with the objective of promoting greater prosperity in the region and of making the Indian Ocean a free, open and inclusive space, based on the UN Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS).

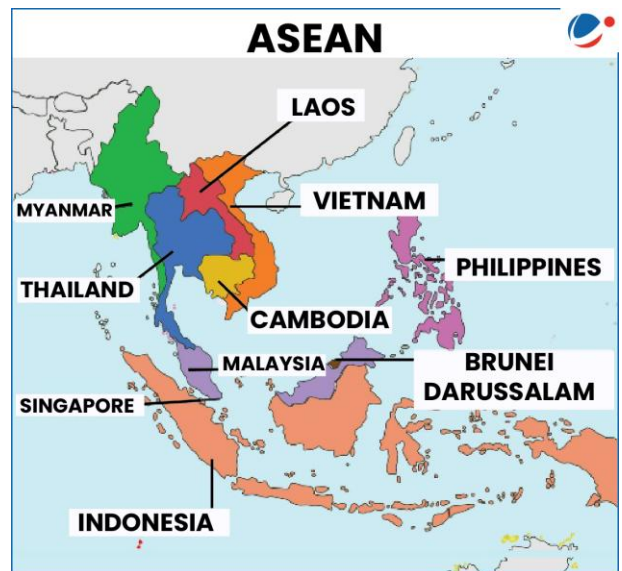
2.3. ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN) CENTRALITY

Why in the News?

ASEAN Centrality is under growing strain from great-power rivalry, trade tensions, and a shifting order requiring bold reforms and deeper partnerships in Indo-pacific Region.

About ASEAN

- **Genesis:** Established in 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration).
- **Aims:** Accelerate regional economic and cultural progress; Promote peace, stability, and the rule of law; Foster collaboration across education, trade, agriculture, and industry.
- **Secretariat:** Jakarta (Indonesia).
- **Member Countries:** 10 countries (see map)
 - Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand are founding members.
- **ASEAN Summit:** It is the highest policy-making body in ASEAN comprising the Heads of State or Government of ASEAN Member States.
- **Article 1.15** of the ASEAN Charter emphasises that the grouping's primary goal is to uphold the **centrality and active role of ASEAN** as the main driving force behind its relations and cooperation with external partners.



Relevance of ASEAN Centrality in the Region

- **Security and Stability:** Through forums like the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM- Plus), ASEAN provides space for defence, maritime, and security dialogue involving both member and external powers.
- **Economic Integration:** RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) was ASEAN-led, strengthening regional trade links across Asia-Pacific.
- **Norm-building:** E.g., **Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC)**, originally meant for Southeast Asian states, has evolved into a key regional framework, with major powers like China, US, and Russia also becoming signatories.

Threats to ASEAN Centrality

- **Great-Power Rivalry:** US-China competition risks marginalizing ASEAN, fragmenting regional unity (e.g., BRI vs Indo-Pacific Strategy).
- **US tariffs:** The tariffs are destabilising the international trade systems crucial for ASEAN economies.
- **Overlapping Regional Architectures:** New minilateral arrangements such as QUAD and AUKUS (Australia, UK, and US) challenge ASEAN-led security mechanisms like the East Asia Summit, AADMM-Plus etc.
- **Internal Divisions:** E.g., Vietnam put strong pressure on ASEAN members to confront China whereas Cambodia, along with Laos, have also become increasingly dependent on Chinese infrastructure loans.

- **Credibility Crisis:** E.g., On the Myanmar crisis, ASEAN has struggled to enforce its “**Five-Point Consensus**,” allowing external powers to step in the Indo-pacific region.
- **Weak Institutional Capacity:** ASEAN Secretariat’s limited resources curtail ambitious initiatives..

Way-forward to Strengthen ASEAN Centrality

- **Upgrade ASEAN:** ASEAN’s Community Vision 2045 and ASEAN Political-Security Community Strategic Plan, ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Strategic Plan (2026-2030) marks step in the right direction.
- **Cooperate with like-minded partners:** E.g., EU seeks Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with ASEAN and most of its members, is expanding its presence in the Indo-Pacific.
- **Formal consultation mechanisms:** With groupings like the QUAD, proposing joint initiatives on shared concerns, and exploring ways to connect minilateral arrangements with ASEAN-led processes.
- **Closer partnership with India:** India shares ASEAN’s interest in enhancing regional trade, increasing economic diversification, and promoting regional stability.

How can India deal with shift of ASEAN Centrality?

- **Synchronize Efforts:** Advancing cooperation between India’s Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) with ASEAN’s AOIP (ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific) on shared Indo-Pacific concerns, especially maritime security, disaster response, and blue economy opportunities.
- **Explore potential synergies:** With sub-regional frameworks, such as Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), BIMSTEC, Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle (IMT-GT) etc.
- **Expedite review of ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA):** To make it more effective, user-friendly, simple, and trade-facilitative for businesses.
- **Implementation the ASEAN-India Tourism Cooperation Work Plan 2023-2027:** To explore deeper cooperation to support joint programs for tourism education, training and research to build capacity.

Conclusion

ASEAN has emerged as the premier organisation in Southeast Asia. The key approach going forward is to reassert its centrality in Southeast Asian development and progress, in tandem with the commitment of respective member states to avoid being swayed by the strategic ambitions of external powers.

2.4. NEWS IN SHORTS

2.4.1. INDIA-PHILIPPINES STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

The Philippines and India formally elevated their bilateral ties through a declaration on establishing a Strategic Partnership guided by **the Plan of Action (2025-2029)**.

More on the news

- The strategic partnership **marks 75 years of diplomatic ties (established in 1949)**, further strengthened by India’s Look East (1992) and Act East (2014) Policies.

India-Philippines Relations Overview



Bilateral Trade: Bilateral trade exceeded \$3.05 billion in FY2024-25



People-to-People Ties: Diaspora (around 1.2 lakh Indians live in the Philippines)



Multilateral Platforms: Regional security cooperation initiatives



Cybersecurity & Counterterrorism: Collaboration against transnational security threats



Maritime: Joint focus on maritime domain awareness



Science, Technology and Education: Cooperation program promoting advanced technologies



Blue Economy: Focus on sustainable ocean-based industries e.g Shrimp

Convergence of India-Philippines Relations

- **Defense Partnership:** Growing trust and defense cooperation exemplified by India's arms exports, like **\$375m BrahMos** missile deal with Philippines (**1st foreign buyer**).
- **China Factor:** Increasing **Chinese assertiveness** in the South China Sea threatens Philippine sovereignty and also India's maritime trade routes, bringing both **towards closer cooperation**.
 - **Maritime Security:** India backs the Philippines' stance on the 2016 arbitration ruling, reinforcing a rules-based order under UNCLOS.
 - **India** calls a **rules-based order** and freedom of navigation in the SCS region.
- **Indo-Pacific Vision: India's Act East Policy** and Indo-Pacific outreach have Philippines as a key player.

Conclusion

India-Philippines relations are becoming more strategically deep through collaboration in cyber, economics, maritime, and defense. The partnership promotes a rules-based Indo-Pacific and enhances India's Act East Policy. By working together, both countries can guarantee shared prosperity, stability, and security in the region.

2.4.2. UN-INDIA GLOBAL CAPACITY-BUILDING INITIATIVE

India launched projects with the UN under Global Capacity Building Initiative for Asia, Africa and Caribbean countries.

About Global Capacity Building Initiative

- **Genesis:** India and the United Nations jointly launched it in September 2023 .
- **Objective:** Share **India's development experiences**, best practices, and expertise with Global South nations through capacity-building and training programs for accelerating progress on the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.
- Implemented through the new **UN India SDG Country Fund** as well as the **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC)**.

2.4.3. EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION

India and Eurasian Economic Union recently signed Terms of Reference for trade deal. Signing of Terms of Reference marks the formal commencement of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations with the goal to establish a **long-term framework for trade cooperation**.

Potential Benefits of FTA with EAEU

- **Economic Benefits**
 - **Trade expansion:** It will unlock untapped trade potential, increase investments and establish a stronger, durable India-EAEU economic partnership.
 - > Bilateral Trade turnover stood at **USD 69 billion in 2024** (7% rise from 2023).
 - **Market access:** It will open wider opportunities for **Indian exporters** amid **increasing US tariffs** and **support diversification** into new sectors and geographies.
 - **Enhance competitiveness:** It will **strengthen India's position** against non-market economies.
 - > It will significantly benefit Indian Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).
 - **Energy partnership:** EAEU offers **abundant natural resources** and energy crucial for India's growth.
 - > **E.g. Russia** now accounts for **35-40% of India's total oil imports** by volume.
- **Strategic Benefits:** Strengthening ties with **Russia led bloc** will reinforce **India's policy of multialignment**.



About Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)

- **Overview:** It is an **international organization** for regional economic integration.
- **Genesis:** Established by the **Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union (2014)**.
- **Benefits:** Provides for free movement of goods, services, capital, and labour, etc.

2.4.4. INTERMEDIATE-RANGE NUCLEAR FORCES (INF) TREATY

Russia officially end commitment to 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. Russia cited **recent US military actions as key reason** including the US order of repositioning two nuclear submarines closer to Russian shores and deployment of Typhon missile system in Philippines.

About INF Treaty

- Signed between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1987, the treaty required **destruction of all ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of 500–5,500 km**.
- It was the **first major agreement to reduce nuclear arsenals**, remove an entire class of weapons, and allow on-site inspections for verification.
- INF Treaty had **already weakened after the US withdrew in 2019**.

Implications on nuclear arms control

- **Breakdown of Arms Control Frameworks:** Eroding trust and hindering efforts towards future nuclear disarmament movements.
- **Negative impact on nuclear disarmament:** Major powers accelerating nuclear modernization, while non-nuclear states are reconsidering their **non-proliferation commitments**, heightening **global instability**.
- **Return to Cold War Politics:** Collapse of treaty has stoked fears of a replay of Cold War-era European missile crisis.
- **Increasing Security Risk:** Such weapons take less time to reach targets, raising the likelihood of a global nuclear conflict over a false launch warning.

Key Nuclear Arms Control Agreements	
	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT): Entered into force in 1970, it aims at preventing spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology.
	Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT): 2002 US-Russia bilateral agreement limiting strategic nuclear warheads.
	New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START): 2010 bilateral agreement between US and Russia, significantly limiting strategic arms.
	Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW): Adopted at UN in 2017 and prohibits prohibitions participating in any nuclear weapon activities.

2.4.5. ARMENIA–AZERBAIJAN PEACE AGREEMENT BROKERED BY THE UNITED STATES

The deal aims to bring an **end to decades of conflict between the two South Caucasus countries**.

Key Provisions of the deal

- **Cessation of Hostilities:** Both nations agreed to end armed conflict, establish diplomatic relations.
- **Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity" (TRIPP):** New transit route linking Azerbaijan to its exclave **Nakhchivan** through Armenian territory.
 - **US** has exclusive **development rights**.

- **US Cooperation Deals:** Both countries also signed separate agreements with the United States to enhance cooperation in energy, technology, and the economy.

Background of the Conflict

The Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict is mainly over **Nagorno-Karabakh**, a mountainous region **inside Azerbaijan** but **predominantly populated by ethnic Armenians**.

- **1980s:** Nagorno-Karabakh broke away from Azerbaijan with Armenia’s support.
- **1991:** Both countries gained independence from the Soviet Union, but the dispute continued.
- **2023:** Azerbaijan regained full control, causing nearly **100,000 Armenians** to flee to Armenia.

India’s Interest

India supports the peace deal, calling it an **“important achievement”** for dialogue and diplomacy. The deal is important for India as:

- **Armenia** is the only country in the region with which it has a **Friendship and Cooperation Treaty (signed in 1995)**.
- **Azerbaijan falls on the International North-South Transport Corridor** route, connecting India with Russia through central Asia.



2.4.6. ALASKA SUMMIT

The President of USA and Russia met in Alaska regarding Ceasefire in Russia-Ukraine war.

- **About Alaska**
 - It is a **non-contiguous U.S. state** on the northwest extremity of the North American continent.
 - It was bought by the USA from Russia as per Alaska Treaty 1867.
 - **Maritime Boundaries:** **Beaufort Sea and Arctic Ocean** (North), **Gulf of Alaska and Pacific Ocean** (South), **Bering Sea** (West), **Chukchi Sea** (Northwest)
- The Northern Lights or **Aurora Borealis**, are visible across much of Alaska
- Nearly one-third of the state lies **within the Arctic Circle**, and about 85% of Alaska is underlain by permafrost.

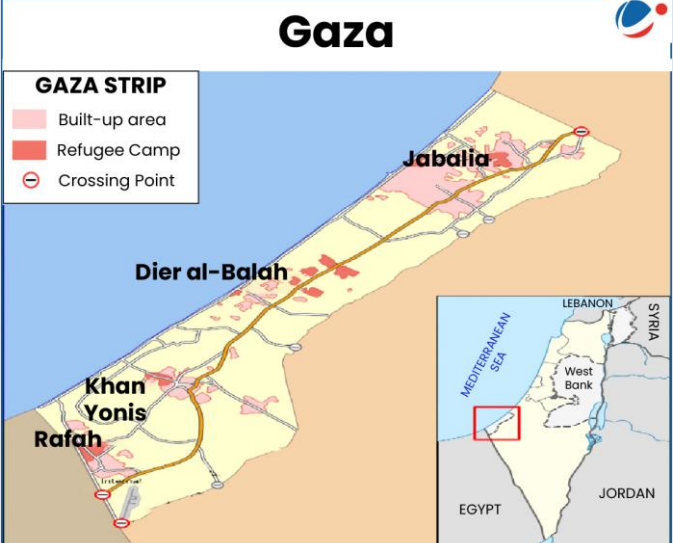
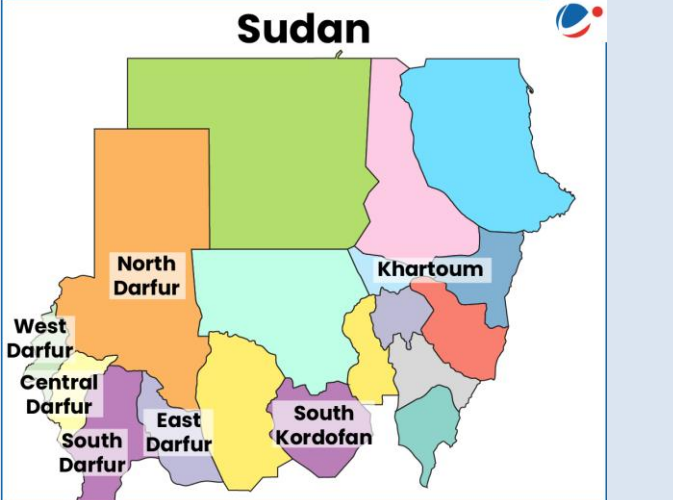

2.4.7. ASIA-PACIFIC INSTITUTE FOR BROADCASTING DEVELOPMENT (AIBD)

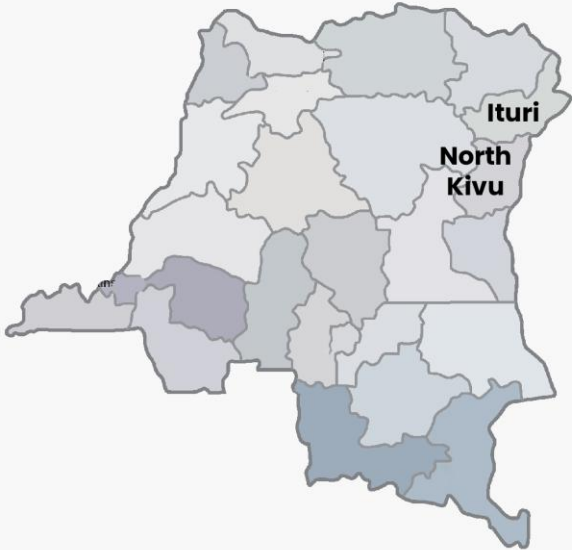
India has been elected as the Chairman of the Executive Board of AIBD at 23rd General Conference in Thailand.



About Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development

- **Genesis: Founded in 1977** under the auspices of UNESCO, AIBD is a unique regional inter-governmental organization.
- **Secretariat:** Kuala Lumpur.
- **Mandate:** To achieve a vibrant and cohesive electronic media environment in the Asia-Pacific region.
- **Members:** It currently has 92 member organizations from 45 countries.
 - **India is a founding member** of AIBD, and **Prasar Bharati India’s public service broadcaster** represents the **Ministry of Information & Broadcasting** in the organization.

2.4.8. AREAS IN CONFLICT IN NEWS

Areas In Conflict	Reason	Key Geographical Features	Map
<p>Gaza (Khan Yonis, Rafah, Jabalia, Dier al-Balah).</p>	<p>UN officially declared famine in August 2025, with half a million people at risk of starvation due to Israel's prolonged blockade and restricted aid entry post Hamas attack on Israel.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small coastal strip along the eastern Mediterranean Sea. • It borders Israel on the north and east, and Egypt on the southwest. • With nearly 2.2 million people, it is among the most crowded places in the world. 	 <p>Gaza</p> <p>GAZA STRIP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built-up area • Refugee Camp • Crossing Point <p>Map labels: Jabalia, Dier al-Balah, Khan Yonis, Rafah, MEDITERRANEAN SEA, EGYPT, JORDAN, SYRIA, West Bank, LEBANON.</p>
<p>Sudan (Darfur, Khartoum, South Kordofan, Blue Nile States).</p>	<p>Sudan plunged into a civil war in April 2023 after a vicious power struggle broke out between its Army and a powerful paramilitary group, the Rapid Support Force (RSF).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in Northeast Africa, bordered by Egypt to the north, the Red Sea to the northeast. • Third-largest country in Africa. • The Nile River system (White Nile and Blue Nile) runs through Sudan. 	 <p>Sudan</p> <p>Map labels: North Darfur, West Darfur, Central Darfur, South Darfur, East Darfur, South Kordofan, Khartoum.</p>
<p>Ukraine (Kyiv, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Cherkasy and Chernihiv, and Kharkiv).</p>	<p>Worsening humanitarian conditions in Ukraine amidst wave of Russian missile and drone strikes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bordered by Russia (east), and the Black Sea & Sea of Azov (south). • The Dnieper River flows through Kyiv to the Black Sea. • Carpathian Mountains in the west and Crimean Mountains in the south. 	 <p>Ukraine</p> <p>Map labels: POLAND, ROMANIA, MOLDOVA, KYIV, Cherkasy, Chernihiv, Kharkiv, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Crimea (Annexed by Russia), RUSSIA.</p>

<p>Democratic Republic of Congo (North Kivu, Ituri province).</p>	<p>Congo has been facing a long cycle of wars in the east, shaped by ethnic tension, weak governance, and the struggle for its mineral wealth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in central Africa and the 2nd largest on the continent. • Congo river basin- 2nd longest river in Africa. • Congo rainforest-2nd largest tropical rainforest. • Mineral Rich- Cobalt, Copper, and Gold, etc. 	<p>Democratic Republic of Congo</p> 
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 <p>SMART QUIZ</p>	<p>You can scan this QR code to practice the Smart Quiz of International Relations at our open test online platform for testing your understanding and recalling of the concepts.</p>	
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3. ECONOMY

3.1. PRODUCT NATION

Why in the News?

In its recent report, the **Standing Committee on Finance** suggested ways for India to navigate rising **global trade uncertainties** and growing **protectionism**.

More on the News



- Conflicts like the **Russia–Ukraine war** and the **West Asia crisis** have disturbed energy markets and supply chains, making India’s **trade more vulnerable**.
- Recently, the **United States'** move to impose a **50 percent tariff on Indian products** has also underlined the same.
- Experts believe that this is India’s opportunity to **evolve from a service-oriented economy into a true product nation**.
 - This has also been **signaled in the recent reforms announced by the government like GST rationalization**.

What is a Product Nation?

- Definition:** A product nation is a country that **produces and exports** a substantial volume of **high-value goods**, becoming a **net producer** rather than a **net importer**.
- Purpose:** At its core, a product nation **shifts from being only a consumer or assembler to becoming a creator of globally competitive goods**, boosting both its **economic strength and its strategic standing** in the world
- Smile Curve Insight—Stan Shih’s Smile Curve** shows that **higher value lies in R&D, design, branding, and distribution** rather than pure manufacturing. E.g.,: **Apple (\$3T market cap) vs. Foxconn (\$85B)**.
 - This curve makes the **case for investing in entire life cycle of a product**, rather than just assembly. E.g., Apple (\$3T market cap) vs. Foxconn that assembles for Apple (\$85B).
- South Korea, Japan, and several Southeast Asian nations** have risen as **manufacturing hubs** over the last three decades.

Challenges in Becoming a Product Nation

- Innovation & R&D Gaps:** Lack of innovation in **manufacturing and high-tech** lags. For instance, India spends **0.65% of its GDP on R&D**.
- Import Dependence:** Heavy reliance on **energy, fertilizers, metals, Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients, and technology imports** makes India vulnerable to supply disruptions.
 - India imports **65-70% of its semiconductor** needs.
- Low Private Investment:** Despite reforms, private sector **capital formation remains subdued**.
- Regulatory and Policy Bottleneck:** Delays in approvals, **complex compliance**, and a lack of **ease in doing business** affect growth.
- Structural Constraints:** **Weak infrastructure** and a **shortage of skilled labor** limit India’s capacity to scale manufacturing rapidly.

India's Transformative Initiatives 	
Initiative Area	Key Aspects
 National Defence & Security	Indigenous weapons in Operation Sindoor
 Energy & Resource Security	Solar capacity up 30x in 11 years
 Critical Minerals & Tech	National Critical Minerals Mission launched
 Space Sector & Innovation	Indigenous human spaceflight (Gaganyaan)
 MSMEs & Manufacturing	MSMEs in global supply chains
 Social Justice	DBT revolutionised social security
 Youth, Skill & Employment	Viksit Bharat Rojgar Yojana created
 Agriculture & Rural Dev.	PM Dhan Dhanya Krishi Yojana launched
 Health & Welfare	Free vaccination for humans and livestock
 Reform & Governance	New Income Tax Act implemented
 Digital & Financial incl.	UPI internationalisation achieved

- **Make in India risks being reduced to assembly work rather than genuine value addition.**
- **Employment Generation: Mismatch between job creation and the growing young workforce, especially in manufacturing.**
- **Climate & Sustainability Risks:** Exposure to climate change impacts, **energy transition challenges**, and lack of green finance readiness.
 - Coal generates more **than 70% of India's total electricity.**

Way Forward

- **Strengthen Manufacturing:** Scale up **Production Linked Incentive (PLI)** and incentivise **indigenous innovation** in electronics, semiconductors, and EVs.
- **Infrastructure & Connectivity Push:** Invest in logistics parks, **multimodal transport**, and digital connectivity, and integrate **MSMEs** into global value chains through **cluster-based development, e.g., National Logistics Policy (2022).**
- **Invest in Human Capital:** Reform education and **skill development** to align with **product-driven economy needs (AI, robotics, advanced manufacturing).**
 - **For example, Skill India & Gati Shakti** initiatives as building blocks.
- **Foster Product Development Platforms:** Create **intelligent product platforms** that startups and companies can use to accelerate development, **like Atal Incubation Centers.**

Conclusion

By strengthening indigenous innovation and advanced manufacturing that integrates human creativity with intelligent technologies in line with the **principles of Industry 5.0** (human-centric, sustainable, and resilient industrial model, where advanced technologies such as AI, robotics, IoT, etc., work with humans rather than replacing them), India can reduce external vulnerabilities and enhance value capture. In an era of trade wars and geopolitical flux, this shift becomes vital for safeguarding the nation's geostrategic and economic autonomy.

3.2. REGIONAL IMBALANCES IN INDIA

Why in the News?

The Standing Committee on Finance recommended Centre to come up with **action plan to evenly distribute industries across States to reduce regional imbalances in India.**

More on the News

- The Standing Committee on Finance, in its 26th Report, '**Roadmap for Indian Economic Growth in Light of Global Economic and Geopolitical Circumstances**', noted that **industries is a State subject.**
 - However, it emphasized that the **Central Government's initiatives** are vital for industrial development.
- **Economic Survey 2024-25 also highlighted significant disparities** in industrial development across states.
- Regional imbalances refer to the **differences in economic development and uneven economic growth** in different geographical regions.

Note: The Union list also has the following industries

- **Industries declared by Parliament** by law to be necessary for defence or for the prosecution of war.
- Industries, the control of which by the **Union is declared by Parliament by law** to be expedient in the public interest.

Reasons for Regional Imbalances in India

- **Historical Factors:** Regional imbalances started during the British regime, concentrating development in areas like West Bengal and Maharashtra.
- **Geographical Factors:** Difficult terrain (e.g., Himalayan and North-Eastern states) raising administration and project costs.
- **Political factors:** E.g. Relocation of Tata Nano project from West Bengal to Gujarat due to protests.

- **Policy Disparities:** The Green Revolution benefited a few states like Punjab and Haryana, exacerbating imbalances.
- **Lack of Growth of Ancillary Industries:** Despite developing public sector industrial enterprises in backwards areas like Rourkela, Barauni, Bhilai, etc.
- **Location Specific:** E.g. Development of commercial hubs, residential complexes in National Capital region (Gurugram, Noida) due to proximity to the capital Delhi.
- **Infrastructure Deficit:** Poor transportation, banking services etc. limits growth. E.g. Industrial growth is low in north-eastern states due to poor road/rail connectivity, weak banking penetration, and power shortages.

Consequences of Regional Imbalances in India

- **Security:** E.g., Insurgency in North-east and left-wing extremism in large parts of central and eastern states.
- **Political fragmentation:** E.g., Creation of Telangana State and demand for separate Vidharbha State in Maharashtra, Bodoland in Assam, etc.
- **Economic:**
 - **National growth:** Regional imbalance slows the growth of the entire national economy.
 - **Economic Gap:** Difference in Per Capita Income, e.g. Rs 2,04,605 in Karnataka and Rs 70,434 in Madhya Pradesh.
 - **Reinforcing Imbalances:** Prosperous areas attract more investments. For example, cities like Chennai and Bangalore grow faster than others.
- **Environmental:** Concentrated industrial development causes air, water, and noise pollution. For example, pollution in Delhi.
- **Social:** Frustration among youth and vulnerable sections like SC, ST, OBCs, women, etc.
- **Disparity in Human Development:** According to the UNDP, in Human Development Index, Goa occupies the top spot, with Bihar scoring the lowest.
- **Health Inadequacy:** One doctor serves a population of 28,391 in Bihar, whereas in Delhi, one doctor serves 2,203, both greater than the WHO standard of 1:1000.
- **Other:** Housing & Water Problem in Metropolitan cities like Mumbai, New Delhi, Chennai and Hyderabad.

Initiatives taken by the Government



Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP): Transforming 112 most under-developed districts across the country.



Aspirational Block Programme (ABP): Developing underdeveloped blocks of India (500 blocks from 27 states and 4 UTs).



PM-DevINE (Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North East Region): To accelerate the development of India's North Eastern Region.



Special Package Scheme: For Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and J&K.



Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana (PMKKKY): For the welfare of tribals and tribal areas and other affected by mining.



Border Area Development Programme (BADP): To develop remote and inaccessible areas situated near the international borders.

Way Forward

- **Promoting New Financial Institutions in Backwards Regions:** The Government can see that these Institutions function well for all-around development of the backward areas.
- **New Regional Boards:** Regional Boards with necessary legal powers, funds can be instituted to remove regional imbalances.
- **Growth Corridors:** Comprising education zones, agricultural zones, and industrial zones should be operationalised for the rapid development of backward areas in the states.

- **Performance-Based Funding:** A system may be introduced to reward States, including developed ones, that significantly reduce inequalities within their borders.
- **Additional funds for Infrastructure:** Additional funds need to be provided to build core infrastructure at the inter-district level in less developed States and backward regions.
- **Strengthening of Good and Local Governance in backward states:** Effective administration helps states raise revenues, attract investment, and improve resource use, especially in backwards regions.
- **Other:** Deregulation, R&D and innovation, and improving skill levels of the workforce.

Conclusion

For removing regional imbalances focus should be on creating an **environment that fosters innovation, attracts investment, and ensures efficient utilization of resources**. Strengthening governance, improving infrastructure, and promoting healthy competition between states through **cooperative and competitive federalism** are essential for balanced development.

3.3. INTERNATIONALIZATION OF RUPEE

Why in the News?

RBI removes prior approval requirements for banks to open Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVAs), speeding up rupee-based trade settlements and supporting the internationalization of the Indian Rupee.

More on the News

- Special Rupee Vostro Account (SRVA) mechanism was **introduced in July 2022** to enable exporters and importers to **invoice and settle trade in Indian Rupees (i.e. Internationalization of Indian Rupee)**.
- **Vostro Account:** Refers to a foreign bank's account held in a domestic bank in the local currency.
 - E.g. if a US bank holds an account in an Indian bank in rupees, it is SBI's Vostro account.
- **How it Works?**
 - **For Importers:** When an Indian importer pays a foreign trader in rupees, the amount is credited to the Vostro account.
 - **For Exporters:** When an Indian exporter receives payment, money is deducted from the Vostro account and credited to the exporter's regular account.

Know the term

- **Nostro Account** refers to a domestic bank's account held in a foreign bank in the currency of the overseas country.
 - E.g. if an Indian bank (SBI) holds an account in a US bank (Citibank) in USD, it is **SBI's Nostro account**.
- Nostro accounts **simplify the process of exchanging and trading in foreign currencies** e.g. US dollar.




What is Internationalization of Rupee?

- Internationalization of Rupee refers to a process that involves **increasing use of the rupee in cross-border transactions**.
 - It involves **promoting the rupee for import and export trade** and then other current account transactions, followed by its use in capital account transactions.

What is an International currency?





- An international currency is a currency, like the US dollar or the Euro, used for transactions between countries and beyond the borders of the issuing nation.
- Just like domestic currency, it performs the **three functions of money (As a medium of exchange, a unit of account, and a store of value)**.
 - It does so at two distinct levels, for private and public transactions and resultantly **plays six roles in total**.

The Roles of an International Currency

Function	Sector	
	Private	Official
 <p>Unit of Account</p>	Currency is used to invoice foreign trade and denominate international financial instruments.	Currency is used in expressing exchange rate relationships.
 <p>Medium of Exchange</p>	Currency is used to settle international trade and to discharge international financial obligations.	Intervention currency in the foreign exchange markets and currency used for the balance of payments financing.
 <p>Store of value</p>	Currency is used to denominate deposits, loans and bonds.	Reserve assets held by monetary authorities.

- Currently, the US dollar, the Euro, Japanese yen, Chinese renminbi/Yuan and the pound sterling are the **leading reserve currencies in the world.**

Determinants of Internationalization of Currency

 <p>Wider use: Currency must be commonly utilized in global transactions.</p>	 <p>Capital account openness: How easily foreign and domestic investors can invest or withdraw capital.</p>	 <p>Economic Fundamentals: E.g. Large Economic size and trade network.</p>	 <p>Stability: Currency should be stable and easily convertible.</p>
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Benefits of Internationalization of Rupee

- Lower Currency Risk & FX Reserve Needs:** Settling trade in rupees reduces forex losses, transaction costs, and dependence on large foreign reserves.
- Global Standing & Bargaining Power:** Wider INR usage strengthens India's role in trade negotiations and boosts its economic influence.
- Trade & Policy Flexibility:** Trading in rupees can soften the impact of sanctions, diversify partners, and ease fiscal management through potential rupee-denominated debt.
- Financial Market Development:** Greater global demand for INR deepens Indian bond and equity markets, attracts investment, and ensures faster, more transparent transactions.

Challenges in Internationalization of Rupee

- Increased Exchange Rate Volatility:** Greater global rupee trading increases vulnerability to international market fluctuations, raising transaction costs and complicating financial planning for businesses and investors.
- Reduced Monetary Policy Autonomy:** Widespread rupee trading would limit RBI's control over currency value, making inflation and macroeconomic management more challenging.
 - Triffin Dilemma**, where a country struggles to balance global currency demand with domestic monetary needs.
- Higher Capital Flight Risk:** Increased foreign rupee holdings raise the risk of sudden capital outflows, potentially causing financial crisis and currency depreciation.
- Greater External Shock Vulnerability:** Deeper integration with global financial markets increases rupee's susceptibility to external shocks like interest rate changes and commodity price fluctuations, destabilizing the Indian economy.
- Competition:** The global reserve currency landscape is dominated by US dollar, Euro, Japanese yen, and pound sterling.

- **Ensuring Liquidity and Convertibility:** The rupee is currently not fully convertible and cannot be freely bought or sold on international markets, lesser capital account convertibility hinders internationalization of rupee.
 - In India, **full current account convertibility is allowed**, whereas **on capital accounts only partial convertibility is allowed**.

Steps taken for Internationalization of Rupee

- **RBI's Strategic Action Plan for 2024-25:** The Annual Report 2023-24 outlined INR internationalization initiatives including.
 - **Permitting INR accounts outside India** and extending INR-denominated loans to persons resident outside India (PROI).
 - **SPECTRA Project:** Software Platform for External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs) and Trade Credits Reporting and Approval to streamline External Commercial Borrowings and Trade Credits processes.
- **Indian Payment Infrastructure:** India linked UPI with Bhutan, France, Mauritius, Nepal, UAE, Singapore and is expanding UPI's global reach to other jurisdictions.
- **Asian Clearing Union (ACU):** RBI proposed including INR as a settlement currency under ACU.
- **GIFT City Development:** Hosts Financial Market Infrastructures including two international exchanges and a depository.
- **Liberalized FEMA regulations, 1999 by RBI:** To encourage use of Indian Rupee (Internationalization of Rupee) for settlement of cross border transactions.
- **Other:** Bilateral Currency Swap agreements, INR as a Designated Foreign Currency in Sri Lanka, Issuance of rupee-denominated bonds i.e. Masala bonds.

Way Forward

- **Recommendations of Inter-Departmental Group of RBI**
 - **Short-Term Measures:** Promoting Rupee Accounts for Non-Residents, Integration of Payment Systems, and Internationalization of Indian Payment Systems, etc.
 - **Medium-Term Measures:** Masala bonds framework liberalization, Expanding Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) system for settling international transactions, etc.
 - **Long-term Measures:** Inclusion of INR in **Special Drawing Rights (SDR)** basket
 - > SDR is an international reserve asset created by IMF in 1969 to **supplement its member countries' official reserves**.
 - > Value of the SDR is calculated from a weighted basket of **5 major currencies - U.S. dollar, Euro, Japanese yen, Chinese Renminbi, & British pound**.
- **Specific Reforms:** India can pursue specific reforms like increasing the rupee's convertibility, developing a more robust bond market, enticing exporters and importers to conduct business in rupees etc.
- **Addressing Macroeconomic Fundamentals:** India needs to concentrate on strengthening its macroeconomic foundations to overcome inflation, non-performing assets etc.
- **Harmonization of KYC norms:** RBI and SEBI can ease access of foreign investors to INR assets.

3.3.1. DE-DOLLARIZATION

Why in the News?


RBI's push for internationalization of INR through SRVAs, UPI linkages, currency swap agreements etc., aims to reduce dependence on foreign currencies and contributes to global de-dollarization.


What is De-dollarization?

- It **aims to reverse dollarization** (historical domination of US dollar in global market) causing a significant reduction of its use in world trade, reserves and financial transactions.

Recent trends regarding De-dollarization

 **Central bank foreign exchange (FX) reserves:** USD share has fallen to a two-decade low.

 **In fixed income:** Share of foreign ownership in the U.S. Treasury market has decreased over the last 15 years, indicating reduced reliance on the dollar.

 **Commodity markets:** Most visible de-dollarization, with a growing proportion of energy being priced in non-dollar-denominated contracts.

Key reasons for De-dollarization

- **Asymmetry of shrinking US economic weight and growing dominant role of the dollar:** While the US share of world GDP has decreased from around 45% post-World War II to approximately 25% currently, the dollar still carries disproportionate share.
- **Weakening credibility of Dollar:** The US government's high debt burden and instances like the 2023 debt ceiling standoff have weakened this credibility.
- **Spillover effects of US monetary policy:** Actions by the Federal Reserve, such as hiking interest rates (2023), have led to currency depreciation, significant increases in debt service costs, and inflation in many countries.
- **Weaponization of US dollar and payment clearance systems:** Currently, approximately 40 countries are under US sanctions, which have become more systemic, impacting central governments and policy making.
- **Aspiration for a new and more democratic international economic order:** De-dollarization efforts are also a reflection of a desire to shift away from a unipolar world towards a multipolar New International Economic Order (NIEO).
- **Positive developments outside U.S.:** Enhanced credibility of alternative currencies, like economic and political reforms in China.

Challenges with De-dollarization

- **Transition Costs:** Moving away from the U.S. dollar requires heavy spending on updating financial systems, adjusting contracts, and renegotiating trade agreements.
- **Market Volatility:** The shift to new currencies can trigger uncertainty and market instability, affecting global trade and investment flows.
- **Geopolitical Tensions:** Reducing reliance on the U.S. dollar may spark political frictions and be seen as a challenge to American economic influence.
- **Reserve Diversification Challenges:** Holding reserves in alternative currencies or assets like gold brings new risks, including currency depreciation or commodity price swings.

Recent Initiatives for De-dollarisation



mBridge Project:

Cross-border CBDC payment system backed by China, Thailand etc.



BRICS Pay:

Digital platform for faster, cheaper cross-border trade in local currencies.



China's Digital Yuan:

Push for global use of e-CNY (Digital renminbi) and yuan-backed stablecoins despite capital controls.



Pan-African Payment & Settlement System (PAPSS):

Enables direct transactions in African local currencies, bypassing the dollar.



Russia's System for Transfer of Financial Messages:

For secure transmission of financial messages across banks, within Russia and participating foreign entities.

Conclusion

In case of India, de-dollarization can be complemented with internationalization of Rupee—**rupeefication**, that would provide complete freedom over buying or selling of the rupee by an entity.

3.4. FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY AND BUDGET MANAGEMENT (FRBM) ACT

Why in the News?

Recently, **Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG's) report** has highlighted several fiscal inconsistencies and transparency issues in the government's compliance with the FRBM Act.

About FRBM Act, 2003

- **Purpose:** The FRBM Act, 2003, was enacted to foster **inter-generational equity in fiscal management and ensure long-term macroeconomic stability.**
 - The Act aims to guide the **central government's fiscal policy towards a sustainable path**, thereby promoting **economic stability and responsible financial governance.**
 - A key mandate of the Act is that the **CAG must conduct an annual compliance review** of its provisions.
- FRBM Act mandates the following statements to be laid before the Parliament along with the Budget:
 - **Macro-economic Framework Statement.**
 - **Medium Term Fiscal Policy Statement.**
 - **Fiscal Policy Strategy Statement.**

Key Targets under FRBM Act

Parameter	Target	Deadline	Current Ratio as of 2023-24 (CAG Report)
Fiscal deficit (original FRBM)	3% of GDP	31st Mar 2021	5.32%
Debt limits	General Govt (Centre + State) ≤ 60% of GDP; Central Govt ≤ 40% of GDP	End of FY 2024–25	Central Govt: 57% General Govt: 81.3%
Revised fiscal consolidation path	< 4.5% of GDP fiscal deficit	FY 2025–26	
Additional guarantees (against Consolidated Fund of India)	≤ 0.5% of GDP in any year	Annual cap	
<i>The targets for Revenue and Effective Revenue Deficit were removed by the 2018 Amendment to the FRBM Act.</i>			

Key Findings of the CAG Report

- **Central Government Debt Trends:**
 - **Debt-to-GDP Ratio:** The central government debt as a ratio of GDP peaked significantly during the pandemic, reaching 61.38% in FY 2020-21.
 - > However, it has since shown a **moderating trend, declining to 57% as of March 2024.**
 - > **A high debt-to-GDP ratio is undesirable**, as a higher ratio indicates a higher risk of default.
 - **Debt Sustainability:** A positive signal was acknowledged regarding debt sustainability, with the **debt sustainability analysis indicator being positive in 2022-23 and FY24**, indicating stability.
- **Interest Payments to Revenue Receipts:** This ratio, considered an important indicator of the government's fiscal health and fiscal strain, **rose marginally to 35.35% in 2022-23** after declining from a peak of 38.66% in 2020-21.
- **Compliance with Guarantee Limits:** This **remained within the legal ceiling of 0.5% of GDP in 2022-23**, indicating compliance.
- **Unrealized Tax Revenues:** The report revealed a significant amount of **tax revenue raised but not realized**, which surged to ₹21.30 trillion by the end of 2022-23.
 - A large portion of this unrealized amount was **not under dispute**, suggesting potential issues in tax enforcement or recovery processes.

- **Discrepancies in Deficit Figures:** Variations have been seen in estimates for **fiscal deficit, revenue deficit (currently 2.54%), primary deficit (1.66% currently)**, and especially in non-tax revenue estimates.
 - The **fiscal deficit figure in the Union Government Finance Accounts (UGFA) for 2022-23 differed from the figure cited in the Budget at a Glance (BAG) for 2024-25.**
 - Such discrepancies raise questions about the consistency of key fiscal indicators.

Conclusion

The need of the hour is to enhance transparency, tax recovery and improving fiscal management practices. By working on this, the government can bolster its fiscal credibility, ensure greater accountability, and reinforce the objectives of the FRBM Act to maintain sound fiscal health and macroeconomic stability.

Know the terms

- **Debt Sustainability Analysis:** It is a measure to assess the ability of the Government to service its debt-related financial obligations over a period of time
- **Fiscal Deficit:** Fiscal deficit is the difference between the government’s total expenditure and its total receipts excluding borrowing.
- **Primary Deficit:** While fiscal deficit represents the need for additional resources in general, a part of such resources may be needed to finance interest payments. Interest payments represent the expenditure of past obligations and are independent of current allocative priorities.
- **Revenue Deficit:** Revenue deficit is the excess of revenue expenditure of the Government over its revenue receipts. It represents net dissaving of the Government for the sake of present consumption. Revenue deficit leads to increase in borrowings without corresponding capital/asset formation.
- **Effective Revenue Deficit:** It means the difference between the revenue deficit and grants for creation of Capital Assets.

3.5. BLUE ECONOMY

Why in the News?

The Ministry of Earth Sciences released a white paper titled, “**Transforming India’s Blue Economy: Innovation and Sustainable Growth,**” outlining a **roadmap to 2035.**

Blue Economy in India

- **Definition:** According to The Energy and Resources Institute, **Blue economy** refers to **exploring and optimizing** the potential of the oceans and seas which are under India’s legal jurisdiction **for socio-economic development, environmental sustainability, and national security.**
 - The concept of **Blue Economy** was **first articulated** in **1994** by **Prof. Gunter Pauli** at the United Nations University (**UNU**).
- **Potential:** India’s extensive **coastline (11098 km)** and large **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 2.4 million sq. km,** with its **strategic location on vital global shipping lanes** provides significant potential for developing this sector.
- **Current Status:**
 - India’s blue economy contributes **4% of its GDP**
 - > **Handles 95% of its trade by volume**
 - **12 major (Vadhavan Port in Maharashtra will be 13th major port) and 200 minor ports** along its coastline.
 - **By 2035,** India’s **coastal shipping modal share** is expected to grow from **6% to 33%,** reflecting **robust potential** for economic expansion.

Challenges related to Blue Economy in India

Environmental

- **Climate change impacts:** Warming waters, stronger cyclones, sea-level rise, erosion of coasts and heritage sites.
- **Overfishing** and depletion of fish stocks.

- **Marine and port pollution** damaging ecosystems (coral reefs, mangroves, marine habitats).
- **Over-tourism and unplanned development** degrading sensitive coastal ecosystems.
- **Limited and incomplete** Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs).
 - **Example: CAG, in a report** in 2022, stated that there are **large-scale violations of coastal zone regulations and EIA norms by several projects in the country.**

Policy and Governance

- **Insufficient enforcement** of international commitments and **IMO regulations.**
- Slow adoption of modern regulatory frameworks for **emerging sectors (deep-sea mining, marine biotechnology, renewables).**
- **Need for** strong inter-ministerial and inter-agency coordination, and **more harmonized policy frameworks** (energy, heritage, tourism).
 - **Example:** Multiple government ministries and agencies are involved in various aspects of the blue economy (e.g., fisheries, shipping, environment, earth sciences), **but a unified and coordinated approach is lacking.**

Technological and Infrastructure

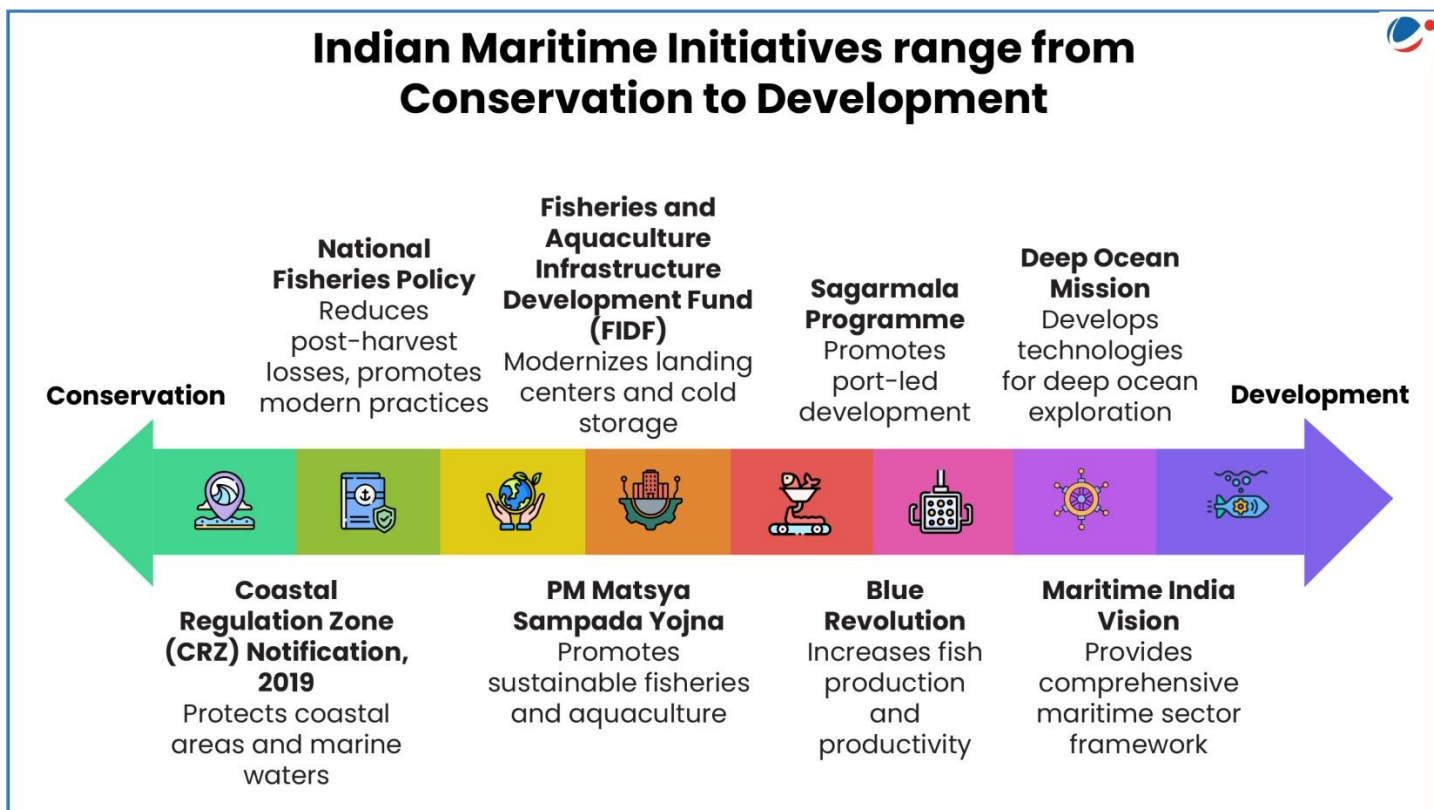
- Limited **cold chain, storage, and post-harvest facilities in fisheries.**
- Heavy dependence on **imported specialized equipment** (renewables, deep-sea mining, biotech).
- Limited **shipbuilding and ship repair capacity.**
- Poor **transmission and grid readiness** for offshore energy.
- **Low commercialization** of research outputs in **biotechnology.**
- Limited access to **advanced deep-sea exploration technology.**
 - **Example:** India has used France's IFREMER's submersible, **Nautilie**, for test expeditions in the Atlantic Ocean

Financial and Investment

- **Low** levels of **private sector investment** across fisheries, ports, renewables, biotech.
- Limited **financing** for small-scale fishers, start-ups, and coastal tourism cooperatives.
- **Insurance gaps** for small ventures and capital-intensive activities.
- **Majority of funding** for marine biotechnology research in India coming from **government bodies** like the Department of Biotechnology **rather than private venture capital firms.**

Social and Equity

- **Skill shortages:** Trained technicians, high-skill jobs in ports, biotech, deep-sea ops.
- Weak **representation of marginalized groups** (tribal, women, small-scale fishers) with **economic benefits often bypassing them** along with persistent threat of **displacement.**
 - **Example: women constitute up to 72% of India's coastal fisheries workforce,** they are largely **confined to informal, low-paying jobs.**



Successful Case Studies related to Blue Economy of India

- Kochi's Smart Port Transformation through Digital Twin Integration (Virtual Port)**
 - The integration has shown **tangible benefits in operational efficiency, enhanced planning accuracy and resilience** while also **supporting environmental monitoring**.
- Alang, Gujarat: Transforming Shipbreaking into a Circular Economy Model**
 - Alang achieved compliance with **Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships**, indicating shift towards environmentally **sustainable resource recovery** and value addition in a traditionally heavy industry.
- Andaman and Nicobar Islands (ANI): A Model for Sustainable Coastal and Marine Tourism**
 - Community-led programs**, investing in eco-friendly infrastructure leading to **around 5,000 jobs** and reduced tourist-zone waste by 40%.
 - Blue Flag certification for beaches and Marine Spatial Planning (MSP)** helped regulate tourism in **Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)**.
- Community-led Seaweed Cultivation in Odisha: A Model for Sustainable Coastal Livelihoods**
 - Odisha's annual seaweed output has reached approximately 5,000 tons, providing crucial **supplementary income** for over 10,000 coastal households.
 - Environmentally**, seaweed farming absorbs dissolved carbon dioxide, **contributes to climate change mitigation**, improves water quality, and reduces pressure on stressed fish stocks.

Conclusion

Targeted investments in green technologies, resilient infrastructure, and skill development are crucial for India's blue economy. **Sustainable resource management and inclusive participation** along with innovative financing models like **blue bonds, carbon credit markets, and public-private partnerships** will mobilize capital, fostering **long-term competitiveness and resilience** while balancing economic growth with environmental health.

3.6. MINES AND MINERALS (DEVELOPMENT AND REGULATION) AMENDMENT ACT, 2025

Why in the News?

Recently, the **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2025** was passed by Parliament.

More on the News

- The act amends **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957**.
- The Act was last amended in 2023 with key provisions like-
 - Introduction of **a new list of 24 critical and strategic minerals** for increasing exploration and production.
 - Empowering **central government** to auction mineral concessions in respect of such minerals &
 - Introduction of **exploration licence** for **critical and deep-seated minerals**.
- The Act will enhance availability of critical and strategic minerals in India.

Know the term

- **Deep-seated minerals:** Minerals which occur at a **depth of more than 200 metres from the surface of land.**
- **Composite licence:** It provides **rights for both prospecting and mining.**

Why Critical/Strategic minerals are increasingly becoming important for India?

- **Chinese control on Supply chain:** China currently controls ~60-70% of rare earth production and 80-90% of global processing capacity.
- **Clean Energy Transition and Climate Goals:** E.g. **Silicon, Tellurium, Indium, and Gallium** are used in photovoltaic (PV) cells and rare earth elements such as **Dysprosium and Neodymium** are used in permanent magnets for wind turbines.
- **Electric Mobility:** E.g. Lithium, Nickel & Cobalt are key materials used in lithium-ion batteries and advanced energy storage systems and are also crucial for success of National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP).
- **National Security and Defence Capabilities:** Critical minerals support a wide range of military capabilities, from communications and surveillance systems to weaponry and protective gear.
- **Securing Digital Sovereignty:** Ensuring resilient supply chain is crucial for furthering **Digital Economy and technological self-reliance**.
 - E.g. Silicon forms the basis of microchips whereas cobalt is used to enhance memory and logic devices.
- **Accelerating SDG gains:** It has potential to attract foreign and domestic investment, create jobs, and boost fiscal revenues, exports, and growth.
 - E.g. Chile has used copper revenues to support **poverty reduction (SDG 1) & improved health services (SDG 3)** (UNDESA).

Key amendments and their significance

Amendment	Details	Significance
National Mineral Exploration and Development Trust (NMEDT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replaces earlier National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET) with widened scope and territorial domain. • NMEDT can use funds accrued to it within India, including the offshore areas and outside India, for the purposes of exploration and development of mines and minerals. • Increased amount of payment to Trust by lessees (to 3% of royalty from 2%). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM): Expenditure of 8,700 crore rupees in next 5 years is envisaged from NMEDT under NCMM.
Inclusion of other minerals in a mining lease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lease holders can apply to state government for adding other minerals to an existing lease. • No additional amount needs to be paid for inclusion of critical and strategic minerals, and other specified minerals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentivises production of critical and strategic minerals: These minerals are found in small quantity and are difficult to mine and process.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g., Cobalt & Nickel are generally found in association with copper ores.
Inclusion of contiguous area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allows for one-time extension of area under a mining lease (up to 10%) or composite lease (up to 30%) for deep-seated minerals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Optimal mining of deep-seated minerals: Extraction of these minerals may not be economically viable under a separate lease or licence.
Establishment of Mineral Exchanges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establishes authority to register and regulate mineral exchanges (a registered electronic trading platform or marketplace for trading minerals and metals). ● Empowers Central government to frame rules regarding mineral exchanges on matters such as registration, levy of fees, prevention of insider trading etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promote investment in mining sector: It will help miners and end-users of minerals in determining fair and transparent market prices based on supply and demand dynamics.
Removal of limit on sale for captive mines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No limit on sale of minerals by captive mines. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Earlier captive mines were allowed to sell only up to 50% of minerals produced in a year, after meeting end-use requirements. ● Captive mines allowed to sell dumps of stacked minerals which cannot be captively utilised to reduce environment hazards and increase safety in mine workings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bring more minerals in market and provide additional revenue to the States.

Conclusion

India's shift to green energy depends heavily on having access to critical minerals. As the country works to lower its carbon emissions and improve energy security, it's crucial to ensure a reliable supply of these essential minerals.

To read more about Critical Minerals and NCMM, refer to Article 3.2. National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM) in the February 2025 Monthly Current Affairs magazine.


3.7. GIG WORKERS

Why in the News?

Recently, Karnataka's State Legislative Assembly passed the **Karnataka Platform-Based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Bill, 2025**, to protect the rights of workers.

More about the bill

- **Establishment of Welfare Board:** It will oversee registration of workers and aggregators, create social security schemes, monitor the schemes, etc.
- **Establishment of Social Security and Welfare Fund:** Consists of **welfare fee** (Levied on transactions b/w worker & aggregator or on overall turnover of company) & contributions from Union and State governments.
- **Others:** Aggregators will register gig workers, share work terms, and explain how automated systems affect their conditions.
- **Rajasthan and Bihar** have passed laws in this regard in 2023 and 2025, respectively.



Data Bank

Status of Gig Worker (According to NITI Aayog)

- **77 lakh workers** were engaged in the gig economy in 2020-21.
- **2.35 crore** Gig workers by 2030
- Increasing with a **growth rate of 13 % per annum.**

About Gig workers

- **Definition: The Code on Social Security, 2020**, defines a gig worker as a person who works outside a traditional employer-employee relationship.
- **Types:** platform and non-platform-based workers.
 - **Platform workers** are those whose work is based on online apps or digital platforms. E.g., Ola, Uber, Zomato, Swiggy, Urban Company, etc.
 - **Non-platform gig workers** are generally casual wage workers and own account workers in the conventional sectors, working part-time or full time.

Reasons for growth: Demographic dividend (65 % of Indians are in age group of 15-64 years), **Rapid urbanisation**, boost to the remote work during COVID-19, **Adoption of smartphones and internet** (In India, 85.5 % of households possess at least one smartphone), etc.

Significance of the gig economy

- **For government**
 - **To utilise demographic dividend:** By ensuring employability, business that serves the gig economy account for 56 % of all new jobs created in India.
 - **Economic growth:** By 2030, India's gig economy might see \$250 billion in transactions or 1.25 % of GDP (NITI Aayog).
- **For society**
 - **Empowering the vulnerable section:** According to ILO, digital platform's flexible employment benefits women, youth, and physically disabled.
 - **Micro-Entrepreneurship:** Platforms like Airbnb and Urban Company let people monetize their skills, assets, and time while lowering entry barriers such as high startup costs.
- **For workers**
 - **Flexible Employment:** Remote work, on-demand and task-based arrangements, flexible work hours, etc.
 - **Skill development:** The gig economy imparts a range of skills, such as digital literacy, self-management, communication, problem-solving, etc.
- **For consumers**
 - **Access to the Global Market:** e.g. Airbnb, and Amazon.
 - **Greater convenience:** Via personalised and cheaper products.

Challenges for Gig Workers

- **Lack of social security:** More than 82.5 % of gig workers are **informal** employees (NITI Aayog).
- **Health and Safety Concerns:** Due to the nature of the job, e.g., tight delivery schedule can cause accidents.
- **High Working hours:** 60 % of platform workers work 7 days a week, while 47% of the workers work for more than 12 hours a day (Tata Institute of Social Science).
- **Income uncertainty:** According to Fairwork India, around half of the gig workers did not receive the statutory minimum wage
- **Algorithmic Asymmetry:** Platforms use algorithms to manage work. However, reliance on this leads to various imbalances such as
 - **Information Access:** Platform aggregators have access to worker's personal information raising privacy concerns.
 - **Transparency:** Rating Systems, task distribution and wage based on data etc are often guided by algorithms which are **opaque**, increasing the possibility of unfair calculations.

Steps taken for the Gig Workers in India



Code on Social Security, 2020: Provides for the extension of social security benefits to gig workers as well.



Code on Wages, 2019: Ensures a universal minimum and floor wage for all workers, including gig workers.



e-SHRAM Portal: National Database of Unorganised Workers, including gig workers.



Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY): All registered unorganised, including gig workers are entitled to accidental insurance benefits.

Conclusion

A comprehensive framework can be brought for gig and platform workers that ensures fair wages, social security, safe workplaces, gender inclusion, and protection from discrimination. It should mandate transparency, algorithmic accountability, and the right to unionize while promoting training, grievance redressal, and access to finance.

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WEEKLY FOCUS #99

Future of Work



3.8. INCOME TAX ACT 2025

Why in the News?

The President has given her assent to the Income Tax Act 2025 which replaces the Income-Tax Act, 1961.

Key highlight of the Act

- **Commencement:** The Act would come into force on the **1st April 2026**.
- **Shorter and Simpler:** New Act has simpler language and is shorter than the previous bill.
 - The provisions of **Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT)** and **Alternate Minimum Tax (AMT)** have been separated into two sub-sections.
- **Stability in Core Tax Elements**
 - Tax rates and regimes for **individuals and corporations remain unchanged**.
 - There are no changes in offences and penalties.
 - Most definitions have also been retained.
 - Faceless collection of information and assessment of tax cases.
- **Power to Frame Schemes:** The Act empowers the central government to frame new schemes for greater efficiency, transparency, and accountability.
- **Undisclosed Income:** The definition of undisclosed income for assessing search cases, which previously included money, bullion, jewellery, or other valuable articles, is expanded to include **virtual digital assets**.
- **Virtual Digital Space Access:** Income tax authorities are now allowed to gain access to a virtual digital space during search and seizure proceedings.
 - The authorities will have power to gain access by overriding any required access code.
 - A "virtual digital space" is **defined broadly to include email servers, social media accounts**, online investment and trading accounts, and websites for storing details of asset ownership.

Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT)

- It aims to **bring into the tax net "zero tax companies"** which in spite of having earned substantial book profits and having paid handsome dividends, do not pay any tax due to various tax concessions and incentives provided under the Income-tax Law.
- The provisions of MAT are applicable to a **corporate taxpayer only**.

Alternate Minimum Tax (AMT)

- It has similar provisions as MAT which is applicable to non-corporate tax payers.

- **Dispute resolution panel:** The Act allows certain eligible assesseees to refer draft orders passed by assessing officers to a dispute resolution panel.
 - These assesseees include persons engaged in transfer pricing cases, non-residents, or foreign companies.
 - Transfer pricing refers to the price charged in a transaction between related entities of a multinational enterprise.
- **Pending Proceedings:** Any proceedings pending before any income-tax authority, Appellate Tribunal, or court on the commencement of the new Act will continue and be disposed of as if the new Act had not been enacted.
- **Interpretation of tax treaties:** The Act allows the central government to enter into agreements with other countries to provide relief in cases of double taxation.

Related News

The President has given her **assent to the Taxation Laws (Amendment) Act, 2025.**

- It is a legislative measure designed to modify existing tax laws, primarily the Income-tax Act, 1961, and the Finance Act, 2025.

Key features of the Act

- **Exemption for the Unified Pension System (UPS):** Tax exemptions aligned with New Pension Scheme benefits.
- **Tax Benefit to Public Investment Funds (PIF) of Saudi Arabia & subsidiaries.**
 - Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia has total \$925 billion plus assets under management.
- **Block Assessment in Search Cases:** It aims to streamline treatment of pending assessments/reassessments in block assessment procedures.

3.9. ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL, AND GOVERNANCE (ESG)

Why in the News?

The Parliamentary standing committee on finance submitted a report in Lok Sabha and gave recommendations to improve ESG framework in India.

What is ESG Framework?

ESG (environmental, social, and governance) is a framework for evaluating a company's sustainability and ethical practices across three key areas: environmental impact, social responsibility, and corporate governance.

Significance of ESG Framework:

- **Global Alignment:** Supports national and international sustainable development goals including SDGs and Paris Agreement.
- **Financial Access:** Attracts ESG-conscious investors, customers, and employees while enabling access to green financing
- **Operational Efficiency:** Reduces costs through sustainable practices like renewable energy adoption.
- **Competitive Advantage:** Drives innovation and resilience through best practices that minimize environmental/social impacts
- **Brand Value:** Creates positive societal impact by addressing community needs and stakeholder concerns.

Challenges of ESG Reporting in India (Highlighted by the Parliamentary Standing Committee):

- **Persistent Risk of Greenwashing:** False or misleading claims about their ESG performance may lead to a loss of brand image.
- **Inconsistent Implementation across sectors:** Due to lack of ecognized regulations and fragmented approach of reporting.
- **Difficulties faced by small businesses in adopting ESG practices:** ESG adoption needs high upfront costs in terms of data collection, reporting, certification etc., posing burdens for small and mid-sized firms lacking resources and expertise.

Other Challenges:

- **Lack of Awareness and Education:** Many Indian businesses lack ESG awareness, expertise, and professionals; education on sustainability and ESG remains limited and underdeveloped.
- **Integration with Business Strategy:** Companies struggle to align ESG with core strategies, leading to costly, unproductive efforts that fail to create value or sustainability.
- **Data Quality and Availability:** Many Indian companies lack proper systems and standards, making ESG data unreliable and hard to measure or report consistently.
- **Regulatory Fragmentation:** SEBI mandates ESG disclosure for top 1000 listed firms.
 - India lacks uniform regulations: Clear, harmonized reporting frameworks.

Way Forward to make ESG effective:

Recommendation of Parliamentary standing committee:

- **Dedicated ESG Oversight Body:** To be set up under Ministry of Corporate Affairs to combat greenwashing.
- **Amendment to Companies Act, 2013:** To include ESG objectives as part of fiduciary duties of the directors.
- **Independent ESG Committees:** For ensuring effective implementation and monitoring of ESG strategies.

Other Recommendations:

- **Set clear ESG goals:** Businesses should start by setting clear ESG goals that are aligned with their business strategy. These goals should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.
- **Invest in ESG Training and Capacity Building:** For effective implementation of ESG strategies.
- **Partner with ESG experts:** Businesses can partner with ESG consulting firms to help them with ESG adoption. These experts can provide guidance and support on ESG best practices.

Other Initiatives to promote ESG in India:

- **Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR):** It is a reporting framework notified by the SEBI for top 1000 listed companies in India.
- **BRSR Core:** It mandates companies to disclose detailed information on various aspects of their value chains.
- **National Guidelines on Responsible Business Conduct (NGRBCs):** These are voluntary guidelines released by Ministry of Corporate Affairs in 2019 with aim to encourage businesses to adopt ethical and sustainable practices.
- **Corporate Social Responsibility: Section 135 of Companies Act, 2013** makes it **mandatory** for companies of a certain turnover and profitability to spend **2% of their average net profit** for the past 3 years on **CSR activities**.

3.10. COMPETITION COMMISSION OF INDIA

Why in the News?

Recently, the **Standing Committee on Finance** tabled a report titled **Evolving Role of Competition Commission of India in the Economy, particularly the Digital Landscape**, before parliament.



Competition Commission of India



Establishment: In 2003, under the Competition Act, 2002, but became operational from 2009.



Ministry: Minister of Corporate Affairs (MCA)



Composition: Chairperson and 6 Members appointed by the Central Government.



Appellate Authority: National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) under the Companies Act, 2013, for the Competition Act 2002.

Role of CCI

- **Eliminate practices having adverse effect on competition:** E.g., in the **Umar Javeed vs. Google case**, the CCI directed Google not to restrict app developers from distributing apps via side-loading.
 - **Side-loading** means **installing apps on a device from outside the official app store.**
- **Protect the interests of consumers:** E.g., CCI fined Meta for abusing dominance by sharing WhatsApp's user data with other Meta companies.
- **Advise the government on competition issues:** E.g., the **competition assessment toolkit** by CCI to help govt. analyse laws and regulations to identify aspects that restrict competition.
- **Inquire, investigate, pass orders and impose penalty on anti-competitive practices:** E.g., in the Google search bias case, it imposed a Rs 135 crore penalty.
 - It also has the powers of a **civil court** (summons, evidence, etc.)
- **Regulate Mergers:** E.g., it approved the Walmart-Flipkart merger after evaluating concerns such as predatory pricing, deep discounting, impact on offline retailers, etc
- **Adapting to evolving challenges:** E.g., **Digital Markets Division (DMD)** was constituted by **CCI** to cope up with challenges posed by digitization to fair competition
 - Study technology and its impact on competition
 - Assisting in work relating to the draft Digital Competition Bill (DCB), etc.

Evolving Challenges before CCI

- **Digitization:** it has introduced efficiencies but, has also posed significant **challenges** eg,
 - **Tech firms as gatekeepers** controlling access between consumers and businesses.
 - > E.g., **xAI filed case against Apple's** exclusive integration of ChatGPT into iOS.
 - **Network effects:** E.g., WhatsApp's '**take-it-or-leave-it**' policy of 2021, compelling all users to accept data collection terms to leverage networking effect, was fined by CCI
 - **Data Advantage:** Big tech platforms' ability to control vast amounts of user data undermines the ability of smaller firms to compete
 - > The **European Union regulators** accused **Amazon** of misusing data from 3rd party sellers on its platform to gain an unfair advantage in retail.
 - **Ecosystem dominance:** E.g., **Apple's ecosystem** - Apple Pay, Safari browser, iCloud, Apple Music.
 - **Other Challenges:** Self-Preferencing (platforms prioritise their own products), Predatory Pricing and Deep Discounting, Tying and bundling, etc.
- **Lack of a comprehensive policy framework:** National Competition Policy was prepared in 2011, but is yet to be enforced.

- **Digital Competition Bill (DCB) Concerns:** Broad thresholds, absence of a rebuttal mechanism, and potential overlap with the **Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDP Act)**.
- **Cross-Jurisdictional Issues:** Cross-border digital markets and players require the CCI to collaborate with global regulators.
- **Resource and Capacity Gaps:** CCI faces significant **human resource vacancies** (only 113 out of 195 sanctioned posts filled) and, lack of specialized technical expertise (e.g., AI).
- **Enforcement Effectiveness:** CCI-imposed penalties (Rs. 18,512.28 crore out of Rs. 20,350.46 crore) are stayed or dismissed by appellate courts.
- **Threats to MSMEs:** A ₹2,000 crore deal value threshold (**DVT**) allows large corporations to acquire MSMEs without regulatory scrutiny.

Recent Initiatives to streamline competition

- **Competition (Amendment) Act, 2023**
 - **Deal value threshold (DVT):** To regulate Merger & Acquisition (M&As) particularly in the digital markets
 - > All M&A transactions with deal value exceeding Rs. 2000 crore are to be notified to the CCI.
 - **Settlement and Commitment Mechanisms:** Empowers CCI to accept voluntary commitments from parties in certain anti-competitive cases.
 - **Proportional Penalties:** To file an appeal against a CCI order, a mandatory deposit of 25% of the imposed penalty is now required.
- **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023:** Establishes a legal framework for safeguarding personal data and regulating data-driven practices of digital firms.

Way Forward (recommendations of the committee)

- **Digital Competition Regulation:** Use **market studies (AI, etc.)**. **Implementation of the National Competition Policy**, etc.
- **Learning from the best practices:** Such as **Digital Markets Act of the European Union** which is an ex-ante competition framework, ensures that gatekeeper behave fairly online.
- **A lower DVT for MSMEs:** It could be considered for acquisitions involving MSMEs and proactive investigations by CCI into predatory pricing by dominant online platforms
 - Ensure **data access for MSMEs** to compete with big digital firms.
- **Institutional Capacity and Resource Gaps:** Sanctioned strength of CCI must be increased, Invest in continuous training & international collaboration, etc.
- **Refining Digital Competition Bill:** To address certain concerns like its broad threshold.

3.11. INDIAN PORTS ACT, 2025

Why in the News?

The President of India has given her assent to the Indian Ports Act, 2025 which replaces the Indian Ports Act, 1908.

Indian Ports Act 2025

It seeks to **consolidate the law relating to ports, promote integrated port development**, facilitate ease of doing business and ensure optimum utilisation of India's coastline.

Key features of the Act

- **Statutory recognition to Maritime State Development Council (MSDC):** It is established by the Central Government to make recommendations on the legal framework, port sector growth, competition, efficiency, and port connectivity.
 - **Composition**
 - > Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways shall be the *ex-officio* Chairman.
 - > Ministers-in-charge of each coastal state,
 - > Secretaries in the Indian Navy and Coast Guard dealing with coastal security, and
 - > Secretary of the Union Ministry for Ports, Shipping and Waterways.

- **Statutory recognition to State Maritime Boards (SMB):** SMB administer non-major ports within their respective states.
- **Adjudicatory Mechanisms:** Each State Government must constitute a **Dispute Resolution Committee** to adjudicate disputes between ports (other than major ports)
 - **Civil courts are barred from having jurisdiction** over matters.
 - Appeals from the Committee's orders can be made to the **High Court** within sixty days.
- **Port Tariff and Charges:** For **major ports**, tariffs are fixed by the **Board of Major Port Authority or board of directors (if a company)**.
 - For ports other than **major ports**, the respective **SMB or authorized concessionaires** fix the tariffs.
- **Port officer:** The Act specifies the conservator as a port officer appointed by the state government for each port or a group of ports.
 - It possesses **powers to issue directions** regarding vessel berthing, mooring, anchoring, movement, and removal of obstructions.
- **Mega Ports:** Central Government, in consultation with State Governments, can notify criteria for classifying ports as "mega ports." A mega port retains its original status (major or non-major) and shall continue to be governed by the respective laws applicable to such port.
- **Emergency preparedness and response plan:** For safety, security, disaster management, and pollution incidents, subject to Central Government approval and audit.
- **Environmental and Pollution Control:** Mandates compliance with **International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) Convention** and **Ballast Water Management (BWM) Convention**.
- **Penalty:** Certain offences from the 1908 Act are decriminalized and made punishable with monetary penalties.
 - **Digital Integration and Data Management:** Introduces provisions for **electronic integration of port-related data with a port community system or centralized system**.
 - **Prior Clearance for Ownership Changes:** Introduces a new requirement for any port undergoing a **change in substantial ownership or effective control** to obtain **prior clearance from the Central Government**.
 - **Exclusions:** Act does not apply to specified ports, navigable rivers, aircrafts exclusively servicing military, non-commercial government, Indian Navy, Coast Guard, foreign vessels of war etc.

MARPOL and BWM Convention

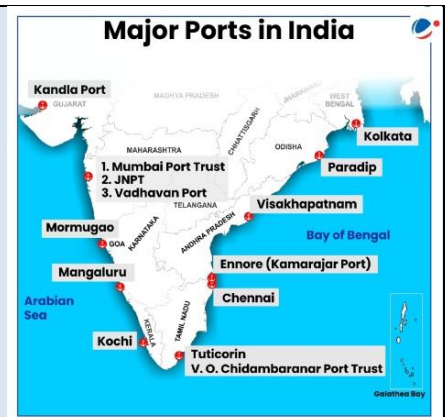
- **MARPOL** is the main international convention covering **prevention of pollution of the marine environment by ships** from operational or accidental causes.
 - **India is a signatory to this Convention.**
- **BWM convention** is a treaty to help prevent the **spread of potentially harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens in ships' ballast water**.
 - India is not a party to the Convention.
- Both treaties are adopted by **International Maritime Organisation (IMO)**.

Conclusion

The Indian Ports Act, 2025 is a landmark reform aiming to modernise port governance, promote efficiency, and align India with global maritime standards. However, concerns over need for classification of mega ports and absence of appeal against penalties levied by the conservator must be addressed. With proper checks, the Act can drive India's ambition of emerging as a top maritime nation by 2047.

Ports in India

- Presently India has **12 major ports** (**13th major port** is under construction at **Vadhavan, Palghar District, Maharashtra**) and approximately **200 non-major ports**.
 - **Major Ports:** Wholly-owned by **Central Government**
 - **Non-Major Ports:** Managed by and under the control of the **respective State Maritime Board / State Government**.
- **95% of India's trading by volume and 70% by value** is done through maritime trade.
 - Major ports handled **53% of maritime cargo traffic**, while non-major ports (including private ones like Mundra and Sikka) handled **47%**.



- Over the past decade (**FY 2014-15 to FY 2024-25**), key productivity indicators also showed substantial progress.
 - Output per Ship Berth Day (OSBD)** increased from **12,458 tonnes** to **18,304 tonnes**
 - Average Turnaround Time (TRT)** improved by **48%**, reducing from **96 hours** to **49.5 hours**
 - Idle Time (%)** dropped by approximately **29%**, from **23.1%** to **16.3%**.

Initiatives for port development

- Sagarmala (2015):** Port led development of India’s maritime sector.
- Maritime India Vision 2030:** Aimed at enhancing the performance and productivity of the maritime sector through **ports, shipping and waterways**.
- Major Ports Authority Act, 2021:** Provide for regulation, operation and planning of Major Ports in India
- FDI Policy:** Allows for **100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** in the construction and maintenance of ports and harbours, **under the automatic route**.

3.11.1. 10 YEARS OF SAGARMALA PROGRAMME

Why in the News?

Sagarmala Programme has achieved 118% growth in coastal shipping over the last decade, reducing logistics costs and emissions.

About Sagarmala Programme

- Ministry:** Launched in 2015 by Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways (MoPSW).
- Aim:** To accelerate economic development in the country by harnessing the potential of India’s **11,098 km long coastline** and **14,500 km of potentially navigable waterways**.
- Key Objective:**
 - Reduce logistics cost for Export-Import (EXIM)** and domestic trade with minimal infrastructure investment,
 - Enhanced domestic waterways** (inland and coastal) in the multi-modal transport,
 - Create jobs and develop skills** in ports and maritime sector.
- Funding Structure:** **Public-Private Partnership, Internal & Extra Budgetary Resources** by MoPSW, **Grant-in-Aid** for projects with **high social impact and Equity** through Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs).
- Sagarmala 2.0:** Launched in 2025 with Focus Areas including Shipbuilding, repair, breaking, and recycling and port modernization.

5 Components of SAGARMALA Programme



Port Modernization & New Port Development: Upgrade existing ports and build new Green-field ports.



Port Connectivity Enhancement: Strengthen road, rail, waterways, and pipeline links for smooth cargo flow.



Port-Linked Industrialization: Develop Coastal Economic Zones and industrial clusters near ports.



Coastal Community Development: Boost skills, jobs, tourism, fisheries, and local livelihoods.



Coastal Shipping & Inland Waterways Promotion: Promote cargo/passenger movement via coastal shipping and inland waterways.

- Institutional Framework for Implementing Sagarmala Programme:**
 - Apex body:** National Sagarmala Apex Committee (NSAC) Chaired by Minister of Shipping for policy direction and oversight of the Programme.
 - Sagarmala Coordination and Steering Committee (SCSC):** Under chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary to provide coordination between ministries, state governments and agencies to implement the projects.

- **State Sagarmala Committee:** Chaired by Chief Minister / Minister in Charge of Ports for Coordinating and facilitating Sagarmala related projects and take up matters on priority as decided in NSAC.
- **State Maritime Boards/State Port Departments:** They shall service the State Sagarmala Committee and also be, inter alia, responsible for coordination and implementation.
- **Sagarmala Development Company Limited:** It is set up under Companies Act, 2013 to **assist the State level/zone level Special Purpose Vehicles.**
 - > It is now **renamed as Sagarmala Finance Corporation Limited (SMFCL)**, India's first Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) in the maritime sector.

Key achievements of Sagarmala Programme



Coastal Community Development:
Projects worth ₹5.79 lakh crores identified, with ₹1.41 lakh crore worth of projects completed.



Boost to waterways: 700% surge in inland waterway cargo movement, easing congestion on roads and railways.



Improved connectivity: 40 lakh+ passengers benefited from **Ro-Pax ferries**, enhancing coastal connectivity.



Port development: 9 Indian ports are among **the world's top 100**, with Vizag in top 20 container ports globally.



Average Port Turnaround Time: Approx. 2 days (Significant improvement from average of 4 days in 2014-15).

Various initiatives taken under Sagarmala Programme

- **Sagarmala Startup Innovation Initiative (S2I2)** launched in **March 2025** to drive **Research, Innovation, Startups, and Entrepreneurship (RISE)** in maritime technology.
- **Center of Excellence in Maritime and Ship Building (CEMS):** It was set up in 2017 by Ministry of Shipping in collaboration with Siemens and Indian Register of Shipping (IRS) under Sagarmala Programme.
- **Coastal Berth Scheme:** It aims to provide financial support to ports and state governments for creation of infrastructure for movement of cargo and passenger by sea or national waterways.

Conclusion

Sagarmala 2.0 will position India as a hub for maritime innovation and sustainability thereby steering towards a globally competitive maritime ecosystem that fuels economic growth, job creation, and **Blue Economy**.

3.12. PRADHAN MANTRI GRAM SADAK YOJANA (PMGSY)

Why in the News?

The Parliamentary Standing Committee in its report has flagged slow progress of work under PMGSY in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected areas.

About PMGSY

- **Ministry:** Ministry of Rural Development
- **Type:** Launched in December 2000 as **Centrally sponsored scheme**
- **Objective:**
 - To provide all-weather road connectivity to eligible unconnected rural habitations as a strategy for poverty alleviation
 - 62,500 km of all-weather roads to be constructed
 - Bridges will be built/modernized along the alignment of these roads

Cost Sharing Pattern of PMGSY IV	
All States and Union Territories (UTs) with legislature except North-Eastern & Himalayan States.	60% Centre and 40% State/UT
UT of Jammu & Kashmir, North-Eastern and Himalayan States	90% Centre and 10% State/ UT
UTs without legislature	100% Centrally funded

- **Habitation Population Criteria for PMGSY:** 500+ in Plains; 250+ in North-Eastern & Hill States and 100+ in LWE Affected Districts as per Census 2011.

Salient Features of PMGSY:

- **Institutional Arrangements:**
 - **National Rural Infrastructure Development Agency (NRIDA)** provides technical & managerial support.
 - **State Rural Roads Development Agencies (SRRDAs)** for state-level implementation.
- **Decentralized Planning:** Full involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions, MLAs, and MPs.
- **Monitoring and Grievance Redressal Systems:**
 - **OMMAS (Online Management, Monitoring, and Accounting System):** Web-based system developed by C-DAC for PMGSY to enhance transparency and accountability in road construction projects.
 - **eMARG Platform:** Uses geo-tagged photos from its mobile app to verify road maintenance work for payments and monitor contractor performance.
 - **Grievance Redressal: “Meri Sadak” App** to address concerns related to slow pace, abandoned work or bad quality.
- **Use of New materials/Green technologies:**
 - Fly Ash, Lime, Polymers etc. for soil ecognizedn
 - Portland Cement Concrete for White topping
 - Cold Mix Asphalt for lower PM10 emissions and reduced energy consumption than Hot Mix Asphalt.
 - Waste Plastic as a modifier for bituminous hot mixes.
 - Coir geo-textiles are used for improvement of sub-grade soil strength in road pavements and stabilization of side slopes.
 - Use of Iron, Copper and Steel slag increases resistance of the road to wear and tear.
 - Bioengineering e.g. Jute/Bamboo for slope ecognizedn.

Observations of Committee about Scheme:

Issue	Observation	Recommendation
• Low Bidding of Tenders	• Contractors often quote 25–30% below minimum bid, raising quality concerns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form committee to assess impact of low bidding on road quality. • Keep aside difference between minimum bid & quoted bid as security, which shall be released only after quality compliance.
• Poor Quality of Construction of Roads and poor maintenance	• Non-compliance with norms, use of poor materials, and failing to withstand weather, traffic, monsoons etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Rural Development (DoRD) must enforce strict adherence to quality norms. • Need for Stronger monitoring and accountability, shortlisting and blacklisting erring contractors.
• Linkage of Unconnected Habitation	• Roads often end at village periphery and many small settlements (Desam, Dhanis, Tolas, Majras, Hamlets) remain 2–3 km inside, missing connectivity benefits.	• DoRD should review road connectivity policy to ensure roads reach actual unconnected habitations, not just village peripheries.
• Lapses in Coordination between Centre and State	• Projects often face delays due to logistical issues or late fund release by Centre/ States.	• DoRD to devise a better cohesive mode of coordination along with an effective monitoring mechanism.
• Slow Progress in LWE Areas	• Pending work under Road Connectivity Project for Left Wing Extremism Areas (RCPLWEA) despite extension of deadline to March 2025.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges like insurgency, tough terrain, law-and-order issues, and forest clearances can be addressed through better planning, stakeholder coordination, and ecognized agencies like BRO. • Adopt innovative, area-specific solutions to avoid further delays and ensure timely completion.

Conclusion

There is a close link between rural connectivity and socio-economic aspects, such as, economic growth, employment, education and health care. Effective implementation of PMGSY will bring rapid sustainable development and socio-economic transformation in rural India.

3.13. 100TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF MS SWAMINATHAN

Why in the News?

Prime Minister addressed the M.S. Swaminathan Centenary International Conference in New Delhi.

More on the News

- The theme of the conference is “**Evergreen Revolution: The Pathway to Biohappiness**”, reflecting Swaminathan’s lifelong dedication to food security.
- The “**M. S. Swaminathan Award for Food and Peace**” was instituted in his honor.
 - This international award will be presented to individuals from developing countries who have made significant contributions in the field of food security.
 - The first award was conferred to **Nigerian scientist Prof. Ademola A. Adenle**.

Key contribution of MS Swaminathan

- **Green Revolution Architect (1960s–70s):** Focused on **increasing food production** through the adoption of advanced breeding & modern techniques.
 - He along with **Norman Borlaug** initiated a breeding program that incorporated dwarfing genes into wheat, producing shorter, stronger plants that boosted yields.
 - Introduced semi-dwarf Mexican wheat (**Sonora, Lerma Rojo 64**) and high-yielding **Indica** rice varieties.
 - Played a key role in the development of **Pusa Basmati** (1989), which was the world’s first semi-dwarf and high-yielding basmati variety.
- **Championing the Evergreen Revolution:** Swaminathan supported the Green Revolution but cautioned against its side effects like chemical overuse, monoculture, and soil damage. He proposed the “**Evergreen Revolution**” for lasting productivity without ecological harm.
 - This represented a **paradigm shift from a commodity-centric to a “systems approach”**.
- **Ecological Foundations and Practices**
 - Advocated **Integrated Pest Management (IPM)** and **Integrated Nutrient Management (INM)** to reduce chemical reliance and maintain soil fertility.
 - Stressed **rainwater conservation** and **renewable energy** (e.g., biogas, solar, wind) in farming.
 - Focused on **climate-resilient crops** (drought/salt-tolerant) and championed **millet**s (**Shree Anna**), demonstrating foresight on climate adaptation.
- **Underlined biodiversity conservation:** By influencing acts like the **Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers’ Rights Act – 2001** and the **Biological Diversity Act-2002**.
- **Introduced the idea of ‘biohappiness’:** Biohappiness is the state of well-being and fulfilment that arises when biodiversity is

Evergreen Revolution

- It is **pro-nature and pro-poor**, linking livelihood security with ecological security.
- Key components include **Ecoagriculture, Biovillages, Village Knowledge Centres, and Ethics and Equities in economic, social, and gender divides**.

Key Achievements and Prizes

- **Bharat Ratna (2024, posthumously)**.
- **Padma Shri (1967), Padma Bhushan (1972), Padma Vibhushan (1987)**, Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Award (1961), Lal Bahadur Shastri National Award (1999), Indira Gandhi Prize (2001).
- **World Food Prize (1987):** Inaugural recipient.
- **Ramon Magsaysay Award (1971)**.
- **Albert Einstein World Science Award (1986)**.
- Named “**Father of Economic Ecology**” by the United Nations Environment Programme.
- **International Orders:** Order of Golden Heart (Philippines), Order of Agricultural Merit (France), Order of the Golden Ark (Netherlands), Order of Cambodia.

conserved and utilized in ways that enhance human health, nutrition, and livelihoods, creating harmony between people and nature.

- **Women in Agriculture:** The Women Farmers’ Entitlements Bill, 2011, a private member bill, was introduced by MS Swaminathan.
 - It aims to provide for the gender specific needs of women farmers, to protect their legitimate needs and entitlements and to empower them with rights over agricultural land, water resources etc.
- **Focus on Nutritional Security:** Advocated shifting from “food security” to “nutrition security,” targeting protein hunger, calorie hunger, and hidden hunger (micronutrient deficiencies).
 - Promoted bio-fortified and nutrition-rich crops.
- **Leading National Agricultural Initiatives**
 - Chaired **National Commission on Farmers (NCF)** from 2004-2006, producing five reports on farmer distress. A key recommendation was setting **Minimum Support Price (MSP) at least 50% above the weighted average cost of production.**
 - He founded the **National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS)** in 1990 for unbiased agricultural policy guidance.

Conclusion

MS Swaminathan worked until his passing to empower small farmers, particularly rural women, through economic growth strategies. His dedication to science, society, and nature left an indelible mark on global agricultural development and human well-being.

3.14. NEWS IN SHORTS

3.14.1. SOVEREIGN CREDIT RATINGS

S&P upgraded India’s long-term Sovereign Credit Rating to ‘**BBB**’ from ‘**BBB-**’ and its short-term rating to ‘**A-2**’ from ‘**A-3**’, with a **Stable Outlook**.

- This marks the **India’s first sovereign upgrade by S&P after 2007** when India was elevated to investment grade at BBB-.
- The upgrade reflects India’s commitment to fiscal consolidation, improved quality of public spending, and strong corporate, financial and external balance sheets.

About Sovereign Credit Ratings (SCR)

- It refers to an **independent evaluation of a country’s creditworthiness**, and seeks to quantify issuers’ ability to meet debt obligations.
- **Major SCR agencies:** S&P, Fitch and Moody’s.
- **Rating Grades:** SCR broadly rate countries as either **investment grade or speculative grade**, with the latter projected to have a **higher likelihood of default on borrowings**.
 - The **Investment grade** rating ranges from **BBB- to AAA for S&P and Fitch** and **Baa3 to Aaa for Moody’s**.
- **Significance:** When favourable, these can **facilitate countries access to global capital markets and foreign investment, and reduce borrowing cost**.
- **Issues:** There are **concerns over bias** in rating processes, **conflicts of interest**, and **rating ceiling**.
 - Rating ceiling relates to the notion that a **corporate issuer is not rated higher than the country** that it resides within, constraining growth of a country’s domestic marketplace.

3.14.2. GIFT CITY-LIKE FINANCIAL CENTERS

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance has recommended for **development of more GIFT City-like Financial Centers** in major metro cities.

- India’s **first** and only **International Financial Services Centre (IFSC)** was established within **Gujarat International Financial Tec City (GIFT City)**.

About GIFT City IFSC (Gandhinagar, Gujarat)

- It was established as a **Special Economic Zone (SEZ)** in 2015. Designated as a **non-resident zone under Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA)**.
 - IFSC is a jurisdiction that provides onshore and offshore **financial services to non-residents and residents (institutions)**, in a foreign currency.
- **Functions:**
 - **Favorable tax structure:** Offers **cross-border** financial products and services within a **competitive tax environment**.
 - **Trusted regulatory environment:** Provides **onshore talent** with an offshore **technological and regulatory framework**.
 - **Ease of doing business:** Facilitates movement of **international financial services** based on **global standards**, promotes inbound and outbound **investment** to India.
- **Regulatory body:** International Financial Services Centres Authority (**IFSCA**) regulates financial products, financial services and financial institutions in IFSCs in India.
 - Established in **2020** under the **IFSCA Act, 2019**.
- **Current Status:** GIFT-IFSC ranked **46th** in the **Global Financial Centres Index** (a 5-rank improvement); ranked **45th** in the **FinTech rankings** (a 4-rank improvement).

Committee's Recommendations

	Create satellite financial innovation zones/ fintech clusters in major cities to boost growth, talent, and investment (e.g., China's multiple hubs).
	Streamline policies by enhancing transparency, financial literacy, digital infrastructure, and regulatory sandboxes.
	Others: Simplify taxation, reduce compliance burden etc.

3.14.3. INDIA'S RETAIL INFLATION

India's retail inflation moderated to 8 year low of 1.55% in July, 2025. Measured by the **All India Consumer Price Index (CPI)**, it shows the **lowest year-on-year inflation** rate after June, 2017.

- Further, Year-on-Year inflation rate based on **All India Consumer Food Price Index (CFPI)** or **Food Inflation** stood at -1.76% in July 2025, lowest after January 2019.

Reason for the Decline

- **Favourable base effect:** Refers to the **impact of the corresponding reference year on current growth estimates**.
- **Decline in inflation:** In items like Pulses and Products, Transport and communication, Vegetables, Cereal and products, Education, etc.

About CPI

- **Meaning:** It the **change over time in general level of prices of goods and services** that **households** acquire for **consumption**.
- **Significance:** Widely used **macroeconomic indicator of inflation**, tool for **inflation targeting** by governments and central banks, **deflators in national accounts**, **indexing dearness allowance** to employees.
- **Published by:** **Central Statistical Office (CSO)** on **12th of every month**.
- **Components:** Includes 4 CPI numbers at the national level, namely:
 - CPI for Industrial Workers (IW),
 - CPI for Agricultural Labourers (AL),
 - CPI for Rural Labourers (RL) and

- CPI for Urban Non-Manual Employees (UNME).
- **Base Year for CPI:** 2012
- **Comparison with Wholesale Price Index (WPI):** WPI captures the inflation at the **wholesale level**, and differs with CPI in terms of their **weighing patterns**.
 - **Food** has a larger weight in CPI while **fuel group** has greater weight in WPI.

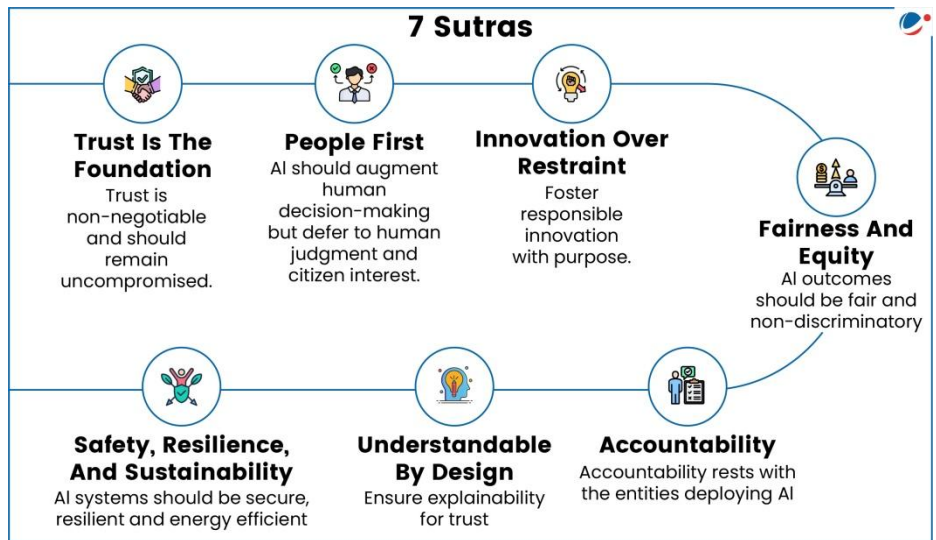
3.14.4. RBI'S FREE-AI VISION FOR FINANCIAL SECTOR

RBI committee unveiled Framework for Responsible and Ethical Enablement of Artificial Intelligence (FREE-AI) to **balance innovation with risk management in financial services**.

About FREE-AI Vision

- **Aim:** Ensuring safe, fair and accountable AI adoption in India's financial sector
- **7 Sutras:** Foundational principles for AI adoption (refer to the infographics)
- **Dual Approach:**

- **Fostering Innovation**
 - > Shared infrastructure for **democratized data and compute access**, which may be **integrated with the AI Kosh** established under the IndiaAI Mission.
 - > **AI Innovation Sandbox** for testing **indigenous** financial AI models
 - > Create **AI policy** for regulatory guidance
 - > Institutional **capacity building** (boards and workforce)
 - > **Relaxed compliance** for low-risk AI solutions to facilitate inclusion and other priorities



- **Mitigating Risk:**
 - > **Board-approved AI policies** by Regulated Entities
 - > Inclusion of **AI-related aspects in product approval processes**, consumer protection frameworks and audits
 - > **Strengthened cybersecurity** and incident reporting
 - > **Robust AI lifecycle governance**
 - > **Consumer awareness** when they interact with AI

Why FREE-AI Vision Matters?

- **AI's Growing Impact:** The financial sector's AI investment is projected to reach:
 - **₹8 lakh crore (\$97 billion) by 2027** across banking, insurance, capital markets, and payments
 - **₹1.02 lakh crore (\$12 billion) by 2033 for GenAI alone**, growing at 28-34% annually
- **Emerging Complex Risks:** AI introduces **data privacy, algorithmic bias, market manipulation, cybersecurity vulnerabilities**, and governance failures that **traditional risk frameworks struggle to address**.
 - These risks could **undermine market integrity, erode consumer trust, and create systemic vulnerabilities** without proper management.

3.14.5. SMALL FINANCE BANK UNIVERSAL LICENSE

The Reserve Bank has granted 'in-principle' approval to AU Small Finance Bank for **transitioning from a small finance bank (SFB) to a universal bank**, for the first time in a decade.

- A Universal Banking Licence **permits a financial institution to offer a wide array of banking services**, including commercial and investment banking, under a single umbrella.
- Last time, the universal banking licences were granted **in 2014 to Bandhan Bank and IDFC Bank**, which later became IDFC First Bank.

Eligibility criteria for SFB to transition into a Universal bank:

- **Status:** Scheduled status for a minimum period of five years.
- **Stock Listing:** Shares of the bank should have been listed on a recognized stock exchange.
- **Net Worth:** Having a minimum net worth of ₹1,000 crore.
- **CRAR:** meeting the prescribed CRAR requirements for SFBs
- **Financial Health:**
 - **Profitability:** Should have net profits in the last two Financial Years.
 - **Asset Quality:** Gross non-performing assets (G-NPA) and net NPA (N-NPA) must be less than or equal to 3% and 1%, respectively, over the last two FYs.
- **Promoter Requirements:** No addition of new promoters or changes to existing promoters during the transition.
- **Preference:** SFBs with a diversified loan portfolio will be preferred.

Small Finance Bank (SFB)



Genesis: Announced in the Union budget of 2014-15.



Objective: Financial Inclusion.



Registration: Registered as a public limited company under the Companies Act, 2013.



Licensing: Licensed and governed under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.



Capital Requirement: 200 crore (except for some SFBs)



Eligible promoters: Resident individuals/professionals with 10 years of experience in banking and finance.

3.14.6. RBI TIGHTENS CO-LENDING NORMS

Recently, RBI issued revised **directions for Co-lending Arrangements (CLA)** between banks and Non-bank Financial Companies (NBFCs) under various provisions of the **Banking Regulation Act (1949)**, **Reserve Bank of India Act (1934)**, and **National Housing Bank Act (1987)**.

What is co-lending?

- Under CLAs, **Regulated entities (Res)** can enter into a **lending arrangement with other Res** for extension of credit to the borrowers, **subject to compliance with the extant prudential regulations**.

Key highlights of the revised Directions

- **Minimum share:** Each RE to retain a **minimum 10% share of the loans**.
- **Priority Sector Lending (PSL) status:** Each lender can claim **PSL status** for its share under co-lending, if the loan qualifies as priority sector.
- **Uniform asset classification system:** If one lender tags a loan as Non-performing Asset (NPA), other co-lenders must do the same.
- **Blended interest rate:** Interest rate charged to borrowers will be calculated based on the weighted average of each RE's internal rate, proportionate to their funding contribution.

Significance of Co-lending



Banks: Wider reach through NBFCs, easier PSL compliance



NBFCs: Shared credit risk, cheaper capital access



Consumers: Cheaper credit, flexible and customized loan options

3.14.7. SAFETY IN THE CIVIL AVIATION SECTOR

Parliamentary Standing Committee released Report on Review of Safety in the Civil Aviation Sector. The report examines **civil aviation safety environment and effectiveness of Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)** amidst increasing growth of civil aviation in India.

Key Highlights of Report

Key Areas for Systemic Improvement	Issues	Recommendations
Enhancing Regulatory Autonomy and Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DGCA Staff Shortage: Shortfall of around 50% and slow and inflexible recruitment process through UPSC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time-bound plan to grant the DGCA full administrative and financial autonomy. Establish a specialized recruitment mechanism or body decoupling DGCA recruitment from UPSC.
Mitigating Air Traffic Controller (ATCO) Fatigue and Staffing Deficits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persistent ATCO shortages and high workload. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immediate development of Fatigue Risk Management System, a comprehensive staffing audit and expand training capacity.
Strengthening Surveillance and Enforcement Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large backlog of unresolved safety findings, especially in airworthiness & aerodrome standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time-bound mechanism for deficiency closure and stronger enforcement actions, including financial penalties.
Addressing Recurring Operational Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persistent incidents due to inadequate root-cause analysis despite a dedicated Occurrence Review Board. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed root-cause analysis for each incident and focused remedial programs.
Developing Domestic Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) Capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges to domestic MRO companies including high taxation on imported parts and infrastructural limitations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote domestic MRO sector: Rationalize tax structure, provide fiscal and infrastructural incentives, establish national aviation skill development mission etc.
Establishing Just Culture and Whistleblower Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fear of penalties may deter reporting, undermining safety oversight. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institute a comprehensive whistleblower protection framework.

To read more about the Aviation Safety in India, refer to Article 3.3. Aviation Safety in June 2025 Monthly Current Affairs Magazine.

3.14.8. STEEL SCRAP RECYCLING POLICY (SSRP)



Standing Committee on Coal, Mines and Steel recently released Report on Steel Scrap Recycling Policy (SSRP).

SSRP was notified by Ministry of Steel (MoS) in 2019, with following **objectives:**

- **Promotes Circular Economy (6Rs – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Recover, Redesign & Remanufacture).**
- **Formal & scientific collection, dismantling & processing activities** for end-of-life products that are sources of recyclable ferrous, nonferrous & metallic scraps
- **Creation of Mechanism for treating waste streams** and residues produced from dismantling and shredding facilities, etc.

Key Highlights of the Report

Issue Highlighted	Relevant Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of comprehensive data base on steel scrap sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a robust database of steel scrap. • Create and maintain a dedicated portal with updated data on generation, usage, policies, programmes, and benefits. • Include comparisons with other countries.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of designated Nodal Ministry for steel scrap matters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Steel to be the nodal agency. • It should Collect, compile, update, and share all steel scrap data (state-wise, sector-wise, imports, exports).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of formal scrap markets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing a roadmap to formalize the informal scrap sector. • Organise ‘Kabadiwallahs’ and dismantlers into cooperatives for economic and social benefits.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of Industry status to steel scrap recycling sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accord ‘Industry status’ to the scrap recycling sector to attract domestic/foreign investment, generate jobs, and boost skill development.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of skill development and certification for scrap workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) to launch certification courses on scrap handling. • Train workforce and entrepreneurs for future formal sector needs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of obsolete technology in scrap processing centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentivise centres (non-fiscal) to adopt modern technologies like: AI-powered optical sensors, Blockchain for scrap traceability & Digital platforms to connect aggregators with steel mills.

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4. SECURITY






4.1. HIGH-POWERED DEMOGRAPHY MISSION

Why in the News?

In his Independence Day address, the Prime Minister announced the launch of a High-Powered Demography Mission aimed at addressing the challenge of illegal immigration.

More on the News

- Illegal immigrants are those who enter the country without valid travel documents in a clandestine and surreptitious manner.
- There is no officially verified estimate regarding the number of illegal immigrants currently residing in India.
 - In 2016, government had informed that there are around 20 million illegal Bangladeshi migrants staying in India.

Factors Facilitating Illegal Immigration/Infiltration into India				
 Geographical	 Socio-Economic	 Political/ Administrative	 Historical/ Cultural	 Security/ Strategic
Porous and riverine borders (Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar); dense forests and hills, etc.	Poverty, unemployment, religious persecution, etc. in neighbouring countries	Corruption (Easy access to forged IDs), political patronage (vote-bank politics), etc.	Partition (1947) & 1971 war migrations; shared culture make detection difficult.	Infiltration by militants (Pakistan-backed), smuggling networks, poor surveillance infrastructure.

Key concerns associated with Illegal Immigration and Infiltration

National Security Threats

- **Terror Links and Radicalisation: Extremist groups** may exploit **Illegal Immigrant**, such as the Rohingya, for recruitment.
 - India's border also faces threats from **smuggling, human trafficking, and other cross-border criminal activities.**
- **Demographic Shifts and Social Cohesion:** States bordering Bangladesh, such as Assam, have experienced **significant demographic changes** due to the influx of illegal immigrants.
 - Presence of immigrants may lead to **ethnic/religious friction**. **E.g.** Threat to Assamese identity due to illegal migration from Bangladesh.

Socio-Economic Burdens

- **Strain on Public Services/Overburdening of Welfare Schemes:** E.g., healthcare, housing, etc.
- **Distortion in the Labour Market: Displacing local workers** and **disrupting wage structures** (often work at lower wages).
- **Other:** Illegal settlers encroach on agricultural and forest lands, etc.

Initiatives taken to Curb Illegal Immigration/ Infiltration in India

- **Legislative and Policy Measures**
 - **Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025:** Empowers authorities to detect, detain and deport illegal immigrants.
 - **National Register of Citizens (NRC):** Updated in **Assam** under **Supreme Court** supervision.
 - **Other:** Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019, etc.
- **Border Management Initiatives**
 - **Border Fencing & Floodlighting** (along Indo-Bangladesh and Indo-Pakistan borders)
 - **Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS)**, use of smart technologies (radars, sensors, drones)
- **Institutional and Administrative Measures**
 - **Foreigners Tribunals (FTs):** These are quasi-judicial bodies established through the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order of 1964 under Section 3 of the Foreigners' Act of 1946 to decide cases of illegal immigration and nationality.

Way Forward: Measures to curb Illegal Infiltration/Immigration

- **Security & Intelligence Strengthening:** E.g., **Integrated Intelligence Grid**, seamless coordination among IB, BSF, state police, and local intelligence units.
- **Strengthen Border Management:** E.g., Specialized floating Border outpost, UAV monitoring in river stretches, etc.
- **Enacting a National Refugee Law:** India needs a **national refugee law to legally distinguish between genuine refugees and illegal economic migrants.**
 - India is not a signatory to the **1951 UN Refugee Convention** or its 1967 Protocol.
- **Formal Bilateral Repatriation Agreements:** Facilitates the return of their nationals residing illegally.
- **Other:**
 - **Involve international organizations** like the **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** for support in managing illegal immigration.
 - Expediently issue **National Identity Cards (NIDs)**
 - Maintaining Biometric Records of Illegal Immigrants/ Refugees

Conclusion

The High-Powered Demography Mission is a timely step to counter the long-standing challenge of illegal infiltration. Its success will depend on stronger border fencing and surveillance, faster Foreigners Tribunal decisions, bilateral repatriation agreements, and robust national ID systems.

4.2. INCREASED PRIVATE SECTOR SHARE IN DEFENCE PRODUCTION

Why in the News?

According to the data from the **Department of Defence Production**, the private sector share in defence production **hits record of 23% in FY 2024-25**, marking **third consecutive year of increasing private sector involvement.**

Reasons behind increased share of Private sector in Defence Production

- **Institutional reforms**
 - Creation of **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and Department of Military Affairs** to enhance synergy within the armed forces and promote the use of indigenous equipment by the Services.

 **Data Bank**

Defence Production in India

- **3 lakh crore India's target** in defence production by 2029.
- **223% surge in defence production** between 2014-15 and 2024-25.
- **65% defence equipment** now manufactured domestically, from **earlier (65-70% import).**
- **34 times increase in defence exports** from India during 2013-14 and 2024-25.
- **>100 export destinations with leading buyers including the USA, France, and Armenia.**

- **Policy and Regulatory Reforms**
 - **Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP-2020):** Prioritizes domestic procurement, opening larger contracts to private players and strengthening indigenous manufacturing.
 - **Liberalized Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Policy:** Since 2020, up to **74% FDI allowed under Automatic Route** (and up to **100% through the Government Route**), enabling global defence majors to transfer technology to Indian firms (e.g., Tata-Airbus partnership for C-295 aircraft).
 - **Positive Indigenization Lists (PILs):** Imports of over 5,500 items are restricted, mandating domestic sourcing and creating assured demand for private industry.
 - **Make in India Initiative:** This flagship campaign promotes **indigenous manufacturing and encourages private companies** to invest in **defence production**, boosting private sector involvement. **E.g., SRIJAN Portal.**
- **Industrial Infrastructure and Budget Support**
 - **Defence Industrial Corridors:** Dedicated manufacturing hubs established in **Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu with incentives**, infrastructure, and investment-friendly policies attracting private sector investments.
 - **Budgetary Prioritization:** For FY2025-26, the **Ministry of Defence has earmarked 75% of its modernization budget (₹1.11 lakh crore)** specifically for procurement from Indian firms.
- **Innovation and Ease of Doing Business**
 - **Innovation Ecosystem (iDEX & ADITI):** Startups and MSMEs receive grants and contracts to develop **cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence, drones, and quantum systems, fostering advanced indigenous innovation.**
 - **Ease of Doing Business Measures:** Processes simplified by extending license validity, de-licensing many defence items, and implementing digital export approval systems, reducing entry barriers for private companies.

Significance of Indigenous Defence Production

 <p>Strategic autonomy and national security Reduced vulnerability to supply-chain disruption in times of conflict.</p>	 <p>Operational readiness Easier modernization and adaptation to evolving threats.</p>	 <p>Technological Limited risk of hidden vulnerabilities (like backdoors), positive spillovers of technologies in civilian sectors, etc.</p>	 <p>Diplomacy and soft power Strategic influence in Global South through arms exports.</p>	 <p>Economic benefits Reduced import bill, job creation, etc.</p>
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Challenges in India's Defence Production

- **Production lag:** Industry is way off the target set by the government for exports. E.g., HAL losing the Malaysian LCA contract and Garden Reach Shipbuilders losing a tender in the Philippines.
- **Industrial and manufacturing:** Heavy **reliance on imports for raw materials, high-tech components**, and electronic systems, limited production capacity and demand affecting scalability, etc.
- **Dependence on imports:** Continued reliance on **imported armaments, components, and machine parts exposes India to supply chain disruptions** (e.g., S-400 delays due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict).
- **Technological:** Foreign **Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) are protective of intellectual property and provide limited technology transfer**, hindering local innovation and advanced manufacturing capabilities.
 - Limited technological depth in **emerging defence technologies** including AI, hypersonics, cyber warfare, and stealth tech, etc.

- **Funding Gaps:** Defence budget still remains below the **3% benchmark, with over half spent on personnel costs**, leaving limited funds for **modernization and R&D**.
- **Dependence on foreign technology:** Even with “Make in India,” India remains dependent on **global partners like the US and France** for **cutting-edge technologies**.

Way Forward

- **Enhance and Prioritize Indigenous R&D:** Significantly **increase investment in defence R&D to at least 2% of GDP**, matching global standards.
- **Shift to Absorption of Technology (AoT):** Promote joint ventures with foreign **OEMs that include technology sharing, co-development, and co-manufacturing**.
- **Focus on Skill Development and Human Resources:** Develop specialized **defence education, vocational training, and technical skill programs** aligned with industry and R&D needs.
- **Boost Export Competitiveness:** Encourage **DPSUs and private companies to jointly bid** in foreign contracts for stronger competitiveness.
- **Foster Innovation:** Provide **sustained handholding, funding, and capacity-building support** to smaller enterprises to integrate them **into defence supply chains**.
- **Vijay Raghavan Committee:** Empower a PMO-led Defence Technology **Council to oversee defence technology decision, Refocus DRDO primarily on research and development, Increase private sector** and academia participation in defence R&D.

Conclusion

The coming decade offers an opportunity to position India not just as a manufacturer, but as an innovator shaping the future of warfare technologies, from AI-driven systems to space and cyber defence. By leveraging its demographic dividend, deepening international collaborations on equitable terms, and cultivating a vibrant ecosystem of startups and MSMEs, India can redefine its role in the **global defence value chain**.

4.3. SUDARSHAN CHAKRA MISSION

Why in the News?

Prime Minister announced the launch of **Mission Sudarshan Chakra** during the 79th Independence Day celebrations.

More on the news

- The mission seeks to develop **Air Defence system aimed at neutralising enemy defence infiltrations and enhancing India’s offensive capabilities**.
- **Additionally,** The Indian Air Force is pressing for rapid progress on **Project Kusha**, an indigenous initiative led by **DRDO** to develop a **long-range air defense missile system**.

About Sudarshan Chakra Mission

- **Objectives:**
 - To strengthen India’s deterrent and offensive capabilities by expanding, strengthening and modernising **national security shield**.
 - It will be part of **Multi-Layered Missile Defence System** of India.
- **Features:**
 - **Timeline:** Mission to be completed by **2035**.
 - **Comprehensive Protection:** It will **safeguard India's strategic, civilian, and religious sites/assets** (e.g. hospitals, railways).
 - It will cover all public places with an expanded nationwide security shield across air, land and sea.

Project Kusha

- **Developing Body:** **DRDO** and **Bharat Electronics Limited**.
- **Aim:** an indigenous initiative to develop a **long-range air defense missile system**.
 - Seeks to develop **Long-Range Surface-to-Air Missiles or LR-SAM**.
- **Expected by:** 2028–2029.

- > The mission will be integrating advanced surveillance, cyber protection, and physical infrastructure safeguards.
- > It will be a system for **targeted precise action**.
- **Indigenous technology:** It will be entirely researched, developed and manufactured in India.
- **Air Superiority:** Provides protective cover for ground troops.
- **Deterrence Effect:** Creates a strong deterrent against potential enemy aggression.
- **Self-Reliance:** The mission will promote self-reliance in defence modernisation.

Conclusion

The Sudarshan Chakra Mission epitomizes the blend of India’s cultural legacy and modern technological excellence, reinforcing the nation’s resolve to proactively safeguard its sovereignty.

To know more about Air Defence System (ADS) refer to the Articles 4.2. Defence Technologies in Operation Sindoor and 4.6. Golden Dome in May 2025 Monthly Current Affairs Magazine.

Related News: DRDO successfully conducts maiden flight-tests of Integrated Air Defence Weapon System (IADWS)

IADWS is expected to offer multiple layers of protection by **combining surveillance, threat identification, and air defence systems**.

About IADWS

- **Key Components: Indigenous Quick Reaction Surface to Air Missiles (QRSAM):** Developed by DRDO.
 - It is a short-range (5 to 30 km range) SAM system designed to protect moving armoured columns from aerial attacks. It is configured on mobile platform and is capable of providing air defence on the move.
 - **Advanced Very Short Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS) missiles:** Developed by Research Centre Imarat (RCI).
 - > It is a **Man Portable Air Defence System (MANPADS)** designed to neutralize low-altitude aerial threats at short ranges.
 - **A high-power laser-based Directed Energy Weapon (DEW):** Developed by Centre for High Energy Systems and Sciences.
 - > **Laser-DEW** can **engage targets at the speed of light** and use an intense laser beam to cut through the target.
- **Command Centre:** Integrated operation of all the weapon system components is controlled by a **Centralised Command and Control Centre** developed by Defence Research & Development Laboratory (DRDL).

4.4. NEWS IN SHORTS

4.4.1. AGNI-5

India successfully test-fired Agni-5 Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM). The launch was carried out under the Strategic Forces Command (SFC).

- SFC forms part of **India’s Nuclear Command Authority** and is responsible for the management and administration of the country's **tactical and strategic nuclear weapons stockpile**.

About Agni-5

- It is a Nuclear-capable **Surface-to-Surface Ballistic Missile (SSBM)** and is powered by a **three-stage solid fuel engine**.
- **Range:** Over **5,000 km**.
- **Developer:** Developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
 - Agni is **one of the five missile types** developed under the **Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP)**.

> Other missiles developed under IGMDP include Prithvi, Trishul, Nag and Akash.

- **Significance:** Places India among few nations (US, Russia, China, France) with Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicle (MIRV)-capable IRBMs.

Surface-to-Surface Ballistic Missile (SSBM)



Rocket-powered initially, then follows an **unpowered ballistic trajectory**.



Can carry **nuclear or conventional warheads**.



Range types: Short (<1,000 km), Medium (1,000–3,000 km), Intermediate (3,000–5,500 km), Long/Intercontinental (>5,500 km).

4.4.2. EXERCISES IN NEWS

- **SLINEX:** Indian Naval Ships INS *Rana* (a Guided Missile Destroyer) and INS *Jyoti* (Fleet Tanker) arrived at Colombo to participate in the 12th edition of Sri Lanka India Naval Exercise (SLINEX-25).
 - **Bilateral naval exercise between India and Sri Lanka** started in 2005.



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5. ENVIRONMENT

5.1. E-MOBILITY

Why in the news?

NITI Aayog released its report “**Unlocking a 200 Billion Dollar Opportunity: Electric Vehicles (EVs) in India**” along with the first **India Electric Mobility Index**.






About India Electric Mobility Index (IEMI)

- **India Electric Mobility Index (IEMI)**, a **first-of-its-kind** tool to benchmark states’ progress in e-mobility, was launched by NITI Aayog, in partnership with World Resources Institute India.
- It tracks 16 performance indicators under 3 thematic categories-
 - **Transport Electrification Progress:** Tracks EV adoption on the demand side.
 - **Charging Infrastructure Readiness:** Assesses charging network development.
 - **EV Research & Innovation:** Evaluates supply-side R&D efforts.
- The index groups states into four categories: **Achievers (100)**, **Front Runners (65–99)**, **Performers (50–64)**, and **Aspirants (0–49)**.
 - For the year 2024, **Delhi** led the rankings with a score of 77, followed by **Maharashtra (68)**, **Chandigarh**, and **Karnataka**.

About Electric Vehicles (EVs)

- **Types: Battery EVs** (entirely battery-powered); **Hybrid EVs** (have both engine and electric motor); **Fuel Cell EVs** (utilize 'fuel cell technology' to generate electricity for propulsion); **Plug-in Hybrid EV** (uses both an engine and a rechargeable battery) etc.
- **Status of E-mobility in India (Unlocking a 200 Billion Dollar Opportunity: Electric Vehicles in India)**
 - **2.08 million** EV sales in 2024, up from 50,000 in 2016.
 - **7.6%** EV penetration in 2024, far below the **30% target for 2030**.

Benefits of EVs over Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) Vehicles

 <p>Zero Tailpipe Emissions ~3x less CO₂ emissions, even considering electricity generation for EVs.</p>	 <p>Energy Efficiency ~60% conversion of electricity into wheel power vs ~20% in petrol vehicles.</p>	 <p>Reduced Oil Imports Target of 30% EVs by 2030 save ~₹1.1 lakh crore annually.</p>	 <p>Lower Costs Lower running & maintenance costs.</p>	 <p>User Convenience Charging at home, potential for battery swapping, Noise reduction.</p>
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Key Challenges highlighted in the report

Challenge Area	Specific Issues
Financing Challenges (e-Buses & e-Trucks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High capital cost: E.g., EV buses/trucks cost 2–3× ICE vehicles, making shift difficult for the small players. • High EMI burden: Doubts among financial institutions over repayment ability of small operators.
Vehicle-Centric Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy & costly batteries reduce truck load capacity. • 15-year scrappage rule lowers resale value.

Charging Infrastructure Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public charging almost 4 times expensive as home charging (18% GST + operator margins). • Problems in getting upstream power supply connections from DISCOMs: E.g. differences in fee structures for getting connections and in tariff structures for electricity supplied. • Land constraints in cities/highways. • Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) perceive a safety risk with charging stations. • Lack of collaboration between DISCOMs, ULBs, transport departments, and state nodal agencies. • Absence of integrated app for locating, booking & paying.
Awareness & Perception Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion due to differing incentives in states such as exemption for permits of lower tax rates. • Weak/fragmented awareness campaigns. • Misconceptions: fire safety, battery degradation, range anxiety, resale anxiety.
Inadequate data and regulatory gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VAHAN database does not accurately capture data on different categories of EVs, making policy design, subsidy targeting, and progress monitoring difficult. • Absence of unique battery IDs weakens tracking, resale, and recycling ecosystems. • Inverted GST for manufacturers as Input GST at 18% and output GST at 5%, which blocks the working capital and input tax gets piled up.

Steps taken by India to boost EV adoption

- **PM E-DRIVE Scheme:** Supports e-2Ws, e-3Ws, e-trucks, e-buses, e-ambulances, and charging infrastructure and provides demand incentives for consumers (buyers/end users) to purchase certain categories of EVs.
- **Scheme to Promote Manufacturing of Electric Passenger Cars in India:** To attract investments from global EV manufacturers and promote India as a manufacturing destination for passenger cars.
- **PM e-Bus Sewa – PSM (Payment Security Mechanism) Scheme:** It targets deployment of 38,000+ e-buses and ensures payment security for operators against defaults by Public Transport Authorities
- **PLI Scheme for Automobile & Auto Components:** To boost domestic production of Advanced Automotive Technology products, ensure 50% value addition, and attract investments in the auto sector.
- **PLI – Advanced Chemistry Cell:** Supports 50 GWh domestic battery manufacturing, reducing imports.
- **Cost Reduction:** GST on EVs cut from 12% to 5%.
- **EVolutionS program:** Launched by Department of Science & Technology (DST) targeting EV startups.

Way Forward: Recommendations highlighted in report

- **Moving from Incentives to Mandates:** Set targets for production of Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEVs); impose Higher registration fee/taxes for ICE etc.
- **Saturation Approach:** 100% electric mobility adoption across **5 designated Indian cities within 5 years**, leveraging infrastructure development, fleet electrification mandates, and targeted financing mechanisms.
- **Financing e-Buses and e-Trucks:** Create a **pooled fund** from public and multilateral sources to provide low-interest loans for procurement.
- **Battery Research:** Build **academia–industry–government partnerships** to accelerate work on new chemistries.
- **Strategic Charging Infrastructure:** Develop 20 key corridors, set up nodal agencies, **map hub locations**, and use Time-of-Day pricing to boost efficiency.
- **Unified National EV App:** Provide services for locating charging stations, booking slots, payments, and explore dedicated EV power lines.
- **Lowering Upfront Costs:** Promote leasing models for buses and trucks to aid small operators **and battery as a service (BaaS)**; Introduce a **battery passport** for health tracking; etc.
 - Batteries constitute almost 40 % of capital cost of an EV.
- **Awareness and Information:** Launch a **national EV awareness program**, assess stakeholder data needs, and develop a comprehensive information system to guide decision-making.

Best Practices for EV Adoption

- **China:** “10 Cities, 1000 Vehicles” program was a flagship initiative for 10 pilot cities, each tasked with deploying at least 1,000 New Energy Vehicles (NEVs) in public fleets.
- **Singapore:** Established **EVElectric Charging Pte Ltd (EVe)**, a wholly owned subsidiary of their Land Transport Authority to facilitate the establishment of charging stations, by coordinating with all the relevant agencies.
- **Europe:** **ChargeMap** app provides real-time charging station data, user reviews, and is integrated with navigation systems.
- **UK:** **Advanced Propulsion Centre (APC)** explicitly funds projects to bridge the gap between working prototype and commercialisation; **Faraday Battery Challenge** (funded by public and sector sector) created the UK Battery Industrialisation Centre (UKBIC)- a facility that enables companies to scale lab prototypes to production.

5.2. INDIA’S RESOLUTION ON WISE-USE OF WETLANDS

Why in the News?

India’s resolution titled '**Promoting Sustainable Lifestyles for Wetlands**' has been adopted at **Ramsar 15th Conference of Parties (CoP) to Zimbabwe**, with 172 countries supporting it.

More on the News

- The resolution **aligns with the principles of Mission LiFE** (Lifestyle for Environment).
 - **Mission LiFE** is an India-led global movement introduced at **the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP26) in 2021**.
 - It aims to **nudge individuals and communities** to practice a lifestyle that is **synchronous with nature** and does not harm it.

About Wise Use of Wetland

- It is the core principle of wetland conservation under the **Ramsar Convention**.
- The Convention defines wise use as **maintaining the ecological character** of wetlands using **ecosystem-based approaches** within the context of sustainable development.
- Contracting parties are mandated to promote wise use through **national plans, legislation, management actions and public education**.
- **India’s Approach to Wise Use of Wetlands**
 - The **National Plan** for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA).
 - **Integrated Management Plans (IMPs)** outline strategies for sustainable use.
 - India released a **2024 framework** titled “**Wetland Wise Use – An Implementation Framework**”.
 - ‘**Mission Sahbhagita**’ and ‘**Save Wetlands**’ Campaign have witnessed over 2 million citizens as volunteers, enabling the mapping of more than 170,000 wetland.

Other Outcomes of COP15

Outcome/Initiative	Description
Adoption of “Victoria Falls” Declaration	Acknowledges ecological, social, and economic roles of wetlands; highlights contribution to biodiversity, climate change mitigation, and UN SDGs
Launch of Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative (IBRRI) Strategic Plan 2025–2030	To halt and reverse wetland loss Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam
Launch of BRIDGE Programme	Grants on gender mainstreaming and women leadership
Freshwater Challenge	To enhance implementation of the Convention
Endorsement of establishment of Global Waterbird Estimates Partnership (GWEP)	GWEP (established under Ramsar Convention) integrates data sources, build monitoring capacity, provide information for conservation agreements to combat the global decline of waterbird populations and wetland degradation.

About Ramsar Convention



Adopted: 1971 in Ramsar, Iran and came into force in 1975



About: Intergovernmental treaty for conservation and wise use of wetlands



Ramsar Sites: Over 2,500 globally with designation requiring meeting at least one of nine criteria.



India: 91 Ramsar Sites which is the highest in Asia

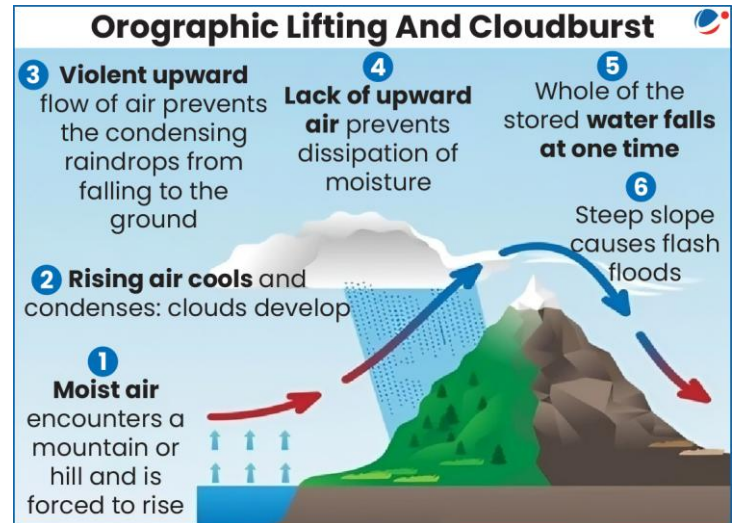
5.3. CLOUDBURSTS IN HIMALAYAN REGIONS

Why in the news?

Cloudbursts have recently impacted several regions in India including states like Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu & Kashmir.

About Cloudburst

- It is an **extreme amount of precipitation** in a short period, sometimes accompanied by hail and thunder, that can create flood conditions.
- India Meteorological Department (IMD) terms a rain event as cloud burst if **10 cm rainfall is received at a station in one hour**.
- Recent Examples:** Kishtwar district, Jammu and Kashmir and Chamoli Cloudburst, Uttarakhand (2025) and Himachal Pradesh (2020).
- Cloudbursts happen in plains as well, but are more common in mountainous zones, as they occur via **orographic lift**. (see infographic)
- Consequences of Cloudburst:** Triggers **Flash floods, Dam breaks, mudslides/Landslides etc.** leading to loss of life; destruction of Homes, roads, and public facilities; biodiversity loss etc.



Challenges associated with tackling cloudbursts

- Climate Change:** Global warming has disrupted precipitation patterns, triggering more frequent, intense rainfall.
 - E.g., every 1°C rise lets air hold **~7% more moisture**.
- Forecasting Challenges:** Cloudbursts are highly **local** and **short-lived and difficult to predict**; Satellites lack precision; Doppler radars give around 3 hours' warning but are **costly** and **limited** etc.
- Anthropogenic Factors:** Deforestation, wetland loss, and unplanned development reduce natural absorption, worsening flash floods and damage.

Way Forward: Cloudburst Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Strategy – National Disaster Management Plan (2019)

- Landslide Hazard Zonation (LHZ):** Using remote sensing and different kinds of spatial data (aerial photographs, satellite imagery) along with local knowledge for accurate mapping of landslide-prone areas.
- Inter-agency Coordination:** Coordination between central and state agencies for **updating rules**, adopting **new standards**, amending laws, and reviewing policies.
 - Ensure effective **early warning dissemination** down to the last mile.
- Structural Measures:**
 - Slope stabilization** through **bioengineering** (plantation, vegetation), and protective structures.
 - Maintenance and improvement of **stormwater drainage, rivulets**, and natural water systems to reduce flooding risks.

- **Non-Structural Measures:**
 - Expansion of **multi-hazard insurance** for life and property.
 - Integration of **risk-sensitive urban planning**: amending building **by-laws** to reduce vulnerability.
 - Application of **multi-level safety planning** in expanding and high-risk settlements.
- **Capacity Development:** Strengthen **ULBs/PRIs** to prepare and respond effectively and encourage use of **insurance and risk transfer tools**.
- **Climate Change Risk Management:** Support and promote **state-specific** and local adaptation efforts.

Conclusion:

The recent cloudburst shows the urgent need for disaster risk reduction, especially in the Himalayas. The focus must shift from reactive relief to proactive resilience by strengthening early warning systems, promoting community-based adaptation, linking disaster management with sustainable development, and using technology, local knowledge, and good governance to reduce risks

5.4. NEWS IN SHORTS

5.4.1. INDIA’S WATER MANAGEMENT

Recently, **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Water Resources** in a report highlighted that despite significant technological advancements and substantial investments, India continues to face **severe socio-economic losses due to floods and water scarcity**.

Key Themes and recommendations

Themes	Current Status/ Issues	Recommendations
Flood Forecasting Modernization and Expansion	Central Water Commission (CWC) operates 340 flood forecasting sites covering 22 states and 2 UTs, which is planned to increase to around 375 by 2026.	Upgrade the present system to address challenges in flood forecasting due to climate change .
Interlinking of Rivers Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 link projects identified. • Lack of consensus among States is a major obstacle as Water is a State subject under Schedule VII. 	Conduct detailed studies on benefits of the projects enhancing awareness amongst the States concerned and expediting implementation of link projects.
Dam Safety	Out of over 6,000 dams, only 459 have Emergency Action Plans (EAP) . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dam Safety Act, 2021 mandates EAP preparation within five years of enactment. 	National Dam Safety Authority should constantly engage with dam owners for preparation of EAP.
Rainwater Harvesting and Water Conservation	‘Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain’ and ‘Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari’ promote community-driven water conservation and groundwater recharge. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase of 11.36 billion cubic meters (BCM) in 2024 with respect to 2017. (Dynamic Ground Water Resources Assessment Report 2024) 	Provide dedicated financial grants to States/UTs for Rainwater Harvesting to boost and enhance support for and enhance support rainwater harvesting initiatives.
Proactive and Integrated approaches	New Draft National Water Policy is under consideration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-Border Flooding Management as an independent initiative coordinated between Ministry of Jal Shakti and Ministry of External Affairs.

- **Inclusion of local MP/MLA** in the bodies under **National Mission for Clean Ganga** to ensure more cohesive outcome.

Scan the QR code to know more about India's Water governance

WEEKLY FOCUS #125

Reforming India's Water Governance To Meet Emerging Challenges



5.4.2. GLOBAL OUTLOOK COUNCIL ON WATER INVESTMENTS

The President of South Africa announced the launch of the Global Outlook Council on Water Investments (GOCWI).

About GOCWI

- Launched as a **G20 Presidential Legacy Initiative**, it forms a **core pillar of the Global Water Partnership's (GWP)** Global Transformation Agenda on Water Investments.
 - GWP is a multi-stakeholder action network and intergovernmental organisation dedicated to **equitable, sustainable, and efficient management of water resources**.
 - GWP's Transformation Agenda aims to mobilise **15 billion for water security** by 2030.
- It will serve as a high-level platform to sustain political and financial momentum for water investments worldwide.

5.4.3. POLLUTION CONTROL BOARDS

SC in **Delhi Pollution Control Committee VS Lodhi Property co. ltd.** case overturned Delhi High court ruling which held that only courts could impose **environmental compensations (EC)**. It held pollution control boards (PCBs) can impose environmental compensation.

- Environmental compensation is a **policy instrument for the protection of the environment** which works on the Polluter Pay Principal.

Key highlights of the rulings

- **Statutory mandate:** PCBs can impose penalties for environmental compensation in exercise of powers under Section 33A of Water Act, 1974 and Section 31A of the Air Act, 1981.
- **Polluter Pays principle:** PCBs can't impose penalties in every contravention under the Acts but only when **environmental harm has been caused** by the erring entity.
 - In **Indian Council for Enviro-Legal Action v. UoI**, SC held that according to Polluter Pays principle, **responsibility for repairing the damage is that of offending industry**.
- **Appropriate Course of Action:** Boards can decide whether a polluting entity needs to be **punished by imposition of penalty** or if situation demands **immediate restoration of environmental damage** by the polluter or both.
 - **SC in Vellore Citizens' Welfare Forum v. Union of India** (1996) also held that liability for environmental damage includes both a compensatory and remedial aspect.
- **Preventive or ex ante measures** can be taken by regulators.

Pollution Control Boards (PCBs) in India



Central PCB (CPCB) is a statutory organization under **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**



CPCB is constituted under **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974**.



It is also entrusted with the powers under the **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981**.



CPCB Role: prevents air and water pollutions and Advise the Central Government on any such matter



State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs): Also constituted under same acts to supplement CPCB to implement Environmental Laws and rules within the jurisdiction of a state.

5.4.4. UNDP EQUATOR INITIATIVE AWARD

Bibi Fatima Women's self-help group (SHG) from a small village in Dharwad district was one of the winners of the 'Equator Initiative Award'.

About UNDP Equator Initiative Award

- Presented biennially under the Equator Initiative of **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**.
- The Equator Initiative** provides opportunities for Indigenous Peoples and local communities to address land degradation, biodiversity conservation and livelihood improvement.
- It is also referred to as the **Nobel Prize for Biodiversity Conservation**.

About Bibi Fatima SHG

- The group introduced **millet-based mixed cropping** on rainfed farms, promoted **climate-resilient farming systems**, practised livestock rearing and horticulture and popularised millets.

5.4.5. AWAZA PROGRAMME OF ACTION (2024-2034) (APOA)

Third United Nations **Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC3)** opened in **Awaza, Turkmenistan**.

- Conference serves as a crucial platform to implement the newly adopted APoA..

About APoA:

- Adopted by consensus at the **UN General Assembly in December 2024**.
 - Offers a **comprehensive framework to tackle persistent development challenges faced by LLDCs**.
- Key deliverables include:**
 - Establishment of **Regional Agricultural Research Hubs** to strengthen food security;
 - Launch of an Infrastructure Investment Finance Facility** to mobilize critical funding;
 - Development of a UNFCCC Negotiating Body **to advance trade and climate resilience** etc.

5.4.6. SUNDARBANS TIGER RESERVE

Sundarbans Tiger Reserve is now India's second largest after expansion of area. **National Board of Wildlife (NBWL)**, led by the Union minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, approved the West Bengal government's proposal to increase the area of Sundarbans Tiger Reserve (STR).

- Now STR is just behind Andhra Pradesh's **Nagarjunasagar-Srisailem Tiger Reserve** in size and elevates it from the seventh to the second-largest tiger reserve within **India's 58 tiger reserves**.

Procedure to declare or alter Tiger reserve

- **Tiger Reserves are notified by State Governments** as per provisions of Section 38V of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 on advice of the National Tiger Conservation Authority.
- **The following steps are involved in the notification:**
 - **Proposal** is obtained from the State.
 - **In-principle approval** is communicated from the National Tiger Conservation Authority, soliciting detailed proposals under section 38V of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
 - **The National Tiger Conservation Authority recommends** the proposal to the State after due diligence.
 - **The State Government notifies** the area as a Tiger Reserve.
- **Process for alteration:** As per **section 38 W (1) of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**, no alteration in the boundaries of a tiger reserve shall be made except on a recommendation of the Tiger Conservation Authority and the approval of the National Board for Wild Life.
 - Such proposals are also **obtained from the State**.

Sundarbans Tiger Reserve (STR)



Location: Coastal districts of West Bengal



Only mangrove forest (with Bangladesh) housing a significant tiger population



Borders: Bangladesh (east), Bay of Bengal (south), River Matla (west), Rivers Bidya & Gomdi (north-west)



Recognition: National Park area is a **natural UNESCO World Heritage Site** and part of the **Sundarban Biosphere Reserve**

5.4.7. 'MATRI VAN' INITIATIVE

Matri Van Initiative is launched in **Gurugram** to develop a **750-acre urban forest** in the **Aravalli hills**.

- The initiative is part of the **'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam'** programme.
- It aims to **enhance ecological preservation and foster community participation**, marking a significant step towards urban sustainability.
- **Ecological Restoration Components includes** removal of invasive species, plantation of **native trees** and restoring **Aravalli-specific biodiversity**.

5.4.8. ETALIN HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT

An expert panel of the **Union Environment Ministry** has recommended **environmental clearance** for the **Etalin hydroelectric project**.

About Etalin hydroelectric project

- **Location:** in Arunachal Pradesh's Dibang valley, part of the Eastern Himalaya **Global Biodiversity Hotspot**.
- **Rivers: Concrete gravity dams on the Dri and Tangon rivers.**
 - The Dri River joins the Tangon **near Etalin village to form the Dibang River** downstream.

5.4.9. VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS IN NEWS

- **Mount Lewotobi:** Composed of **two adjacent stratovolcanoes** in **Indonesia**.
- **Mount Kilauea:** Eruptions have been occurring in the **Halemaumau Crater** which is part of the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park
 - **Hawaii** is the only US state completely made up of islands.

5.4.10. DRAKE PASSAGE

Magnitude 7.5 earthquake has struck drake passage near Argentina and Chile.

About Drake Passage

- **Location:** Between **Cape Horn** (southernmost point of South America) and the **South Shetland Islands** (north of Antarctic Peninsula).
- **Name:** Named after **Sir Francis Drake**, the famous English navigator and circumnavigator.
- **Ocean Current:** Water majorly flows from **west to east** and forms part of the **Antarctic Circumpolar Current** (the most voluminous current).
- **Historic Trade Route:** Key passage for trade before the **Panama Canal** opened in 1914.
- **Sailing Challenge:** Known for **stormy seas and icy conditions**, making Cape Horn rounding a severe test for ships.



SMART QUIZ

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6. SOCIAL ISSUES

6.1. URBAN MIGRATION

Why in the News?

Recent research by **IIT Indore** highlights how **rural-to-urban migration** is reshaping daily life in cities, with shifts in work, routines, and living conditions drawing attention to the broader challenges faced by urban migrants.

What is Migration?

- **International Organisation for Migration (IOM)** defines Migration as the **movement of people** away from their usual place of residence to a new place of residence, either across an international border or within a state.
- **Migrants in India**
 - **The population census of India** defines a migrant based on the Place of Birth (POB) and the Place of Last Residence (PoLR)
 - > **According to the place of birth criteria**, if a person's place of birth differs from the place of enumeration, then at the place of enumeration, the person will be considered a migrant.
 - > **If a person's place of last residence differs from the place of enumeration**, then at the place of enumeration, the person will be considered a migrant.

Do you know ?

Circular Migration is a repetitive pattern of migration where people move to a destination for work and return to their origin once employment ends.

> **Key Feature:** Predominantly seen among **low-income groups** seeking seasonal or short-term jobs in cities, regions, or abroad.

Status of Migration in India

- **Urban Migration:** According to Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, At the all-India level, 18.9% is **rural to urban**, and 15.9% is **urban to urban**, making up approximately **35% of total migration**.
 - By 2030, more than **40% of India's population is expected to live in urban areas** (Economic Survey 2023-24).
 - **Rural to rural migration** at 55% is the highest, and **urban to rural migration** at 10% is the lowest.
- **Share of Migrants:** Migrants account for **28.88%** (40.20 crore) **of the population (2023)**, down from 37.64% (2011) (**400 Million Dreams! report**).
 - **According to the Census 2011**, **45.57 crore** people are migrants.
 - Five states **Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal** account for about **48% of outbound migrants**, while **Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu** receive a similar share of **inbound migrants**.
 - **Incoming migration** is rising fastest in **West Bengal, Rajasthan and Karnataka** but **declining in Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh**. (Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM)).

Factors Driving Urban Migration

- **According to the Census 2011**, the reasons for rural to urban migration were:
 - Marriage (29%).
 - Moved with household (26%).
 - Work (24%).
 - Moved after birth (5.5%).
 - Education (2%).
 - Other reasons (12%).

There are **two sets of factors** that influence migration

	Push Factors (Reasons to Leave Origin)	Pull Factors (Reasons to Choose Destination)
Social & Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persecution (ethnicity, religion, race, politics, culture). • War, armed conflict, human rights violations, political instability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace, stability, security of life and property. • Liberal asylum policies in safer countries.
Demographic & Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High unemployment, poor labour standards. • Economic decline, lack of opportunities, low wages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher wages, better jobs, higher living standards. • Educational opportunities and better healthcare. • Young labour demand in aging societies.
Environmental & Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural disasters (floods, hurricanes, earthquakes). • Climate change impacts (droughts, rising seas, extreme weather). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pleasant climate, safer environmental conditions

Consequences of Urban Migration

- **Economic Consequences**
 - **Economic Growth:** Skilled migrants boost development, with seasonal and temporary migrants contributing about **10% to national GDP (United Nations Development Programme)**.
 - **Improved Living Standards:** Remittances raise **living standards** through housing, land, education and business.
 - **Economic Vulnerabilities:** Concentration in **the informal sector, low wages, lack of access to social security** are persisting challenges for the migrants.
 - > **Example:** Nearly **90% of India's workforce** is in the informal sector, employing most migrant workers.
 - > **Example:** **Covid-19** caused a homeward exodus of around **11.4 million migrants** in India.
- **Demographic Consequences**
 - **Population Structure:** Migration alters population balance, skewing sex ratios and reducing rural birth rates.
 - > **Example:** **Kottayam's sex ratio** (1040) is lower than Kerala's average (1084) due to **female outmigration**.
- **Social & Psychological Consequences**
 - **Social Change:** Migrants bring **new ideas, technology, and consumerist culture**, modernising origin areas.
 - **Social Challenges:** It includes discrimination based on **caste, religion, and regional origin, Language barriers, Formation of ghettos**, etc.
 - > **Example:** 2008 attacks on migrants in Maharashtra.
 - **Housing and Infrastructure Strain:** For e.g., Pune has **564 slums** with an estimated **30-40% of its population**.

Government Initiatives for Migrant workers

- **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana:** It aims to achieve Universal Health Coverage by providing health coverage to India's most vulnerable including migrant workers.
- **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY):** It provides free food grains and direct cash transfers to families below the poverty line, including migrant workers.
- **One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) scheme:** Launched in 2018, ensures food security through the portability of ration cards across India.
- **e-Shram Portal:** Creates a **national database of unorganised workers**, integrates welfare schemes, and enables easy access to social security benefits.
- **PM Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi):** It aims to provide collateral-free working capital loans to street vendors.
- **Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-Dhan Yojana (PMSYM):** It aims to provide a minimum assured pension to workers in the unorganized sector, including migrant workers, upon reaching the age of 60.

Way Forward

- **Working Group on Migration (2015) recommendations**
 - **Legal and Policy Framework:**
 - > Enact legal safeguards to protect **migrants’ constitutional rights**.
 - > Amend Registrar General’s protocols for **caste-based enumeration of migrants**.
 - **Anti-Discrimination Measures:** Eliminate **domicile requirements** for jobs and services to uphold freedom of movement and residence.
 - **Providing Access to Basic Entitlements** such as including **migrant children in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) Annual Work Plans**.
 - **Financial Inclusion:** Reduce cost of money remittances using **India Post’s network** to prevent **informal transfers**.
- **Expanding Best Practices:** The **Kerala Migration Survey model**, conducted every five years since 1998, should be **expanded nationwide** to strengthen migration governance and policy responses.

6.2. ADI KARMAYOGI ABHIYAN

Why in the News?

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has officially launched the Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan.

About Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan

- It is a **tribal grassroots leadership** programme, aimed at empowering tribal communities, strengthening responsive governance, and creating **local leadership opportunities** across the country.
- **Target:** Develop a Cadre of **20 lakh**, to operate in **over 1 lakh tribal-dominated** villages across 30 States/UTs, 550+ districts, and 3,000 blocks.
 - It is expected to reach and uplift **over 10.5 crore tribal** citizens.
- **Vision:** Aadi Karmayogi cadre as a “**Tribal Seva Path**”, driven by Seva (Service), Samarpan (Dedication), and Sankalp (Resolve)—ensuring **responsive governance** and last-mile service saturation in tribal areas.
- **Key Objectives:**
 - **Promote** responsive, transparent, and accountable governance.
 - **Facilitate bottom-up** visioning and participatory planning.
 - **Institutionalize proactive grievance redressal** and feedback systems.
 - **Ensure last-mile delivery through convergence** of flagship tribal initiatives (see infographic)
- It forms a key part of the **Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh** (from 15 November 2024 to 15 November 2025) to **Commemorate Bhagwan Birsa Munda's 150th birthday**.

Key Features of the Scheme

- **Multi-tiered leadership** structure from habitation to State. (see infographic)

Associated Flagship Tribal Initiatives

- **Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM JANMAN) (2023):** For socio-economic development of 75 PVTG communities residing in 18 states and one UT.
- **Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan(2024):** For comprehensive development of tribal areas by addressing critical gaps in infrastructure, healthcare, education, and livelihoods.
- **National Sickle Cell Elimination Mission (2023) :** For addressing significant health challenges posed by sickle cell disease, particularly among tribal populations.
- **Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS):** To impart quality education to ST children in remote areas.

Three Pillars of Leadership



- **Multi-Department Convergence:** Tribal Welfare, Rural Development, Women & Child Development, Jal Shakti, School Education, and Forest.
- **Implementation Strategy:**
 - **Governance Learning Workshops Rollout:** Regional Process Labs (RPLs) at centres like Bengaluru, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Guwahati, Dehradun, Ranchi, etc.
 - **Village Visioning and Development Action Plans:** Every village co-creates **Village Vision 2030** document & **Development Action Plan** with Officials and Villagers.
 - **Mentorship Ecosystem:** Retired civil servants, tribal elders, Padma awardees, etc. as mentors.
 - **Aadi Karmayogi Digital Platform:** To provide ongoing training, data-driven tools, knowledge sharing, and impact dashboards.

Benefits/Anticipated Outcomes

- **100% Saturation of Government Services** including road connectivity, pucca housing, piped drinking water, household electrification, Ayushman Bharat insurance enrolment ensuring that **no tribal household** is left behind.
- **1 Lakh Adi Sewa Kendras** established as **One-Stop Service** Centres for tribal communities.
- **100+ Adi Karmayogi Student Chapters** established across premier institutions such as IITs, NITs, and IIMs, fostering tribal youth leadership.
- **Establishment of a 'Single Window Responsive Governance Centre'** in every tribal village as a hub for information dissemination, grievance redressal.

Importance of Developing Tribal Cadre for Tribal Development

- **Bridging Delivery Gaps:** Over the last decade, the Scheduled Tribe welfare budget (DAPST) has witnessed a fivefold increase from **₹25,000 crore to ₹1,24,000 crore** but outcomes remain weak due to **poor delivery**.
- **Highest incidence and intensity of Poverty among STs:** 40.6% ST population lived below the poverty line as against 20.5% of the non-tribal population (Tribal Health report).
- **Preserving Vibrant Cultural Expressions:** Tribal communities possess unique languages, art, dance, and festivals which are endangered due to assimilation pressures.
 - **E.g.,** TRIFED is collaborating with various ministries and departments for GI Tagging of tribal Products.
- **Harnessing Tribal Ecological Wisdom:** Their traditional practices like shifting cultivation, sacred groves, community forestry hold lessons for climate resilience.
 - **E.g., Dongria Kondh** of Odisha practice millet-based farming conserving agro-biodiversity.
- **Democratizing Development:** Adi Karmayogis will be chosen in consultation with Gram Sabhas to foster trust, ownership, and cultural sensitivity.

Conclusion

A dedicated tribal cadre, can bridge delivery gaps, reduce poverty, and empower Gram Sabhas while preserving culture and ecological wisdom. It is not just about capacity, but conviction—transforming tribal development into inclusive and sustainable nation-building.

6.3. NEWS IN SHORTS

6.3.1. MULTIDISCIPLINARY EDUCATION AND RESEARCH IMPROVEMENT IN TECHNICAL EDUCATION (MERITE) SCHEME

Union Cabinet approved Budgetary Support for **MERITE Scheme**.

About MERITE Scheme

- **Type: Central Sector Scheme**
- **Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Education**
- **Objective:** To improve the quality, equity and governance in technical education covering all States/UTs.
 - Aligned with **National Education Policy 2020**.
- **Budget: Rs.4200 crore** for a period from **2025-26 to 2029-30**.
 - Includes external assistance of **Rs.2100 crore** from **World Bank** as loan.
- **Beneficiaries: 275 technical institutions** comprising **175 engineering institutions and 100 polytechnics**.

6.3.2. KERALA BECOMES INDIA'S FIRST 100% DIGITALLY LITERATE STATE

The achievement stems from the "**Digi Keralam**" programme, launched in 2023, with the goal of extending the digital revolution and e-services to all residents, irrespective of age.

- It also builds upon Kerala's earlier **Akshaya project**, which made **Malappuram the first e-literate district** in India.

Digital Literacy

- It is "**the ability of individuals and communities to understand and use digital technologies for meaningful actions within life situations**".
- **Digitally Literate Household** means at least one member (of 5 years of age or older) can operate a computer and use the internet.

Positive Impacts on Socio-Economic Development

- **Improved government efficiency:** Projects like Kisan Call Centres, Common Services Centres (CSCs) lead to better service delivery and transparency.
- **Global connectivity:** Provides "window to the world" for accessing information and decision making and also helps in **improved social life and family bonds**.
- **Participation in Democratic Processes:** Empowers citizens to engage more actively with governance.
- **Accelerated Financial Inclusion:** Fast-tracks schemes like **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) and Unified Payment Interface (UPI)**
- **Imparting Basic ICT Skills and enhancing livelihood opportunities** for the evolving digital economy.

Concerns related to Digital Literacy in India



Ethical Use of the Internet:
Improper usage can lead to **spread of misinformation leading to Social discord**, communal riots, radicalization, fake news etc.



Protection of Personal Data:
Individuals must be extra careful not to share sensitive personal data like user IDs, passwords, or OTPs to prevent compromise.



Threats of Cyber Security:
The biggest challenge, requiring constant vigilance against remote attacks.



Kerala's achievement as the first digitally-literate state in India showcases a successful model for inclusive digital transformation.

6.3.3. REGISTRAR GENERAL OF INDIA (RGI)

RGI asked States to take steps towards achieving universal registration of births and deaths.


About RGI

- Appointed under the **Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969**.
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **Key Responsibilities**
 - **Housing & Population Census:** Under Census Act, 196.
 - **Civil Registration System (CRS):** Under the Registration of Births & Deaths (RBD) Act (1969) which provides for the compulsory registration of births and deaths.
 - **Others:** Sample Registration System, National Population Register, Mother Tongue Survey, etc.

 SMART QUIZ	<p>You can scan this QR code to practice the Smart Quiz of Social Issues & Social Schemes at our open test online platform for testing your understanding and recalling of the concepts.</p>	
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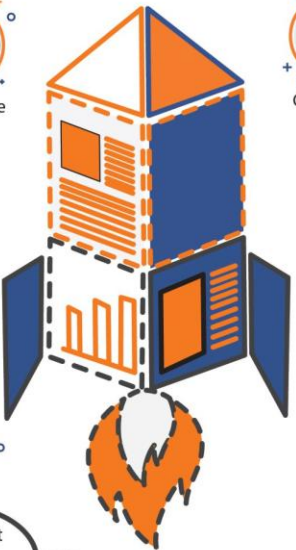
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Art & Culture



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Economics

7. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

7.1. SPACE PROGRAMME OF INDIA

Why in the News?

Recently, Lok Sabha held a special discussion on **Critical Role of the Space Programme for Viksit Bharat by 2047**.

More on the News

- The discussion highlighted that Space experiments conducted by Subhanshu Shukla personify India as **Vishwabandhu Bharat (global friend)**.
 - Subhanshu Shukla travelled to the **International Space Station (ISS)** aboard the **Axiom-4 (Ax-4) Mission**.
 - He is **India's first astronaut** aboard the **ISS** and only the second Indian to travel to space after **Rakesh Sharma** in 1984.

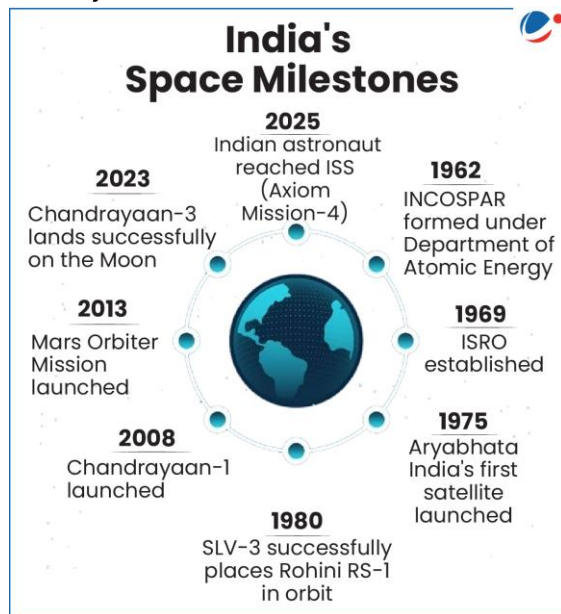
Critical Role of Space Programme/Technology

Space programme/Technology will play a pivotal role in addressing **India's critical challenges** while simultaneously **unlocking new opportunities** for **growth and development**

Sector/Sphere	Current Challenges	Space-based Solutions
Agriculture & Food Security	Erratic monsoons due to climate change; low farm productivity; poor crop forecasting	INSAT-3D/3DR provide weather forecasting; Resourcesat supports crop monitoring and yield estimation
Infrastructure	Lack of integrated planning; delays in project implementation	PM Gati Shakti uses ISRO imagery & spatial tools to integrate projects like Bharatmala, Sagarmala, railways, etc.
Disaster Management	High vulnerability to floods, cyclones, landslides, earthquakes, forest fires	ISRO's Disaster Management Support (DMS) Programme enables real-time monitoring, early warning, and post-disaster assessment
Security & Defence	Border surveillance gaps; communication vulnerabilities; emerging space threats	GSAT-7 & RISAT strengthen secure communication & surveillance; Mission Shakti (2019) demonstrated anti-satellite capability
Strategic Autonomy	Dependence on US GPS for navigation	NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation) provides indigenous navigation services
Climate Change & Environment	Deforestation, glacier retreat, land degradation, ocean warming	NISAR (NASA-ISRO mission) will study land & ice deformation, ecosystems, and oceans
Healthcare Delivery	Limited access to healthcare in remote areas	ISRO's Telemedicine Project
Education	Rural-urban education divide; limited digital learning infrastructure	EDUSAT provides distance learning & educational broadcasting
Transparency & Accountability	Leakages & poor monitoring in welfare schemes	Geo-tagging of MGNREGA assets ensures accountability and transparency
Water Management	Depletion of groundwater; poor watershed planning	Bhuvan-SRISHTI Geoportal enables monitoring of Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) projects

How progress in Space Sector makes India Vishwabandhu?

- **Global Collaboration:** NISAR is termed "**India's scientific handshake with the world**", symbolizing international collaboration by adhering to global standards for docking and interoperability.
- **Regional Leadership and Support:** In 2017 launched **South Asia Satellite (GSAT-9)** for the South Asian region (except Pakistan).
 - Neighbouring countries which fall within the **NavIC service area** can use NavIC services.
- **Sharing Technology, Expertise, & Data for Universal Benefit:** E.g., Chandrayaan-3 datasets are available on PRADAN (Policy based data Retrieval, Analytics, Dissemination and Notification system) for the scientific community.
- **Capacity Building Initiatives:** Programs like **UNNATI (UNISpace Nanosatellite Assembly & Training by ISRO)** offer international training on nanosatellite development.
- **Cost-Effectiveness & Reliability:** E.g., **Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM)** was most economical interplanetary mission in the world and paved way for cost-effective access to deep space.
 - **Over 400 satellites for 34 nations have been launched on India's launch vehicles.**
- **Responsible Space Player:** India's **Debris-Free Space Missions (DFSM) initiative**, aiming for all Indian space missions to be debris-free by 2030, demonstrates a commitment to ensuring a **safe, secure, and sustainable outer space for future generations.**
- **Humanitarian Aid:** ISRO is member of the COSPAS-SARSAT, an international satellite-based search and rescue (SAR) system.



Recent policy intervention for the rapid development in space sector

- **India Space Policy 2023:** Policy was launched to pursue a holistic approach by encouraging and promoting greater private sector participation in the entire value chain of the Space Economy.
- **FDI and Startup Ecosystem:** The amended Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy **allows up to 100% FDI** in manufacturing components for space systems under the automatic route.
 - This progressive environment has fueled the growth of **over 300 space startups in recent years**, significantly boosting innovation
- **New Institutional Framework:** **NewSpace India Limited (NSIL)** acts as ISRO's commercial arm, promoting and commercializing its products and services and enabling industries to undertake high-tech space activities.
 - The **Indian National Space Promotion & Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe)** serves as a single-window facilitator for private sector participation in all space activities, from launches to orbital slot filings and data dissemination.

Conclusion

India's space programme is a driver of national growth, global cooperation, and sustainable development. With clear milestones such as establishing the Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS) by 2035 and launching a crewed lunar mission by 2040, India is steadily positioning itself as a leader in space exploration. By combining innovation, inclusivity, and international collaboration, India's space journey embodies the vision of Viksit Bharat@2047.

To know more about Axiom-4 Mission, refer to Article 7.1. Axiom-4 Mission in June 2025 Monthly Current Affairs Magazine

Scan the QR code to know more about India's SpaceTech Industry

WEEKLY FOCUS #112

SpaceTech Industry: From Curiosity to Reality

7.2. INDIA'S FIRST COMMERCIAL EARTH OBSERVATION (EO) SATELLITE CONSTELLATION

Why in the News?

PixelSpace India-led Consortium has won the **IN-SPACE** proposal to build India's first fully indigenous commercial **Earth Observation Satellite System (EOSS)** under PPP model.

More on the News

- **PixelSpace India consortium** comprises Piersight Space, Satsure Analytics India, and Dhruva Space.
- **Public-Private Partnership (EO-PPP) model:** The private sector is to design, build, and operate the EOSS while, the government is to provide strategic, technical, and policy support.
- **"Zero-cost" bid:** The Consortium will bear the entire investment of over **₹1,200 crore** for the project, foregoing a government offer of up to ₹350 crore in support.

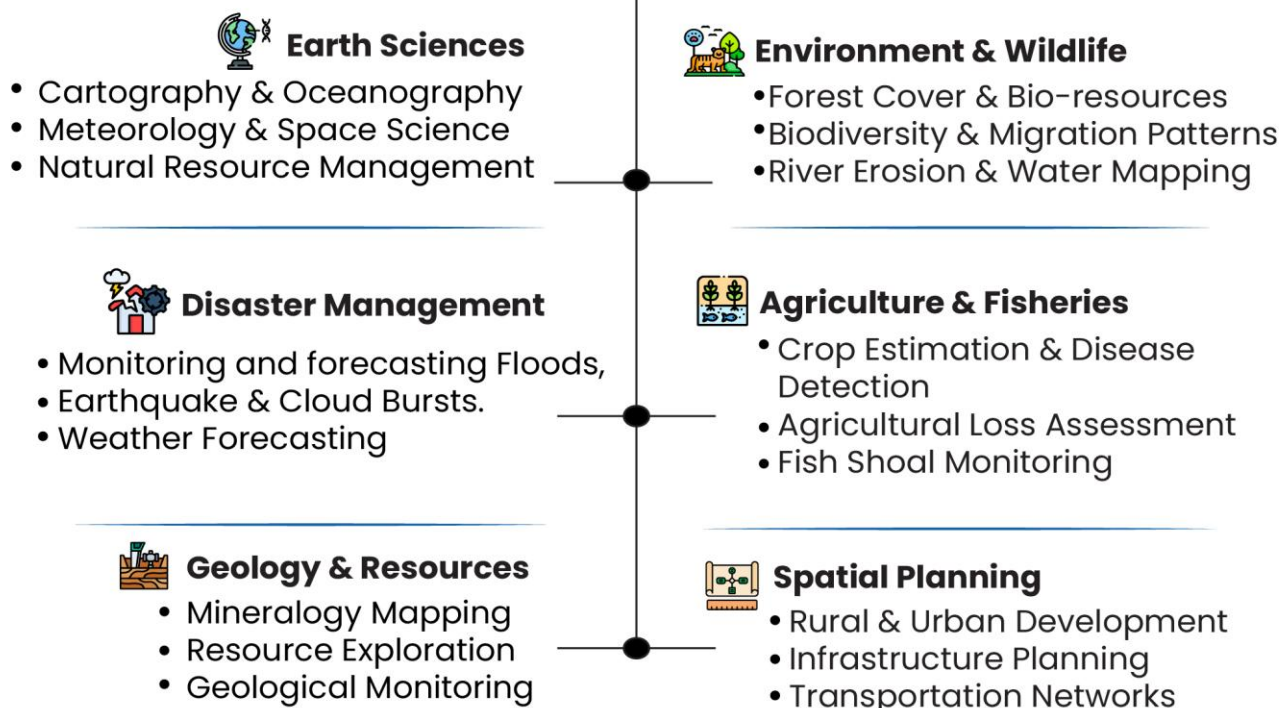
About the proposed Earth Observation Satellite System (EOSS)

- It is a **constellation of 12 state-of-the-art EO satellites** planned to be launched over the **next 5 years**.
- It will be equipped with panchromatic, multispectral, hyperspectral, and microwave **Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) sensors**.
- **Applications:** Deliver **Analysis Ready Data (ARD)** and **Value-Added Services** for climate change monitoring, disaster management, agriculture, national security, serving for high-quality **geospatial intelligence**, among others.

About EO Satellites

- Also called as **Earth remote sensing satellites**, they are designed to collect information about activities on Earth, both natural and artificial, including physical, chemical, biological and human systems.

Applications of Earth Observation Satellites



Significance of Private participation in India's Space Sector

- **Development of Space Economy:** Strong private sector involvement promotes **investments** and boosts **global competitiveness** of India's space economy.
 - India's space economy is currently worth approximately **\$8.4 billion**, envisioned to reach **\$ 44 billion by 2033**, including **\$11 billion** in **exports** amounting to **7-8% of the global share**.
- **Innovation and growth:** Private space companies are driving innovation in satellite development, launch vehicles, and space-enabled services, bringing in new technologies and agile approaches.
 - E.g., **Pixxel** launched India's first private satellite constellation '**Firefly**' providing high-resolution Hyperspectral Imaging.
- **Productivity enhancement of ISRO:** Allows ISRO to concentrate on advanced and long-term missions, promoting **Atmanirbhar Bharat** in space sector.
- **Job creation:** The growing private space sector is creating **high-skilled** jobs and opportunities for the youth in engaging in **quality research and development**, potentially curbing **brain drain**.
- **Strategic self-reliance in Space technology:** Private participation will enhance India's **data sovereignty** and **reduce dependence on foreign imagery** and other space assets.
- **India's leadership in the global space economy:** With over **300 space startups**, private sector participation strengthens **India's positioning in the global space economy**.
 - The Indian space economy currently constitutes only a **2% share of the global space market**.

Government Initiatives to promote Private sector participation in Space sector

- **Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Center (IN-SPACe):** Established in 2020 as an **autonomous** agency in the **Department of Space (DoS)** to boost private participation in space activities.
- **Indian Space Policy 2023:** Provides regulatory clarity and policy stability
- **Venture Capital Fund:** A fund of **₹1,000 crore** approved to finance **startups** across the entire **space supply chain**.
- **Technology Transfer:** **IN-SPACe** facilitated transfer of 10 cutting-edge technologies developed by ISRO to 6 Indian industries. E.g. Advanced Inertial Sensors, geospatial models for crop yield estimation
- **Liberalized FDI Policy:** **Up to 100%** FDI allowed in the space sector to promote international investments, technology transfers, and collaborative research in space technology.

Challenges regarding Private sector participation in Space

- **Absence of a Comprehensive National Space Legislation:** Without a comprehensive legislation, ensuring enforcement and compliance of policies is difficult, creating legal ambiguity in realization of stipulated goals.
 - **Dual-use character of space technologies** poses unique challenges, such as causing project delays, necessitating the protection of intellectual property rights without excessive government intervention, and highlighting the need for an independent appellate authority to avoid conflicts of interest.
- **Operational challenges:** Regulatory transition, in absence of space legislation, creates significant operational challenges for the industry, leading to unnecessary delays and confusion from multiple ministry approvals.
- **Technological bottlenecks:** Despite growing research, Indian private sector lacks the technical as well as financial capacity, increasing their import dependence.
- **Global Demand Generation:** The dominant downstream sector accounts for around 80% of the Indian space economy whereas the upstream sector development is at a nascent stage.
 - **Upstream Segment** involves development, testing, and launching of space assets whereas, **downstream segment** includes applications and services utilizing satellites.

Conclusion

As India advances toward building a robust space ecosystem, the Pixxel-led EO constellation symbolizes the dawn of a new era where public-private synergy will redefine India's role in global space governance. Going forward, **sustained policy support, capacity building, and global collaborations** will be crucial to ensure that India not only meets its domestic needs but also emerges as a leading exporter of space-based solutions, driving the vision of a technologically empowered and globally influential Viksit Bharat.

7.3. NEWS IN SHORTS

7.3.1. ISRO INAUGURATES HOPE ANALOG MISSION IN TSO KAR VALLEY, LADAKH

Himalayan Outpost for Planetary Exploration (HOPE) is a specially designed **Habitat Module** for crew living and a **Utility Module** for operations and support systems which are interconnected for seamless workflow.

The HOPE station set up by ISRO aims to simulate space-like conditions on Earth to aid research for future interplanetary missions.

About HOPE Mission

- **Led by: ISRO's Human Space Flight Centre (HSFC)**, with industry partners and top Indian institutions.
- **Objectives**
 - Simulates extraterrestrial environments like the Moon and Mars.
 - Enables testing of human survival, health protocols, and equipment in space-like environments.
- **Studies to be conducted:**
 - Epigenetics, genomics, physiology, psychology.
 - Sample collection and microbial analysis techniques.
 - Validation of health monitoring and planetary surface operation protocols.
- **Why Tso Kar Valley was chosen?**
 - For Mars-like conditions: **High UV radiation, Low atmospheric pressure, Extreme cold** and **Saline permafrost**
 - Supports both **technological tests** and **astrobiology research**.
- Part of **broader analog missions trend globally**, aimed at preparing for long-term extra-terrestrial human missions.
 - **Other similar research stations across the World:** Mars Desert Research Station of the US, Flashline Mars Arctic Station of Canada, and BIOS-3 of Russia.

About Indian Human Spaceflight Programme, Gaganyaan



Objective: To demonstrate **human spaceflight capability by launching crew of 3 members to an orbit of 400 km for a 3 days mission** and bring them back safely to earth, by landing in Indian sea waters.



Launch Vehicle:
LVM3 rocket



Major milestones planned:
Integrated Air Drop Tests, Test Vehicle Mission, Pad Abort Tests, Unmanned Flights, and Manned Flight.

7.3.2. ISRO'S HEAVIEST ROCKET LUNAR MODULE LAUNCH VEHICLE (LMLV) TO BE READY BY 2035

Key Features of LMLV

- **Design: Improved version** of the NGLV (Next Generation Launch Vehicle).
 - As tall as a **40-storey building**.
- **Purpose: Lunar missions**, including India's first human mission to the Moon planned by 2040.
- **Payload:** It can carry **80 tonnes to low Earth orbit (LEO)** or approximately **27 tonnes to the Moon**.
- **3 Stages: Liquid propellant for its first two stages** and a **cryogenic propellant for its third stage**.

ISRO's Key Launch Vehicles and Capabilities

- **PSLV (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle):** ISRO's workhorse, a third-generation vehicle with liquid stages, capable of launching satellites into **Sun-synchronous Polar Orbit, LEO, Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO)** (e.g., Chandrayaan-1, Mars Orbiter Mission).
- **GSLV (Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle):** A fourth-generation, three-stage vehicle designed to launch **2.0-ton class satellites into GTO** for communication satellites.

- **LVM 3:** A heavy-lift, three-stage vehicle capable of carrying **4-ton class satellites to GTO or about 10 tons to LEO** (Chandrayaan-2 and 3).
 - It is proposed to be used for **Bharatiya Antariksh Station**.
- **SSLV (Small Satellite Launch Vehicle):** Three-stage, all-solid propulsion vehicle designed for launching **Mini, Micro, or Nano satellites (10 to 500 kg mass)**.

7.3.3. EU AI CODE OF PRACTICE ON GENERAL-PURPOSE (GPAI)

26 major tech companies, including **Amazon, Google, Microsoft, and IBM**, have voluntarily signed the EU Commission’s AI Code of Practice on GPAI.

- Code is voluntary, signatories may benefit from enhanced legal certainty and a smoother transition into the binding requirements of the EU AI Act slated to take effect within the next two years.
- The code has three chapters i.e. **transparency, copyright and Safety & Security**
- **About EU AI Act**
 - **EU AI Act is the world’s first comprehensive AI law.**
 - The act takes a **risk-based approach to regulation, applying different rules to AI** according to the risk they pose.
 - It ensures **clearer accountability for AI providers**, with a direct impact on businesses using generative AI through their value chains and third-party risk management.
 - Much like the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the EU AI Act is anticipated to become a **global standard**, aiming to ensure AI's positive rather than negative effects on lives worldwide.
 - **Compliance:** Penalties for non-compliance are significant—up to 7% of global turnover.
- **Key concerns raised by companies**
 - Code introduces **legal uncertainties for model developers** and extends beyond the scope of the forthcoming AI Act.
 - Regulatory complexity and administrative burdens may **impact Europe’s AI competitiveness**

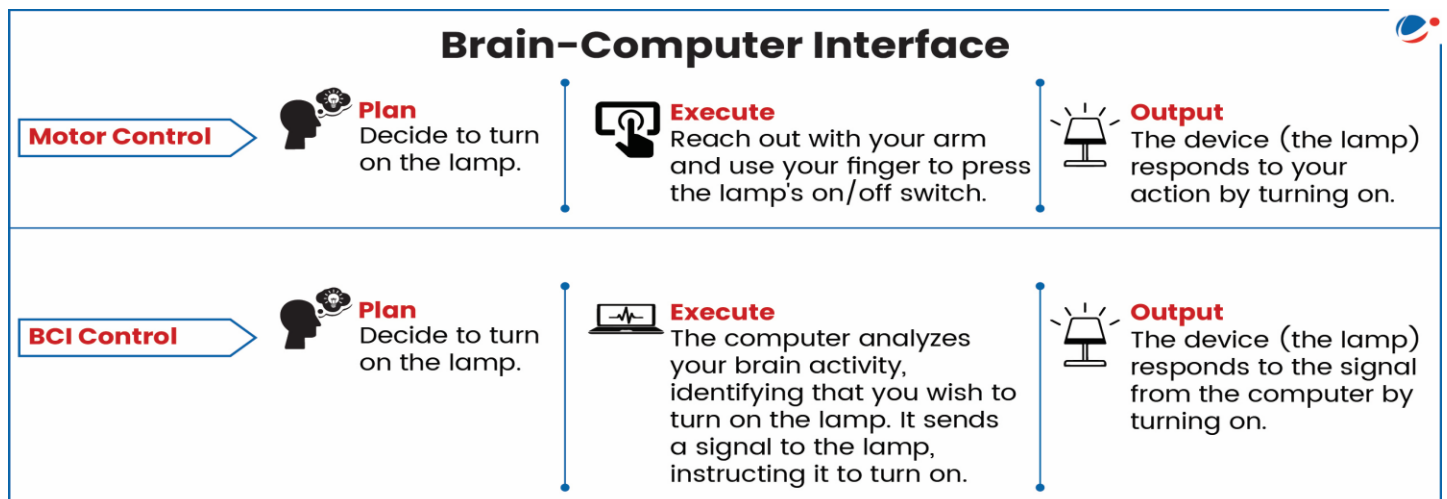
7.3.4. BRAIN-COMPUTER INTERFACE (BCI)

Stanford scientists have created password-protected mind reading Brain-Computer Interface (BCI).

The innovation ensures brain-computer interfaces respect **user privacy** by **requiring mental passwords** before **decoding thoughts into text or audio**.

What is a Brain-Computer Interface?

- A BCI enables **direct brain-to-device communication**, translating neural signals into commands.
 - This **bypasses muscular control**, allowing users to operate applications with thought alone.
- BCIs **acquire brain activity (via invasive implants or non-invasive wearables)**, process signals, and send commands, with **feedback crucial for user adaptation**.



Key Applications of BCIs:

- **Medical:** Restoring mobility and speech for patients with paralysis, ALS, or stroke.
- **Mental Wellness:** Providing feedback for mental health management.
- **Gaming/Industry:** Enabling immersive gaming and decision support systems.
- **Cognitive Enhancement:** Potential for enhancing memory, attention, and decision making.

Key Concerns Related to BCIs:

- **Cybersecurity:** Risks like brain tapping (intercepting private thoughts/beliefs), misleading stimuli attacks (mind control), and adversarial attacks on AI components.
- **Privacy:** Protecting sensitive neural data from unauthorized access.
- **Cognitive Liberty:** Threat to an individual's mental self-determination.
- **Health Impacts:** Unclear long-term consequences of BCI use.
- **Regulatory & Cost:** Lack of standardized regulations and high costs limit accessibility.

Way Forward

- **Robust Regulations:** Implementing tailored data privacy laws, ensuring transparency and informed consent.
- **Enhanced Security:** Developing BCI-specific access controls and defense strategies.
- **Establishing neurorights:** To **safeguard mental privacy**, cognitive autonomy, and freedom of thought of individuals **from exploitation and unauthorized interference.**

7.3.5. ANNUAL FASTAG PASSES

Ministry of Road Transport and Highways launched FASTag Annual Pass facility.

- **Annual Pass** eliminates the need to frequently recharge FASTag through one-time fee of Rs. 3,000 for one year or 200 toll plaza crossings.

About FASTAG

- It is a device that **employs Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology** for making toll payments directly from account while the vehicle is in motion.
 - RFID consists of tags and readers and employs radio waves to communicate information of objects or people to nearby readers.
 - It is a **short-range technology.**
- It is managed by National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) and the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI).

7.3.6. MAHARASHTRA INKS DEAL WITH IIT MADRAS STARTUP(TUTR HYPERLOOP PVT LTD) TO BUILD HYPERLOOP

Proposed Linear Induction Motor (LIM)-based hyperloop mobility system will connect **Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust in Navi Mumbai to the upcoming Vadhavan Port in Palghar district.**

About Hyperloop Mobility System

- In 2013, the CEO of SpaceX, **Elon Musk**, proposed a concept of **ultra-high-speed rail (UHSR)** called hyperloop and open-sourced it.
- It is basically a **magnetic levitation (maglev) system** where pods travel at **ultra-high speeds through low-pressure tubes.**
- **Its Functioning and Key Components**
 - Hyperloop functions in a **sealed tube with minimal air resistance**, utilizing **vacuums** and **magnetic levitation** for hovering.
 - **Linear Induction Motors (LIM)** propels pods silently enabling the theoretical speed of 1,200 km/h.
 - Key components include **steel tubes** (100Pa pressure), **pressurized capsules**, a **compressor** for airflow, and **air bearing suspension.**

- **Advantages:** Ultra-high speeds (e.g., Mumbai-Pune in 25 mins), energy efficiency (potentially carbon-free), noise reduction, and logistics redefinition (moving cargo quickly and efficiently).
- **Issues with technology:** Conceptual status, high costs (\$25-\$27 million/mile for technology), safety concerns (fire in pods, difficult evacuation), vacuum maintenance challenges, demanding straight-line infrastructure requiring new regulations etc.

Substantial financial backing, continuous research and development complemented by new regulatory frameworks are crucial for overcoming technical and safety challenges of hyperloop technology.

7.3.7. SHRESTH INITIATIVE

Union Health Ministry launched **State Health Regulatory Excellence Index (SHRESTH)**, a national initiative to benchmark and strengthens state drug regulatory systems.

About SHRESTH

- Proposed by the **Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO)**.
- **Aim:** To drive improvements in the performance of state drug regulatory authorities across India, ensuring drug safety and quality standards are consistently met.
- **It will have Indices based on five key themes:** Human Resources, Infrastructure, Licensing Activities, Surveillance Activities and Responsiveness.

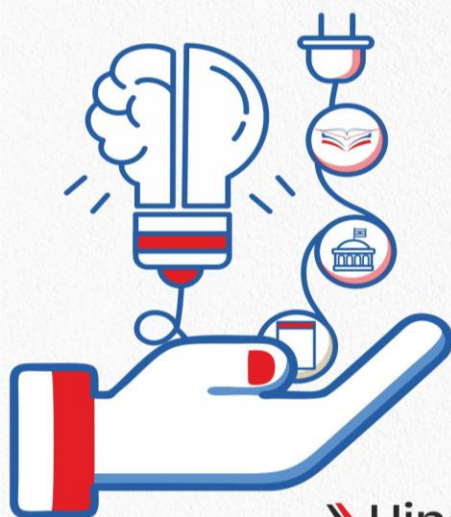


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18 SEPT, 2 PM

- » Physics

ADMISSION OPEN

- » Anthropology **18 SEPT, 2 PM**

- » Hindi Literature » Public Administration

STARTING SOON

8. CULTURE

8.1. GOSWAMI TULSIDAS

Why in the News?

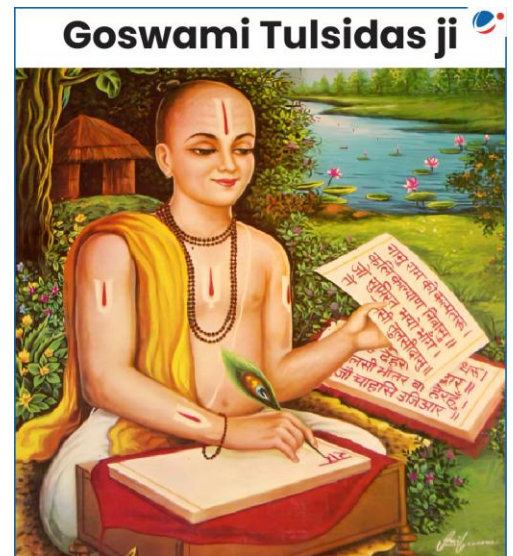
Recently, the **500th birth anniversary** of Goswami Tulsidas was celebrated in Chitrakoot.

About Goswami Tulsidas

- **Birth:** Believed to be born in **Rajapur Village, Banda District, Uttar Pradesh.**
- **Real Name:** Rambola Dubey
- **Father:** Aatmaram.
- **Mother:** Hulasi.
- **Teacher:** Shri Narharidas Ji

Key Contributions:

- **Literary Contribution:**
 - He wrote the **Ramcharitmanas** on the banks of the Ganga at Assi, Varanasi, in the **Awadhi dialect** of Hindi.
 - > Ramcharitmanas is included in **UNESCO's Memory of the World Asia-Pacific Regional Register.**
 - He composed **Vinay Patrika and KavitaVali** in the **Braj dialect** of Hindi.
 - Other major works include **Gitavali, Dohavali, Janaki Mangal, Parvati Mangal, Barvai, Hanuman Chalisa, and others.**
- **Bhakti Movement:**
 - **Tulsidas** was a **reformer and philosopher** from the **Ramanandi Sampradaya** in the lineage of **Jagadguru Ramanandacharya.**
 - He was a **Vaishnava Hindu saint and poet of the Saguna Bhakti tradition**, renowned for his **devotion to the Lord Rama.**
 - > **Saguna bhakti tradition:** Worship of deities like Shiva, Vishnu (and his avatars), and the Goddess, often in **anthropomorphic forms.**
 - > He also believed that **Nirguna** (devotion to a formless, attribute-less, and abstract God) and **saguna are not opposed to each other**; in fact, they complement each other.
- **Promotion of Regional dialects:** The use of **Awadhi and Braj languages** in his major work helped in the promotion of these dialects.
- **Temple building:** Established the famous **Sankatmochan Temple** dedicated to **Lord Hanuman** in Varanasi.
- **Ramlila:** It is the **traditional theatrical performance** of the **Ramayana**, based on **Tulsidas' Ramcharitmanas.** It was started by the **disciples of Tulsidas** after his death.
 - One sect of historians believes that the first person to have started the tradition of Ramlila was **Megha Bhagat, a student of Tulsidas in 1625.**
 - > While other sects hold a view that it was started in **Ramnagar (Banaras) around 1200-1500 CE.**
 - Ramlila is on the **UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage** of Humanity.



Teachings of Tulsidas

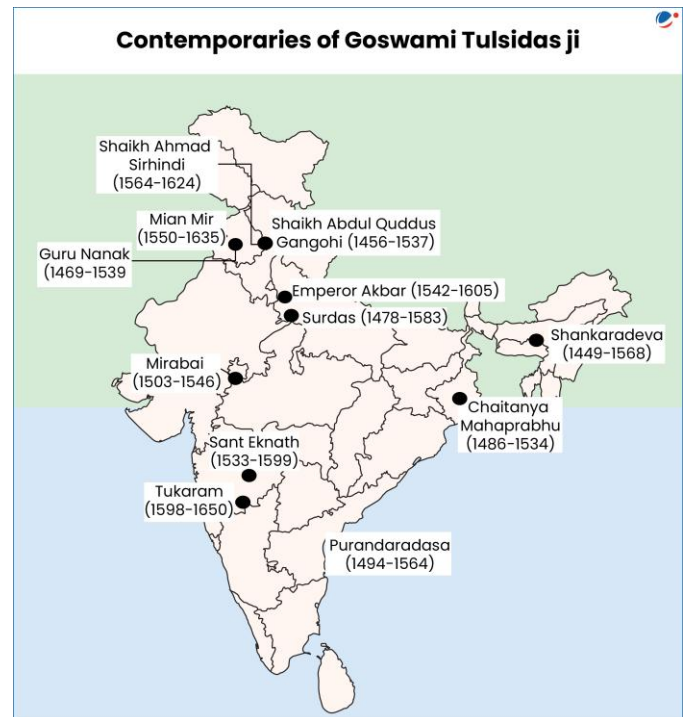
- **Navavidha Bhakti (Nine kinds of devotion):** It includes principles like keep company of saints and devotees, take deep interest in the Lord's life (lila), serve the Guru, etc.
- **Social Concerns:**
 - He propounded **two principles** that promoted social integration and the general acceptability of his works:
 - > **Social Equality:** Devotion, not birth, makes one dear to Lord Rama. He **attacked the caste system**, saying: "None will question your caste or creed; if you devote yourself to God, you belong to Him."

> **Unity of Shaivism and Vaishnavism:** He saw Shiva and Rama as one.

- **Formless Rama (Adwaita idea):** He adopted **Monoism (Adwaita)**, which says the Supreme reality is formless and propertyless. He also adopted the **concept of Rama, without a body**, as per the principle of Monoism.
- **On taxation:** Believes that as the sun draws water from the earth, which then turns into clouds and returns as rain on the earth, bringing prosperity. The tax system should be similar in nature.

Conclusion

Tulsidas's life and works reflect the essence of devotion, humility, and social harmony. His message of equality, unity, and unwavering faith continues to inspire generations. By stressing love for God above all divisions, he transformed spiritual practice into a force of moral guidance and collective upliftment.



8.2. 100 YEARS OF KAKORI TRAIN ACTION

Why in the News?

2025 marks the **centenary year of the Kakori Train action**.

About Kakori Train Action

- The train action was executed on **August 9, 1925**, at **Kakori**, a village near **Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh**.
- It was orchestrated by **ten revolutionaries of the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA)**, to **seize collection money from the British Indian railways**.
- They stopped the **8-down train travelling from Shahjahanpur to Lucknow** near Kakori station, which was **transporting treasury funds** intended for the British government in Lucknow.
- **Key leaders: Ram Prasad Bismil, Ashfaqullah Khan, Chandrashekhar Azad, Thakur Roshan Singh, Rajendra Lahiri**, among others.
 - **Chandrashekhar Azad continued revolutionary activities** across India until his death in a police encounter in 1931 at Alfred Park, Allahabad.

Aftermath of the Incident

- **British Reaction:** A **massive manhunt began**, with **over two dozen arrests** within a month and 40+ accused, including sympathizers.
- **Kakori Conspiracy case trial:** The British authorities charged the **involving 28 active members of the HRA** with **robbery, conspiracy, manslaughter, and waging war against the Crown**, intensifying the severity of the case.
- **Death Sentences:** Ram Prasad Bismil, Ashfaqullah Khan, Rajendra Lahiri, and Thakur Roshan Singh were sentenced to **death by hanging**.
- **Prisoner Protests:** Revolutionaries sent to **different jails undertook hunger strikes** to protest against jail conditions and demand **political prisoner status**.

Impact on India's Independence Movement

- **Inspiration for future revolutionaries:** The **courage, defiance, and ultimate sacrifice** of the Kakori martyrs inspired a **new generation of revolutionaries**, including **Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, and Rajguru**.

- **National unity:** The incident **underscored the unity among revolutionaries** from diverse religious and regional backgrounds, with **leaders like Ashfaqullah Khan and Ram Prasad Bismil symbolising the secular nature** of the freedom struggle.
- **Public awareness:** The high-profile trial and subsequent executions garnered **widespread national attention, exposing the harshness of British rule** and galvanising public support for the revolutionary cause.
- **Shift towards Direct Action:** It marked a critical shift in **Indian independence movement, advocating that the struggle was not limited to non-violent protests** but also required **direct action against British exploitation**.
- **Revolutionary Spirit and Legacy:** The event demonstrated the **bravery and ingenuity of Indian revolutionaries**; it is remembered as a **bold assertion of India's right to freedom and self-determination**, embodying the spirit of **sacrifice and resilience**.
- **Reorganization HRA:** In **1928**, after the executions of its founders, HRA was reorganized into the **Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA)**.

About HRA and HSRA

- **Hindustan Republican Association (HRA)**
 - Founded in **1924 by revolutionaries including Ram Prasad Bismil, Sachindra Nath Sanyal, Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee**, among others.
 - **Basic Principle: Federal Republic of the United States of India** based on universal suffrage.
 - The organization **drafted a constitution (known as the Yellow Paper) and published a manifesto titled "Revolutionary"** in 1925, criticizing **Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent methods** and urged the youth to join the armed revolution against British rule.
 - It had **branches and bomb manufacturing units** in multiple Indian cities.
- **Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA)**
 - Founded in **1928 in Delhi's Feroz Shah Kotla**.
 - **Emerg ed from HRA**, as the group's ideology shifted **more explicitly towards socialism and Marxism**.
 - Founded by revolutionaries including **Chandrashekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev Thapar, Rajguru**, among others.
 - **Basic Principle: Adoption of socialist principles alongside** the continued call for **Indian independence**.

Conclusion

The Kakori Train Action occupies a significant place in the trajectory of India's freedom movement as it not only challenged the economic foundations of colonial exploitation but also highlighted the ideological and organizational shift towards revolutionary methods of resistance. It also inspired subsequent revolutionary organizations such as the HSRA and influenced figures like Bhagat Singh, thereby ensuring the continuity of armed struggle as a parallel strand to non-violent resistance.

8.3. GALLANTRY AWARDS

Why in the news?

President approved 127 Gallantry awards & 40 Distinguished Service awards on eve of 79th Independence Day.

About Gallantry Awards:

- **Objective:** Recognitions given for acts of bravery, valour or self-sacrifice both during wartime and peacetime.
- **Conferred by:** President, who is the supreme commander of the Armed Forces
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Defence invites recommendations twice in a year from the Armed Forces and Union Ministry of Home Affairs for gallantry awards.
- **Announced twice in a year** - First on occasion of Republic Day and then on occasion of Independence Day.
- **History of Gallantry Awards:**
 - **Param Vir Chakra, Maha Vir Chakra & Vir Chakra:** Instituted in January 26, 1950 (effective from August 15, 1947).

- **Ashok Chakra Class First, Ashok Chakra Class Second & Ashok Chakra Class Third:** Instituted in 1952 (Effective from August 15, 1947).
 - > **Renamed:** Ashok Chakra Class First, Second, and Third were renamed as **Ashok Chakra, Kirti Chakra, and Shaurya Chakra**, respectively in **January 1967**.
- **Benefits:** The awardees receive monthly monetary allowance, travel concessions and other benefits.

Types of Gallantry Awards, Criteria, and Benefits:

Category	Name	Features	Eligibility
Wartime (For acts of gallantry in the presence of the enemy, whether of land or at sea or in the air)	Param Vir Chakra	India's highest military decoration, similar to the British Victoria Cross, US Medal of Honor, or French Legion of Honor	All ranks of the Naval, Military, Air, Reserve, and Territorial Forces, including medical and nursing staff, and civilians serving under their direction.
	Mahavir Chakra	Second highest military decoration in India	
	Vir Chakra	Third highest military decoration in India	
Peacetime (Awarded for valour, courageous action or self-sacrifice away from the field of battle)	Ashoka Chakra	Peace time equivalent of the Param Vir Chakra	All ranks of the Armed Forces, Reserve and Territorial Forces, Nursing Services, Police, Central Para-Military Forces, Railway Protection Force, and civilian citizens.
	Kirti Chakra	Peacetime equivalent of the Maha Vir Chakra	
	Shaurya Chakra	Peacetime equivalent of the Vir Chakra	

Other Distinguished Service Awards:

- **Param Vishisht Seva Medal:** For distinguished service of the most exceptional order.
- **Ati Vishisht Seva Medal:** For distinguished service of an exceptional order.
- **Vishisht Seva Medal:** For distinguished service of a high order.
- **Sarvottam Yudh Seva Medal:** For distinguished service of the most exceptional order during War/conflict/hostilities.
- **Uttam Yudh Seva Medal:** For distinguished service of an exceptional order during war/conflict/hostilities.
- **Yuddh Seva Medal:** For distinguished service of a high order during war/conflict/hostilities.
- **Sena/Nao Sena/Vayu Sena Medal:** Awarded for both i.e. courageous acts as well as Sena Medal for devotion to duty.

