

# NEWS TODAY

## Prime Ministers of India and the UK reaffirm the India-UK Comprehensive Strategic Partnership

Joint Statement during the recent Official visit of the PM of the UK to India details numerous agreements across several key areas, including **strengthening economic growth, expanding defense and security cooperation**, etc.

### Key Outcomes of the India-UK Joint Statement

- **Technology and Innovation:** Building on the **Technology Security Initiative (TSI)**, leaders welcomed establishments including **India-UK Connectivity and Innovation Centre, UK-India Critical Minerals Supply Chain Observatory, UK – India Critical Minerals Processing and Downstream Collaboration Guild**, etc.
- **Growth, Trade, and Investment:** Ratification of the **India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)** as early as possible.
- **Defence and Security:** Commitment to robust maritime security collaboration in the Indo-Pacific, including establishment of **Regional Maritime Security Centre of Excellence (RMSCE)** under the **Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative**.
  - ⊕ Agreement was announced to proceed via a **G2G route** for an initial supply of **Lightweight Multirole Missile (LMM) systems** to support India's air defense capabilities.
- **Climate, Energy, Health, and Research:** New **joint investment** was announced for the **Climate Tech Start-up Fund**, a strategic initiative under an **MoU between the UK Government** and the **State Bank of India**.
- **Education, Culture, and P2P:** Queens University of Belfast and Coventry University were authorized to open branches in GIFT City.
- **Regional and Multilateral Cooperation:** To work closely on promoting reformed multilateralism, including reform of the UN Security Council and **UK reiterated its long-standing support for India's legitimate aspirations for permanent membership in a reformed UNSC**.

## India unveiled National Red List Roadmap to strengthen Biodiversity Conservation

**Vision 2025–2030 for the National Red List Assessment of Indian Flora and Fauna** outlines comprehensive biodiversity monitoring and conservation project spearheaded by Union Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change.

### Key Highlights of the Vision 2025-30

- **Vision:** To establish a **nationally coordinated and participatory red listing system** that reflects the true conservation status of Indian species of flora and fauna across India's diverse ecosystems.
- **Scope:** Project is a five-year initiative aiming to assess the extinction risk of approximately **11,000 species** (7000 species of flora and 4000 species of fauna).
- **Context and Urgency:** India is one of the world's **17 megadiverse countries**, hosting nearly **8% of global flora** and **7.5% of fauna**, with four biodiversity hotspots (The Himalayas, Western Ghats, Indo-Burma, and Sundaland).
  - ⊕ Despite this richness, only **6.33% of Indian plant species** and **7.2% of animal species** have been assessed for the Global IUCN Red List.
- **Lead Agencies:** Initiative is spearheaded by the **Botanical Survey of India (BSI)** (for flora) and **Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)** (for fauna) as nodal agencies.
- **Methodology:** Process follows the **IUCN Species Conservation Cycle:** Assess, Plan, Act, Network, and Communicate.
- **International Alignment:** Project aligns with frameworks like the **Convention on Biological Diversity** and the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF)**, using Red List assessments to track progress toward conservation goals.



## Surrogacy Age Bar Not Retrospective: Supreme Court (SC)

The SC held that the statutory age restrictions under the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021, will not apply retrospectively to **couples who had already begun the surrogacy process** before the law's commencement on January 25, 2022.

- The exemption also covers cases where embryos were created and frozen before the commencement of the Act.
- The Court also affirmed that the **right to reproductive choice**, including surrogacy, is an integral part of **personal liberty & privacy** under **Article 21** of the Constitution.

### About the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021

- **Objective:** To regulate surrogacy procedures in India, prevent exploitation, and promote ethical, altruistic surrogacy.
- **Key Provisions:**
  - ⊕ The Act **permits only altruistic surrogacy**, while **commercial surrogacy is strictly prohibited** and punishable.
  - ⊕ **Eligibility for intending couples:**
    - ◆ Married Indian couples; **wife aged 23–50 years, husband aged 26–55 years.**
    - ◆ No surviving biological or adopted child.
  - ⊕ **Eligibility for surrogate mother:** A married woman with at least one child of her own, aged 25–35 years.
  - ⊕ **Right of Surrogate child:** Child is **deemed the biological child of the intending couple**, with all rights and privileges of a natural child.



## Wildlife Protection (Kerala Amendment) Bill, 2025 marks tensions in Federal Environmental Governance

The proposed amendments arise from Kerala's frustration with the **Central government's slow response** to the growing crisis of human-animal conflict, especially involving wild boars, which the State has repeatedly sought to have declared as vermin.

- The bill seeks to enable the **Chief Wildlife Warden** to authorize immediate action, including killing, tranquilizing, capturing, or translocating a wild animal, without unnecessary delay.
- It also seeks to empower the State Government to declare a species listed in **Schedule II** as '**vermin**'.
  - ⊕ **Vermin** are wild animals considered harmful to crops, farm animals, or which carry diseases.



- Currently, under the **Section 62 of Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**, Union Government may declare any wild animal, other than those specified in Schedule I and Part II of Schedule II, to be vermin.

### Constitutional Provisions regarding Federal Environmental Governance

- '**Forests**' and '**Protection of Wild animal and birds**' have been listed under the **List III – Concurrent List** under the **Schedule VII of the Constitution**.
  - ⊕ In pursuance of this, the Parliament has enacted the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- Consequent to its Concurrent List status, any state law that is **repugnant to the Central Act** requires **Presidential assent**.



## China Curbs Rare Earth Mineral Exports

China has mandated a **government license** for exporting China-sourced rare earth minerals and **banned technologies** for rare earth minerals extraction, magnet manufacturing, and military-related exports without government approval.

- Restrictions may impact advanced chips and AI-related R&D with potential military uses, and disrupt supply chains.

### About Rare Earth Elements/Minerals (REEs)

- These are a set of **17 elements** including **15 lanthanides** plus **scandium and yttrium**.
- Elemental forms of rare earths are **iron-grey to silvery metals**, typically **soft, malleable, ductile**, and **chemically reactive**.
- Contrary to their name, rare earth elements are **moderately abundant** in nature.
- **Significance:** REEs are critical for high-tech electronics, **green energy**, defense systems, advanced industrial applications, electric vehicles, and **emerging technologies**.

### Challenges

- **Supply chain concentration:** China accounts for about 70% of global REEs mining.
  - ⊕ **India holds the world's fifth-largest reserves.**
- **Extraction Complexity:** REEs are dispersed and **difficult to extract economically**.
- **Environmental Concerns:** Mining and processing produce **toxic waste & radioactive by-products**.

### India's Initiatives for supply chain resilience

- **National Critical Mineral Mission:** Launched in 2025, is India's blueprint to secure domestic and global supply chains of critical minerals.
- **Khanij Bidesh India Ltd. (KABIL)** aims to secure strategic minerals abroad for Indian industry.
- **Minerals Security Partnership:** India joined US-led initiative to attract investment in global critical mineral supply chains.

## Also In News



### District Judge appointment

The Supreme Court held that judicial officers with **combined experience of 7 years** as an advocate and in service will be eligible for **direct recruitment as District Judges**.

- It held that **article 233** permitted both **advocates** and **in-service candidates** to be appointed as District Judges and extended the criteria of 7 years' practice to **judicial officers** as well.

### Appointment of District Judge

- **Article 233** deals with appointment of District Judge.
- **Appointment Authority:** District judges in a State are **appointed by the Governor in consultation with the High Court**.



### Undersea Cables

Meta Platforms has selected Mumbai and Visakhapatnam as the landing sites for the undersea cable **project, Waterworth**.

### About Undersea Cables

- Undersea cables are **fiber-optic cable laid across the ocean floor** that transmits information and enables worldwide communications.
- **Significance:** Undersea **cables** are backbone of international internet. It moves **90% of data**, **80% of world trade**, and about **\$10 trillion of financial transactions**.



### SAKSHAM

Indian Army initiated procurement of indigenously developed **SAKSHAM (Situational Awareness for Kinetic Soft and Hard Kill Assets Management)** Counter-Unmanned Aerial System (CUAS) Grid System.

### About SAKSHAM System

- It is a **modular, high-end Command and Control (C2)** system operating on the secure Army Data Network (ADN).
- It can detect, track, identify, and neutralise hostile drones and unmanned aerial systems in **real time**, ensuring comprehensive airspace security across the newly defined **Tactical Battlefield Space (TBS)**.
  - ⊕ TBS is a domain extending up to 3,000 metres (10,000 feet) above ground level.
- Developed in collaboration with the **Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)**,





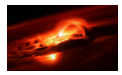
## Cistanthe longiscapa

Scientists have studied a resilient flower species **Cistanthe longiscapa** in in **Chile's extremely arid Atacama Desert** to identify the flower's traits that allow it to **survive severe water scarcity and temperature extremes**.

- **Atacama Desert** is considered one of the **driest coastal deserts in the world**, forming a continuous strip for nearly 1,000 km along the narrow coast of the northern third of Chile.

### About Cistanthe longiscapa

- **Habitat:** Native to the **Atacama Desert in Chile**, known locally as "**pata de guanaco**".
- **Growth Cycle:** An annual herb that completes its life cycle, including flowering, after **sporadic rainfall**.
- **Adaptation:** Utilizes **Crassulacean Acid Metabolism (CAM) metabolism**, a highly efficient photosynthetic pathway that opens its stomata at night to capture carbon dioxide and store it as malic acid, a trait crucial for surviving in deserts.

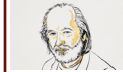
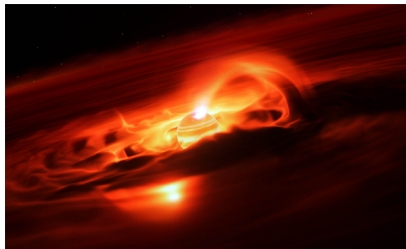


## Rogue Planet

Astronomers have discovered a young rogue planet that is actively accreting material from its surroundings.

### About Rogue Planet

- **Definition:** A rogue planet is a **planetary body ejected from its original system**, drifting freely in interstellar space.
  - ⊕ Most rogue planets are **expelled during early, chaotic stages of planetary system formation**, but **ejection can happen anytime** due to orbital instabilities.
- **Orbit:** Unlike normal planets, it **does not orbit any star and moves independently**.
- **Significance:** Studying rogue planets **help understand planetary formation**, system dynamics, and interstellar matter interactions.



## Nobel Prize in Literature, 2025

**Hungarian writer Laszlo Krasznahorkai won 2025 Nobel Prize in Literature.**

- **Laszlo Krasznahorkai** was born in **1954 in Gyula, Hungary**, near the Romanian border.
- **Major works:** **Satantango** (1985), **The Melancholy of Resistance** (1989), **War & War** (1999), etc.

### About Nobel Prize

Established by **Alfred Nobel in 1895**.

- First Nobel Prizes were awarded in **1901**.
- An international award administered by the **Nobel Foundation** in Stockholm, Sweden.
- **6 Categories:** Peace, Physics, Chemistry, Medicine, Literature, and Economic Science.



## Textile PLI Scheme

**Ministry of Textiles Notifies Major Amendments in PLI Scheme for Textiles.**

- Key revisions include expanding eligible products, lowering investment and turnover criteria etc.

### About Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Textiles

- **Ministry:** **Ministry of Textiles**
- **Objective:** To promote production of Man Made Fibre (MMF) Apparel & Fabrics and Technical Textiles etc.
- **Duration:** From 2021 to 2030 (incentives payable for 5 years).
- **Monitoring and Implementation:** By Empowered Group of Secretaries (constituted by the DPIIT).



## Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2026

**Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2026** was released.

### About Times University Rankings

- **Publisher:** Times Higher Education magazine.
- **Methodology:** Assess universities on teaching, research, knowledge transfer, and international outlook based on **18 performance indicators**.
- **Key highlights of the Ranking 2026**
  - ⊕ **Top rank (Global):** University of Oxford (10<sup>th</sup> consecutive year).
  - ⊕ Among Indian institutions, **Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore**, leads the country, retaining its position in the 201–250 band.

## Place in News



### Australia (Capital: Canberra)

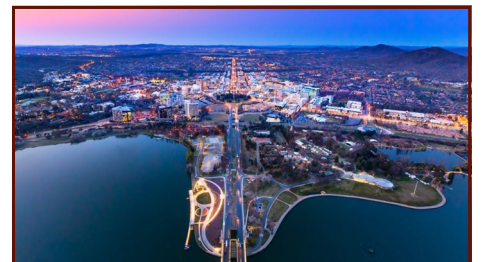
**India & Australia ink key defence agreements to strengthen operational partnership between two armed forces.**

### Political Features

- **Location:** Australia is the **smallest continent** and **6th largest country** on Earth, lying between the Pacific and Indian oceans.
- **Water Bodies:** Indian Ocean (west) and the South Pacific Ocean (east)

### Geographical Features

- **More than 1/3rd of Australia is desert.** Important deserts include Great Victoria, Great Sandy, Tanami Desert, Simpson Desert, & Gibson Desert.
- **Major Mountain Ranges:** Great Dividing Range, & Macdonnell Ranges.
- **Major Rivers:** Murray-Darling, Murrumbidgee, & Lachlan.
- **The Great Barrier Reef**, off the east coast of Queensland, is the greatest mass of coral in the world.



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI