

## October 2025 marks 25 Years of India-Russia Strategic Partnership

Since the signing of the “Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership” in October 2000, India-Russia ties evolved with enhanced levels of cooperation in areas, including political, security, defence, trade and economy, science & technology, culture, and P2P ties.

### Multi-faceted India-Russia Diplomatic Ties

- **Strategic Partnership Framework:** The bilateral relationship was elevated to ‘Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership’ in 2010 signifying a deeper level of trust and collaboration.
- **Institutional Dialogue Mechanism:** Annual Summit level dialogue; 2+2 Dialogue between Foreign and Defence Ministers of two nations; India-Russia Intergovernmental Commission for cooperation on Trade, Economy, Science & Technology, and Culture, and Technical cooperation between Militaries of the two nations.
- **Trade and Economic Cooperation:**
  - ➡ **Bilateral trade** reached a record high of USD 68.7 billion in FY 2024-25.
    - ◆ **Major Indian Exports:** Pharmaceuticals, organic and inorganic chemicals, iron & steel, and marine products.
    - ◆ **Major Russian Exports:** Oil and petroleum products, vegetable oil (sunflower oil), fertilizers, coking coal, and precious stones and metals.
- **Defence and Security Cooperation:** Cooperation has shifted from a buyer-seller framework to one involving joint research, development, and production of advanced defence technologies. E.g., Joint development of **BrahMos Cruise Missiles**.
- **Multilateral Cooperation:** Both the nations cooperate closely at forums including UN, G20, BRICS, SCO, among others.

## Year 2025 marks Golden Jubilee of the Regional Rural Banks

To honor the milestone National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), in partnership with the Department of Financial Services, Union Ministry of Finance, is organizing special national event in New Delhi.

### About Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)

- **Established:** Established in 1975 under an Ordinance, which was followed by enactment of the **Regional Rural Banks Act of 1976**.
- **Objective:** To create an alternative channel to the cooperative credit structure so as to facilitate an expanded bandwidth of institutional credit for agriculture and rural sector.
- **Shareholding Structure:** Share capital of RRBs is contributed by the **Government of India, the concerned State Government, and the sponsoring bank in a 50%, 15%, and 35% proportion**, respectively.
- **Target Clients:** They provide loans and advances mostly to **small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, rural artisans, and other priority sectors in rural and semi-urban areas**.
- **Regulation and Supervision:** RRBs are **regulated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** under the **Banking Regulation Act, 1949** and supervised by **NABARD**.
- **Priority Sector Lending:** Must allocate **75%** of ANBC (Adjusted Net Bank Credit) or CEOBE (Credit Equivalent of Off-Balance Sheet Exposure) whichever is higher to priority sector.
- **Amalgamation:** Following the recommendations of the **Dr. V.S. Vyas Committee in 2001**, a consolidation process for RRBs began in 2005 to provide better customer service through improved infrastructure and computerization.





### Current Status and Performance of RRBs

- **Presence and Reach:** There were **43 RRBs** sponsored by **12 Scheduled Commercial Banks**. (March 2022)
- **Sponsorship:** All public sector banks, except Punjab & Sind Bank, sponsor at least one RRB. **J&K Bank is the only private sector bank sponsoring an RRB**.
- **Priority Sector Lending:** RRBs continue to be leaders in PSL, with over 89% of their loans directed towards these sectors.
- **Role in Financial inclusion schemes:** They hold significant shares in major government schemes, including 18.5% of PMJDY accounts, 13.3% of PMSBY enrolments, and 16.9% of PM-Kisan beneficiary accounts.

## RBI proposes measures for Banking Sector Reforms

The reforms announced alongside the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting aim to strengthen **banking sector resilience** by streamlining the regulatory processes.

### Key Banking Sector Reforms proposed

Key Reforms	About the Reforms	Potential Impact
 <b>Introduction of Risk Based Premium Framework for Deposit Insurance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Banks to move from the present <b>flat-rate deposit insurance premium</b> to a risk-based system.</li> <li><b>Risk-based system</b> means that <b>better-rated banks pay lower premiums</b>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC)</b> has been operating the deposit insurance scheme since 1962 on a flat rate premium basis.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	It will incentivise <b>sound risk management</b> and strengthen overall financial stability.
 <b>Expected Credit Loss (ECL) provisioning framework</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Application of the ECL Framework to <b>all Scheduled Commercial Banks (excluding Small Finance Banks, Payment Banks, and Regional Rural Banks)</b> and All India Financial Institutions (AIFIs) from April 01, 2027.</li> </ul>	<b>Strengthen resilience of Banking sector</b> , enhance credit risk management practices, and promote better comparability of reported financials across institutions.
 <b>Revised Basel III capital adequacy norms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of the <b>revised Basel framework on Standardised Approach for Credit Risk</b> from April, 2027.</li> <li>It includes <b>lower risk weights</b> for certain sectors. E.g. <b>MSMEs, home loans</b>.</li> </ul>	Expected to reduce the <b>overall capital requirements</b> for banks, freeing up capital for further lending.
 <b>Broadening the scope for capital market lending by banks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Banks can now finance <b>acquisitions by Indian corporates</b>.</li> <li>Enhance the <b>limit for lending</b> by banks against <b>shares, units of REITs and InvITs</b>; removing the regulatory <b>ceiling</b> on lending against <b>listed debt securities</b>.</li> </ul>	<b>Ease of doing business</b> as it can improve <b>credit access</b> and lower the cost of capital for Indian businesses.