Do you know ?

- > For each subsequent act of similar bravery, recipients are recognized by a Bar to the respective Chakra.
- > All the gallantry awards may be awarded posthumously.

8.4. COMMON WEALTH GAMES

Why in the News?

Recently, Union cabinet approved India's bid to host Commonwealth Games 2030 with proposed host city as Ahmedabad after the Indian Olympic Association's (IOA's) approval.

About Commonwealth Games (CWG)

- CWG is a multi-sport event held **every four years** among Commonwealth countries.
 - First CWG was held in 1930 in Hamilton, Canada and 19th (XIX) in **Delhi in 2010**.
- **Earlier names of CWG:** British Empire Games (1930-1950), British and Commonwealth Games (1954-1964), British Commonwealth Games (1970-1974).

About Commonwealth

- **Genesis:** At the 1926 conference **Britain and the Dominions** agreed that they **were all equal members of a community within the British Empire.**
 - They all owed **allegiance to the British king or queen**, but the **United Kingdom did not rule over them.**
 - This community was called the **British Commonwealth of Nations** or just the **Commonwealth.**
- **Members:** 56 countries (**including India**), spread across Africa, Asia, Europe, the Americas, and the Pacific.
 - Last two countries to join the Commonwealth were **Gabon and Togo in 2022.**
 - **Adoption of London Declaration (1949)** declared that republics and other countries could be part of the Commonwealth.
- **Key organizations:**
 - **Board of Governors:** All member governments are represented on the Commonwealth Secretariat Board of Governors by their High Commissioners.
 - **Commonwealth Secretariat (London):** Created in 1965 as a central intergovernmental organisation to manage the Commonwealth's work.

Do you know? 

> King George VI was the first Head of the Commonwealth.



Indian Olympic Association (IOA)

Genesis: Established in 1927 with **Sir Dorabji Tata** (President) and **Dr. A.G. Noehren** (Secretary General)

About: It is a **Non-Profit Organisation** under **Societies Registration Act of 1860**, recognised by the **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.**

- Functions:**
- Governing body for **Olympic Movement** and the **Commonwealth Games** in India.
 - Affiliated member of the **International Olympic Committee (IOC), Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF), Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) & Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC)**
 - Oversees **representation of athletes or teams** participating in the Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, Asian Games etc.

Governed by: A **32-member Executive Council**, headed by President

8.5. NEWS IN SHORTS

8.5.1. VITTHALBHAI PATEL

All India Speakers' Conference commemorates the completion of **100 years of Vitthalbhai Patel becoming the first elected Indian President of the Central Legislative Assembly** (August 1925).

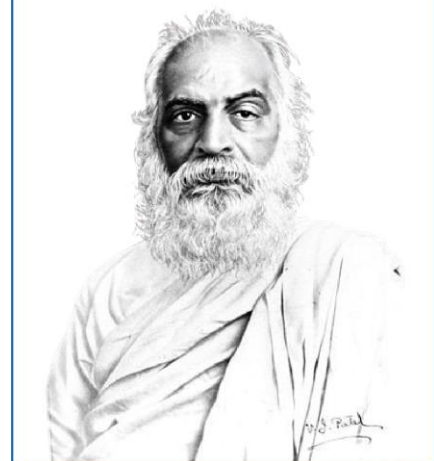
About Vitthalbhai Patel (1873–1933)

- **Born:** Nadiad, Gujarat.
- He was the **elder brother of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel** and an eminent political leader, lawyer, and social reformer.

Key Contributions

- Devoted himself to bringing about both social and political reforms to successfully fight for India's freedom.
- **Became Member of Bombay Legislative Council.**
- **Elected to the Imperial Legislative Council in 1918.**

Vitthalbhai Patel





- **Swaraj Party:** Co-founded the Swaraj Party with Motilal Nehru and Chittaranjan Das in 1922.
- He served as the **Mayor of Bombay Municipal Corporation from 1923 till 1925.**

8.5.2. NATIONAL FILM AWARDS 2023

Recently, the **71st National Film Awards** were announced.

About the National Film Award

- **Genesis:** Established in 1954 by the Government of India.
- **Presentation:** Conferred annually by the Hon'ble **President of India.**
- **Award Sections:** Features Film, Non-Feature Film, Best Writing on Cinema, and Dadasaheb Phalke Award.
 - **Dada Saheb Phalke Award**
 - > **The highest award in Indian cinema**, awarded for outstanding contribution to its growth and development.
 - > **Instituted in 1969** by the Government of India to commemorate Dadasaheb Phalke, who directed Raja Harishchandra (1913), the first full-length Indian feature film.
 - > The award comprises a **Swarna Kamal (Golden Lotus) medallion, a shawl, and a cash prize of ₹10 lakh.**
- **Categories:** It includes **Best Feature Film, Best Direction, Best Actor & Best Actress, Best Cinematography, Best Screenplay and Best Music Direction, etc.**

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9. ETHICS

9.1. TRUST IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Introduction

In recent times, allegations of political misuse on several public institutions like Election Commission of India, Enforcement Directorate, Central Bureau of Investigation etc. have raised concerns about erosion of trust in India’s public institutions. The **UN’s World Social Report 2025** highlights a broad decline globally in institutional trust since the start of the 21st century. Today, over half of the global population has little or no trust in their government says the UN report citing survey data collected between 1995 and 2022.

What is meant by Trust?

- OECD defines trust as **“a person’s belief that another person or institution will act consistently with their expectation of positive behaviour.”**
 - Trust is a **key component of the social contract**, making it important for governance to be **guided by a clear understanding of the nature of trust**, along with deep insight into its drivers and consequences.
- **Types of Trust:**
 - **Horizontal Trust:** Trust that members of a community have in each other.
 - **Vertical Trust:** Trust that members of a community have in the institutions presiding over that community.
 - **Social Trust:** It is a generalized trust, which is not directed at specific people for a specific purpose. It is trust, confidence, or faith in strangers and reflects long-term optimism.
 - **Political Trust:** It is confidence in institutions and its actors (e.g., the executive, legislative, judiciary, bureaucracy, police, media, private sector or business, NGOs etc.)



The essence of good government is trust.

-Kathleen Sebelius

Stakeholders and their Interests in maintaining Trust in Public Institutions

Stakeholder	Interest
Citizens	Efficient delivery of public services, public participation, higher levels of subjective well-being (increased happiness and longevity), democratic life, regime stability
Government Institutions and officials	Proper policy making and implementation, ensuring legitimacy, policy compliance, effective law enforcement, smoother governance without excessive coercion
Civil Society & Media	Interest in freedom of expression, advocacy for people’s rights,
Private Sector	Predictable regulations, contract enforcement, fair competition, reduced corruption, business-friendly environment, encouraging entrepreneurship

Reasons behind erosion of Trust in Public Institutions

- **Non-performance of administrative structures:** E.g., poor service quality, lack of responsiveness, subjective and negative abuse of authority. **(2nd ARC)**
- **Widespread Economic Insecurity:** Providing economic security is a key role of the state and its institutions and a foundation of the social contract.
 - Economically insecure individuals (e.g., lower-income, less-educated groups) report significantly lower institutional trust compared to more secure groups. **(UNDESA)**
- **Political Exclusion:** Limited political influence among the marginalized sections hinders their ability to demand redistributive policies or improved services.


- **Scandals and Corruption:** It undermines public trust by suggesting that public institutions are not acting in the best interests of the people or the country.
- **Disinformation and Social Media:** Social media can **emphasize institutional failures** (real or perceived), enable sophisticated targeting of information campaigns, manipulate views, and affect trust in the legitimacy of election outcomes.
- **Inefficient Judicial systems:** It impairs rule of law, and hampers remedies in case of grievances with public institutions.

Major Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions

Competencies	
Reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government ready to protect people's lives in the event of an emergency. • Personal data shared with public offices are used for legitimate purposes only. • General satisfaction with administrative services and satisfaction with specific aspects.
Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public services are improved following complaints and public feedback. • Public institutions adopt innovative ideas to improve public services. • Government draws on the best available evidence for decision-making.
Values	
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease and availability of information about administrative services. • Citizen participation and engagement opportunities in policy making. • Government clearly explains impact of reform.
Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability between government branches (parliament, judiciary, executive)
Fairness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public employees' consistent treatment of businesses and people regardless of their background and identity. • Fair treatment in government services and benefits. • Representation of needs of different regions and groups in Parliament.

Measures to rebuild/improve Trust in Public Institutions

- **Foster citizen engagement and participation:** E.g. promoting **open** and inclusive policymaking through measures like **Social Audit**.
- **Consistent implementation and results:** Improving citizens' experiences through day-to-day interactions in delivery of public services. **E.g., Direct Benefit Transfer.**
- **Promoting transparency and communication:** Ensuring data used for policy making is accessible and openly verifiable, e.g., through **government dashboards**.
- **Ensuring ethical governance:** Integrity of action, attention to equity, and focus on marginalized groups are critical for ethical behaviour and the public trust.
- **Independent anti-corruption mechanisms:** E.g., **Lokpal and Lokayukta Act, 2013** mandated the establishment of Lokpal at union level and Lokayukta at state level to deal with complaints relating to corruption against certain public functionaries.
- **Strengthening Institutional Frameworks:** A harmonious and cooperative relationship between parliament and the executive, along with independent judiciary is key to building trust.
- **Addressing Misinformation and Leveraging Technology:** Governments need to proactively **tackle misinformation and disinformation** by adoption of **new governance models** to ensure that information ecosystems support democratic debate and discussion. E.g., establishing **Fact Checking Units**.



Government is a trust, and the officers of the government are trustees. And both the trust and the trustees are created for the benefit of the people.
-Henry Clay

Conclusion

Trust is integral to the functioning of any society. Trust in government and its institutions is a necessary precondition for representative democracy. The erosion of trust in government is thought to indicate “the crisis of democracy” with direct and severe consequences for the quality and ability of representative democracy, its institutions, and its actors.

Check your Ethical Aptitude

You are an honest IAS officer, recently appointed as the Municipal Commissioner of a rapidly urbanizing city struggling with inequality and weak infrastructure. Public trust in the municipal body is already low, as your predecessor was removed on corruption charges.

Within days of your posting, a newly built flyover collapses during heavy rains in a low-income area, causing deaths, injuries, and destruction of homes and shops. The tragedy fuels deep public anger and distrust in institutions. The crisis is worsened by spread of misinformation on social media. Honest staff feel demoralized and unfairly blamed, slowing relief work. Meanwhile, social media narratives amplify the credibility crisis of the municipal administration.

The State Chief Secretary directs you to act sensitively but firmly, ensuring both relief and restoration of public confidence.

Based on the above narration of the case, answer the following:

- (a) Identify ethical issues and dilemmas arise in this case, especially regarding institutional trust,
- (b) What immediate and long-term steps would you take to manage the crisis and rebuild institutional credibility?
- (c) Social media is being misused to spread disinformation. How would you leverage the same platform to engage positively with citizens and restore trust in the administration?

9.2. ETHICS OF STRAY DOG MANAGEMENT

Introduction

Over 37 lakh dog bite cases were reported in 2024, according to the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC). The WHO notes that India accounts for **one-third of global rabies deaths**. Recently, the **Supreme Court** modified its Suo motu order that had directed confinement of all stray dogs in Delhi-NCR shelters. It ruled that dogs, once **dewormed and vaccinated**, should be released back to their original areas.

These developments underline the need to **balance** stray dog protection with citizen safety concerns.

Key Stakeholders and Invested interest

Stakeholders	Interest
Residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under Article 51A (g) of the Indian Constitution, having compassion for living creatures is a fundamental duty of citizens. • Community attitudes range from supportive to hostile, often shaped by personal experiences with aggressive dogs or dog attacks. • Residents may face safety risks, property damage, and health concerns. • Children, elderly etc. face disproportionate risks from stray dog encounters due to their inability to assess danger or defend themselves effectively.
Pet Owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owners contribute to the problem through abandonment practices. • They may also offer solutions through responsible pet ownership and support for stray management programs.
Government and its Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing vaccination, sterilization, and stray dog control measures while addressing citizen complaints.

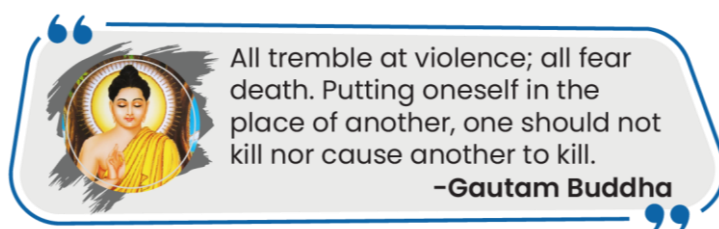
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Authorities: Bear constitutional responsibility under Article 243(W) and 246, to manage stray populations, and Effective implementation of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960. • National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Ministry of Health & Family Welfare is implementing all necessary activities for rabies elimination in India by 2030. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Each stakeholder ministry/department has a defined role and set of responsibilities for rabies elimination under the National Action Plan for Dog-Mediated Rabies Elimination by 2030 (NAPRE).
Supreme Court	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring a balanced approach that safeguards both public health and animal rights.
Animal Welfare Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for rights-based approaches to stray dog management, emphasizing community-based care models, sterilization, vaccination, and feeding programs while opposing culling. • Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) has published the revised Animal Birth Control (ABC) module for Street Dogs Population management, rabies eradication and reducing man-dog conflict.

Ethical Values in Conflict in Management of Stray Dogs

- **Compassion vs. Public Safety:** Feeding strays may keep them alive but can also increase their population and territorial aggression.
- **Animal Rights vs. Human Rights:** The fundamental principle that "every creature with a will to live has a right to live free from pain and suffering" conflict with humans' legitimate rights to security, property protection, and freedom from fear in public spaces.
 - Supreme Court, in **Jallikattu Case 2014**, has interpreted the right to life and liberty (Article 21) as extending to animals as well.
- **Kant's Deontology vs Utilitarianism:** Kant's categorical imperative demands treating all beings as ends in themselves, never merely as means. Forcible relocation or dumping of strays violates their dignity.
 - This perspective goes against utilitarian model that might sacrifice individual animals for human convenience
- **The Non-Maleficence Dilemma:** The medical principle of "**do no harm**" applies to both animals and humans, requiring solutions that minimize harm to all parties.
 - Current approaches often fail this test by either **harming animals** through cruel control methods or **humans through inadequate population management.**
- **The Rights-Duties Paradox:** While animals don't bear legal duties, they still deserve rights—just like infants or the disabled—because of their **vulnerability** and **sentience**, not their **utility**.

Ways for Ethical Management of Stray Dogs

- **The Principle of Beneficence:** Active promotion of welfare for both animals and humans **requires proactive, well-designed interventions** rather than reactive measures.
 - The **Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules, 2023**, represent an attempt to operationalize this principle through systematic sterilization and vaccination programs.
 - The **Netherlands imposed higher taxes on store-bought dogs** to encourage shelter adoptions.
- **Proportionality and Graduated Response:** Responses to stray dog issues must be proportionate to actual risks while avoiding both inadequate action and excessive reaction. This principle demands:
 - Evidence-based assessment of local situations rather than blanket policies
 - Escalating interventions that begin with least harmful approaches.
 - > For example, after a spike in rabies cases in Delhi-NCR, the Supreme Court ordered **building shelters, moving strays, and ensuring professional handling, sterilisation.**
 - Regular evaluation and adjustment based on outcomes for all affected parties
- **Virtue Ethics:** This approach focuses on **cultivating virtues like compassion, responsibility, and wisdom** in addressing the issue.



- It emphasizes community engagement, education, and the development of sustainable practices that reflect moral excellence.
- **Effective implementation of National Rabies Control Program:** Under this, a phased plan is targeting Tier-1 and Tier-2 cities to prevent and control rabies. Surveillance mechanism is also being strengthened for rabies cases and animal bites.
- **Empower Local Bodies and Volunteers:** RWAs, local authorities, and **NGOs like VOSD** should manage dog care. Those unable to help directly should support these efforts financially.

Conclusion

Stray dog management is a complex problem requiring multi-stakeholder approach including local governance bodies, communities and animal rights activists, ultimately moving towards One Health Approach.

Check your Ethical Aptitude

You are the Municipal Commissioner of a large Indian city that has recently reported a steep rise in dog bite cases and suspected rabies deaths. Animal welfare organizations are protesting against any form of relocation or culling of stray dogs. Meanwhile, residents are demanding immediate action to protect public safety. Media reports have intensified public fear, and there is pressure on you to act quickly.

On the basis of case, answer the following questions:

- What are the key ethical issues in this case?
- How would you balance public safety with animal rights?
- Suggest a humane and practical course of action that upholds constitutional and legal provisions.



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10. SCHEMES IN NEWS

10.1. PRADHAN MANTRI VIKSIT BHARAT ROZGAR YOJANA

Why in the News?

Recently, the Prime Minister announced Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana to Boost Youth Employment.

Objectives	Salient Features
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To facilitate employment, and skilling opportunities for youth. Promote job creation, enhance employability, and expand social security across sectors, specifically manufacturing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Labour & Employment Implementation: By the Ministry of Labour & Employment through Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EPFO a statutory body under the Employees' Provident Funds & Miscellaneous Provisions Act of 1952. Target: 3.5 crore jobs (including first-time employees) over a period of two years. The Scheme has two key parts : Part A - Support to First-Time Employees: It targets first-time employees registered with Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incentive: One-month EPF wage up to Rs 15,000 in two instalments. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> First instalment will be payable after 6 months of service and the second instalment after 12 months of service and completion of a financial literacy programme by the employee. Eligible Employees: Employees with salaries up to Rs 1 lakh per month. Encouraging Savings: A portion of incentive will be kept in a savings instrument of deposit account for a fixed period. Payment Mechanism: DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) mode using Aadhar Bridge Payment System (ABPS). Benefits for the employee: Formalisation of job through expansion of social security coverage, On job training making First-timers employable, Improved employability and Financial literacy skills. Part B – Incentives for Employers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eligibility: Employers will receive incentives in respect of new employees with salaries up to Rs 1 lakh. Incentive: Up to Rs 3000 per month, for two years, for each additional employment, sustained for at least six months. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the manufacturing sector, incentives will be extended to the 3rd and 4th years as well. Incentive Mechanism: Directly into their PAN-linked Accounts. Benefits for the employers: Offset of additional job creation, Enhancing workforce stability and productivity, and Incentivize coverage of social security.

To read more about the Youth Employability Scheme, refer to Article 3.3. EMPLOYABILITY AND SKILLING IN INDIA in July 2025 Monthly Current Affairs Magazine.

10.2. PRADHAN MANTRI UJJWALA YOJANA (PMUY)

Why in the news?

The Union Cabinet has approved the targeted subsidy for Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana Consumers for 2025-26 at Rs 12,000 crore.

Objectives	Features
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) connections to families living Below the Poverty Line (BPL). Enhancing access to clean energy, mitigating health risks from indoor air pollution and empowering women by offering a safe, clean and efficient alternative to cooking fuel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry: Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) Type: Central Sector Scheme Launched: Started in 2016 to provide 8 crore deposit-free LPG connections to rural poor. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ujjwala 2.0 (Launched in 2021): Additional allocation of 1.6 Crore LPG Connections under PMUY scheme with special facility to migrant households. An additional 75 lakh connections have been approved for the FY 2023-24 to 2025-26 with the overall target of 10.35 crore LPG connections. Implementation: MoPNG in collaboration with Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs), and state governments. Eligibility: An adult woman (At least 18 years old) from the BPL families not having an LPG connection in her household satisfying either of following conditions (Refer Infographic): Enrolment: Eligible woman can apply by submitting a KYC form to the nearest distributor along with Proof of Address, Ration Card, Aadhaar, and Bank details. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For Migrants: No need for ration card or address proof, self-declaration is enough. Benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cash Assistance: Rs. 1600 for a connection for a 14.2kg cylinder or Rs. 1150 for a 5 kg cylinder. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Covers cost of a cylinder, pressure regulator, LPG hose, consumer card & Installation charges. Free first LPG refill and Stove (hot plate) along with deposit free connection. Targeted subsidy: Rs.300 per 14.2 kg cylinder for up to 12 refills per annum. Exclusion: Households with existing LPG connections from any Oil Marketing Company. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A household with no adult female member is not eligible for Gas connection under the scheme LPG Panchayat: Envisioned to discuss safe handling of LPG, and benefits of using LPG over traditional fuels. Achievements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10.33 crore PMUY connections across India as on first March 2025. Global Recognition: Applauded by the International Energy Agency (IEA) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) for improving the environment and health of women. <div data-bbox="922 233 1515 835" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <h3 style="text-align: center;">Beneficiaries of PMUY</h3> <pre> graph TD A[Identified Households from SECC List-2011] --- B[SC/ST households] A --- C[PMAY Gramin beneficiaries] B --- D[Antodaya Anna Yojana] B --- E[Most Backward Classes] B --- F[Forest Dwellers] C --- G[Residents of Islands/River Islands] C --- H[Tea Garden and Ex-tea Garden Tribes] C --- I[Other Poor Families] </pre> </div>

11. PLACES IN NEWS

India

Ladakh

- Joint Expedition Team successfully summited Mt Merag-III & **Mt kangju Kangri**, the highest peaks in Pangong Tso region, **Ladakh**.
- ISRO inaugurates **HOPE Analog Mission** in **Tso Kar Valley**

Jammu and Kashmir

Dal Lake hosted first-ever Khelo India water games.

Uttarakhand

A **cloudburst** over the Kheer Ganga River (a tributary of **Alaknanda River**) led to flash floods in Uttarkashi district.

Gujarat

Indigenously-Built **Green Hydrogen Power Plant (GHPP)** Commissioned at Kandla Port

Uttar Pradesh

100th Anniversary of the **Kakori Train Action**

Kerala

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World



Canada

Recently, Canada faced its second-worst wildfire season on record.



Spain

Massive wildfires across Spain this summer have burned about 350,000 hectares in just two weeks during an early August heatwave.



Alaska

The President of USA and Russia met in Alaska regarding Ceasefire in Russia-Ukraine war.



Algeria

Earthquake of 5.8 magnitude strikes Algeria's Tebessa province.



Easter Island

Rising sea levels due to climate change could submerge coastal areas by 2080, threatening the moai and archaeological heritage.



France

Recently, Southern France was affected by one of the largest wildfires driven by strong winds, dry vegetation and hot summer weather.

Lebanon
Recently, UNICEF highlighted acute water scarcity, while UNIFIL reported ongoing Israeli fire along the Blue Line in Lebanon

Vietnam
India, Vietnam hold 6th High-Level Meeting to enhance maritime cooperation.

Philippines
The Philippine President visits India marking the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties between two countries.

Fiji Islands
India and Fiji have announced new measures to strengthen defence and maritime security cooperation.

Tonga
A powerful **6.2 magnitude earthquake** hits Tonga

Tuvalu
Tuvalu, threatened by rising sea levels, signed the 2023 Falepili Union Treaty with Australia, allowing 280 Tuvaluans annually to gain permanent residency.

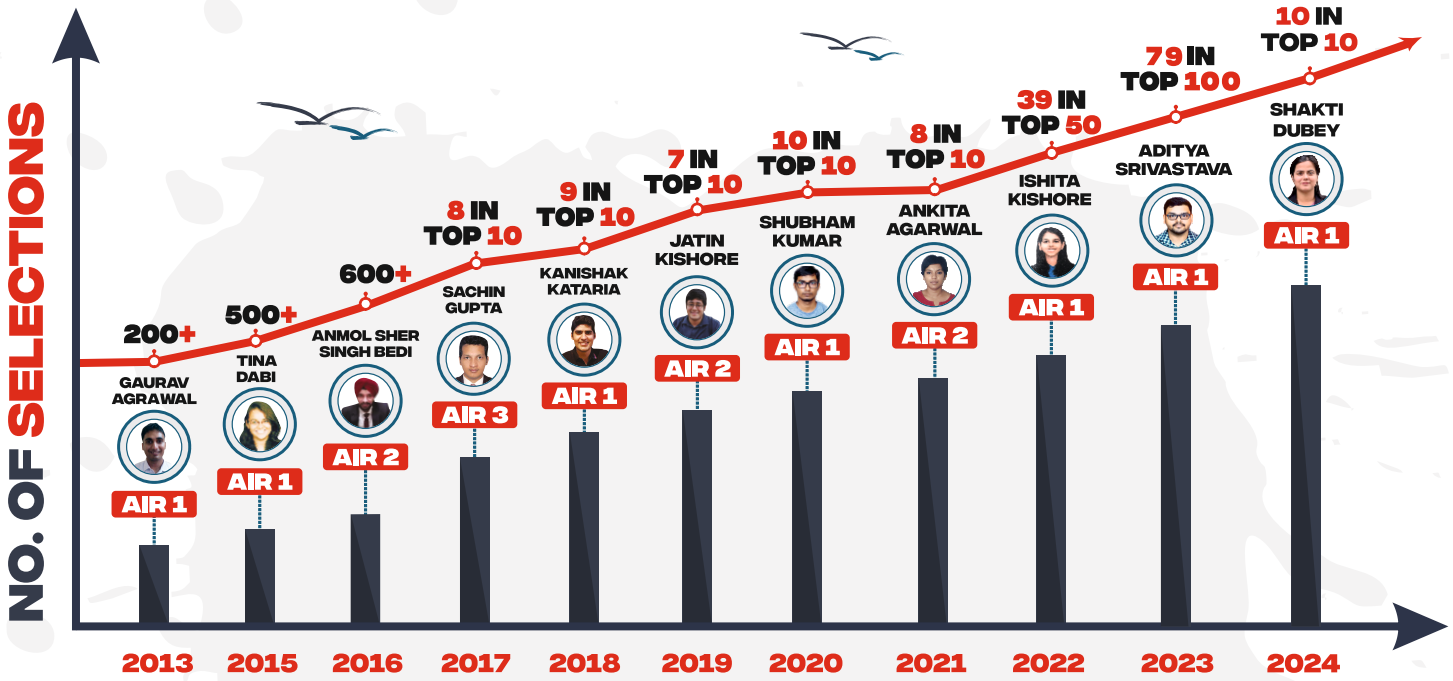
Australia
Chief of Australian Army visited India

New Zealand
Inaugural India-New Zealand Defence Strategic Dialogue held in New Delhi to discuss security perspectives and further bolster bilateral cooperation.

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