## Union Cabinet Approves Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses

The Mission was announced in the **Union Budget 2025-26** to reduce import dependency, meet the rising demand, maximize production, and enhance farmers' income.

### Key Features

- **Time Period:** 6 Years (2025-26 to 2030-31).
- **Financial Outlay:** Rs. 11,440 crore.
- **Aim:** Boosting domestic production and achieving **self-sufficiency (Aatmanirbharta)** in pulses.
  - ⌚ Several initiatives will be taken under the mission for developing and disseminating **Climate-Resilient & Improved Seed Varieties**, developing **post-harvest infrastructure**, value addition, etc.
- **Target:**
  - ⌚ **Area:** Increase area under pulses to **310 lakh hectares**.
    - ◆ It also seeks to expand the area under pulses by an additional 35 lakh hectares by targeting rice fallow areas and other diversifiable lands.
  - ⌚ **Production:** To drive production to **350 lakh tonnes**.
  - ⌚ **Productivity:** Raise yield to **1130 kg/ha**.
- **Approach:** It will adopt a **cluster-based approach**, tailoring interventions to the specific needs of each cluster.
- **Focus Crops:** Tur/Arhar (pigeon pea); Urad (black gram) & Masoor (red lentil).
- **Assured Procurement:** National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (**NAFED**) & National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India Ltd (**NCCF**) will **procure 100% of produce** from farmers in participating states over the next 4 years.
- **Mechanism for Monitoring Global Pulse Prices:** It will be established under the mission to safeguard farmer confidence.

### Need for the Self-Reliance in Pulses

- **Production:** India is the **world's largest producer**; Production rose from 192.55 lakh tonnes in FY14 to 244.93 FY24 lakh tonnes. However, **domestic production has not kept pace with demand**.
  - ⌚ India is **largest consumer of pulses**. With rising incomes and standard of living, pulses consumption has increased.
- **Largest Importer:** India's pulse imports have seen a significant rise. India imported a record **72.56 lakh tonnes** of pulses worth **\$5.48 billion** during 2024-25.

## Centre Notifies Draft Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Rules, 2025

The rules notified by the **Ministry of Electronics and IT** will operationalize the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025.

- The act categorizes online games as **E-Sport, Online Social Games, and Online Money Games**.
- It **prohibits all forms of online money games** (e.g., poker & fantasy sports), while **only allowing "online social games" and e-sports**.

### Key Highlights of Draft Rules

- **Online Gaming Authority of India (OGAI)**: It will be established to regulate online games, maintain registry, decide legality, impose penalties etc.
  - ⌚ It will have a chairperson and five other members from various government ministries.
- **Registration of Games**: Both **social games and e-sports** must register with the **OGAI** and seek a **valid Certificate of Registration**.
- **3-Tiered Grievance Redressal Mechanism**: Every registered **online game or e-sport provider** must maintain a functional grievance redressal mechanism for user complaints.
  - ⌚ Appeals can be made to the **Grievance Appellate Committee** and then to the **Authority**.
- **Violation**: The draft rules propose to make violations a **non-bailable offence** and hold the **entire company staff liable** for facilitating any breach.

### Other Initiatives Against Online Gaming Risks

- **IT Act, 2000 (Sec. 69A)**: Blocks illegal sites/apps (1,524 blocked during 2022–25).
- **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023**: Penalises unlawful gaming, cybercrimes (Secs. 111, 112).
- **IGST Act, 2017**: Regulates illegal/offshore gaming platforms.
- **Consumer Protection Act, 2019**: Prohibits misleading and surrogate advertisements.



### Also In News



#### Foreign Portfolio Investors

As per National Securities Depository Ltd. (NSDL), Foreign Portfolio Investors have sold cash shares worth ₹2.02 trillion in the calendar year through October 01.

#### About Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs)

- FPIs can hold a **maximum of 10% of an Indian company's total paid-up equity capital** (amount of money that a company receives from shareholders in exchange for shares).
- **Exceeding this 10% cap, FPIs can:**
  - ⌚ **Divest** (selling off) the surplus shares; or
  - ⌚ **Reclassify** themselves as **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)**.
- **RBI and SEBI framework on reclassification of FPI to FDI issued in 2024 made following provisions:**
  - ⌚ **Reclassification shall not be permitted in sectors prohibited for FDI. E.g., Chit funds, gambling, etc.**
  - ⌚ **FPI investment requires government approvals are required, especially from land-bordering countries, and need Indian Investee Company's concurrence.**



#### Urban Flood Risk Management Programme

A High-Level Committee, under the Chairmanship of Union Home Minister, approved **Urban Flood Risk Management Programme Phase-II** for 11 cities.

#### About Urban Flood Risk Management Programme

- **Funding pattern**: On **cost-sharing between the Centre and State** as per NDMF guidelines i.e **90% from Centre and 10% from State**.
- **Cities included**: Bhopal, Bhubhaneshwar, Guwahati, Jaipur, Kanpur, Patna, Raipur, Trivandrum, Vishakhapatnam, Indore and Lucknow.
- **Activities involved for Urban Flood risk mitigation project include:**
  - ⌚ **Structural measures** of Interlinking of water bodies to Stormwater Management, Construction of flood protection wall, Erosion Control and Soil Stabilisation using Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) etc.
  - ⌚ **Non-structural measures** such as Flood Early Warning System and Data Acquisition System and capacity building, etc.





## H125 Helicopters

India's first helicopter Final Assembly Line from the private sector in kolar (Karnataka) to roll out Indian-made H125 helicopters in 2027.

- Airbus has partnered with Tata Advanced Systems to manufacture the H125 in India.

### About H125 Helicopter

- The H125 is a versatile, single-engine helicopter.
- A light multi-role helicopter, and can operate in high-and-hot and extreme environments.



## Snow Leopards

Himachal Pradesh's snow leopard population has risen by 62%, from 51 in 2021 to 83 in 2025.

### About Snow Leopard (Panthera uncia)

- **Range:** They are elusive cats found in 12 range countries in Asia (including India).
- Referred to as the "ghost of the mountains" due to their white-gray coat acting as a natural camouflage in the mountains.
- **Conservation Status:**
  - ⊖ IUCN: Vulnerable,
  - ⊖ CITES: Appendix I,
  - ⊖ Wildlife Protection Act, 1972: Schedule I.
- **Project Snow Leopard:** It was launched in 2009 in India to conserve the animal and its habitat.



## Amazon's Flying Rivers

A study warns about the negative impact of deforestation on Amazon's 'flying rivers' worsening droughts across southwestern Amazon.

### About Amazon's Flying Rivers

- It is a natural phenomenon of aerial moisture transport and recycling where massive areas of water vapour flow across the Amazon basin.
- This water vapour is generated by evaporation from the Atlantic Ocean and the 'Evapotranspiration' from the Amazon forest.
  - ⊕ Evapotranspiration is the sum of all processes by which water moves from the land surface to the atmosphere via evaporation (soil etc.) and transpiration (plants).
- It is carried by steady inland trade winds, blowing west along the equator.
- **Significance:** Regulation of rainfall in the Amazon region especially near the Andes in northwestern South America.



## Exercise Pacific Reach

India participated in Exercise Pacific Reach 2025 (XPR-25).

### About XPR-25

- It is biennial multinational submarine rescue exercise featuring participation from over 40 nations.
- **Host:** Singapore.



## Biostimulants

Centre withdraws approval for animal protein-based biostimulants over 'religious, dietary' concerns.

### About Biostimulant

- A biostimulant is a substance, microorganism, or mixture that promotes plant growth by stimulating natural physiological processes, improving nutrient uptake and efficiency, and enhancing tolerance to abiotic stresses like drought or heat.
- E.g., Humic acids, seaweed extracts, liquid manure composting and beneficial bacteria and fungi.
- Biostimulant are officially treated as distinct from fertilisers and insecticides.



## Biomedical Research Career Programme

Union Cabinet has approved the continuation of the Biomedical Research Career Programme, Phase-III (2025-26 to 2030-2031).

### About Biomedical Research Career Programme (BRCP)

- **Objective:** To nurture top-tier scientific talent for cutting-edge biomedical research and promote interdisciplinary research for translational innovation.
  - ⊕ It will also strengthen systems supporting high-quality research, and reduce regional disparities in scientific capacity, to create world-class biomedical research capacity with global impact.
- **Implementation:** In partnership between the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and the Wellcome Trust (WT), United Kingdom and the SPV, India Alliance for Phase III.



## Sir Creek

India criticizes Pakistan over military infrastructure developments along the Sir Creek area.

### About Sir Creek

- It is a 96-km-long tidal estuary between Gujarat's Rann of Kutch and Pakistan. It separates Pakistan's Sindh province from Gujarat's Kutch region.
- It is named after a British representative and extends into the Arabian Sea.
- **Dispute:**
  - ⊖ **India's Position:** Since 1947, India has sought Sir Creek's boundary based on the Thalweg Principle, which sets boundaries along the midline of the navigable channel.
  - ⊖ **Pakistan's Position:** Pakistan contends that Sir Creek is not navigable, so the Thalweg Principle does not apply.



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI