

Government to establish UCBs in all cities with populations over 2 lakh within five years

The Union Minister of Cooperation committed it, while addressing the international conference on the urban cooperative credit sector-Co-Op Kumbh 2025 in New Delhi.

- The government also launched **Sahkar Digi-Pay and Sahkar Digi-Loan applications** that will enable even the smallest UCBs to offer digital payment and loan facilities.

About Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs)

- They are a **subset of cooperative banks** in India that operate **primarily in urban and semi-urban areas**.
- **History: Cooperative Credit Societies Act of 1904** and its 1912 amendment laid the legal foundation.
- They are **registered as cooperative societies** under the respective State Cooperative Societies Acts (for single-state operations) or the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002 (for operations across multiple states).
- **Control and Regulation:** UCBs function under a dual regulatory framework:
 - ⊕ **Banking Regulation Act, 1949:** They were brought under the purview of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 through an Amendment in 1966.
 - ⊕ **The Banking Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2020** has given RBI more control over UCBs, allowing it to intervene in their management and governance.
 - ⊕ **Registrar of Cooperative Societies (RCS):** The respective state governments or the central government control administrative functions through the RCS.

Significance of UCBs

- **Financial Inclusion:** UCBs primarily cater to small borrowers, lower-income groups.
- **Local Focus:** UCBs operate within specific communities and provide tailored financial services.
- **Priority Sector Lending (PSL):** UCBs have to allocate 60% to PSL.

Challenges to UCBs: Concentrated in few states (Like Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat), Dual regulation by RBI and state cooperative bodies, acute market competition with Small Finance Banks (SFBs), FinTechs, etc.

India's Bioeconomy to reach \$300 billion in coming years: Union Minister of State for Science & Technology

Addressing the 2nd Foundation Day of **Biotechnology Research and Innovation Council (BRIC)**, Minister also revealed plans for **200-acre BRIC Bio-Enterprise Innovation Park in Faridabad**.

- BRIC was created in 2023 by **Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science and Technology** by subsuming **14 Autonomous Institutions**.

What is Bioeconomy?

- **Meaning:** It is the **use of renewable biological resources** to produce food, energy and industrial goods, which supports **sustainability and economic growth**.
- **Significance:** Sustainable solutions to **environmental challenges** and **promote overall societal well-being**.
- **Status of India's Bioeconomy**
 - ⊕ **Significant Growth:** \$10 billion (2014) to \$165.7 billion (2024) with a target of \$300 billion by 2030.
 - ⊕ **Leading States (2024):** Maharashtra followed by Karnataka.

Key Initiatives Promoting Bioeconomy in India

- **BioE3 (Biotechnology for Economy, Environment and Employment) Policy:** Approved by Union Cabinet in 2024 fostering high-performance **biomanufacturing** addressing key pillars of **economy, environment, and employment**.
- **National Biopharma Mission (NBM)-Innovate in India (i3):** Implemented by **BIRAC**.
 - ⊕ Co-funded with **World Bank (\$250 million)**, it supports over **100 projects** and **30 MSMEs**.
 - ⊕ **Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC)** is a not-for-profit Section 8, Schedule B, **Public Sector Enterprise**, under DBT.
- **Bioenergy:** India achieved **20% ethanol blending (E20)** in petrol in 2025, five years ahead of the original target.

Four key subsectors of Bioeconomy


BioIndustrial (47%):
 Biofuels, bioplastics, enzymatic applications in various industries, etc.


BioPharma (35%):
 Pharmaceuticals, medical devices, biologics, etc.


BioAgri (8%):
 Genetically modified crops, precision farming, and bio-based products. E.g., Bt Cotton.


BioResearch (9%):
 Clinical trials, bioinformatics, biotech software, etc.

India's Development Cooperation Model: A Distinct Alternative to Conventional Aid

India's development model seeks to blend **local ownership with global credibility**, defining a new approach to South-South Cooperation that looks beyond aid dependency.

India's development cooperation model

- **Demand-Driven Approach:** Meaning proposals originate from partner governments eg., **India-UN Development Partnership Fund**.
 - ⊕ The fund was established in 2017 **under the UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC)**.
- **Capacity-Building Focus:** It includes training local personnel, strengthening institutions, and facilitating technology transfer.
 - ⊕ Eg., The **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation** Programme, of the Ministry of External Affairs has trained officials from 160+ countries.
- **Prioritizing vulnerable states** eg., Least Developed Countries, Small Island Developing States.
 - ⊕ Eg. Indian Development and Economic Assistance Scheme (IDEAS), which provides lines of credit through Export-Import Bank of India to developing African and non-African countries.
- **Blending local Ownership and multilateral Credibility:** By partnering with the UN, execution is transparent, insulating the initiatives from bilateral political dynamics.
 - ⊕ Eg., India-UN Global Capacity-Building Initiative, under the ministry of external affairs
- **Other features:** Respecting sovereignty, cost-effective solution, Non-Conditional Support eg, vaccine maitri, etc.

China's Development model: Supply-driven (projects often initiated by China), *projects* driven by **strategic and economic influence** (Belt and Road Initiative), **lending large sums of money** to financially vulnerable developing countries (debt diplomacy), etc.

To further strengthen its cooperation model, India may enhance:

- **Transparency and Monitoring:** Establishing a real-time results dashboard that consolidates outputs and outcomes.
- **Inclusive partnerships:** Involving local actors eg. civil society, private sector, women-led enterprises, indigenous people, etc.
- **Conduct Periodic Evaluations:** To ensure the model remains adaptable to evolving global challenges eg. climate change, political change in country, etc.

Dumpsite Remediation Accelerator Programme (DRAP) Launched

It is a **year-long**, targeted initiative under **Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0** to achieve the goals of **Lakshya Zero Dumpsites** by **September 2026**.

- **Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM-U) 2.0** was launched in 2021 to achieve Garbage Free Status for all cities. It also aims at remediation of all **legacy dumpsites** and converting them into **green zones**.

About DAMP

- **Objective:** Prioritize high-impact locations, covering **approximately 8.8 crore MT of legacy waste**.
 - ⊕ Legacy Waste refers to **aged municipal solid waste** in landfills or dumpsites, it is a mix of partially or completely decomposed biodegradable waste, plastic waste, etc.
 - ⊕ About **80% of the legacy waste** is concentrated in **214 sites across 202 Urban Local Bodies**.
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).
- **Eligibility:** All States/UTs with ongoing legacy waste projects with **priority** to sites containing over **45,000 MT of legacy wastes**.
 - ⊕ No minimum threshold for eligibility for UTs and North Eastern States.

Dumpsites and its Management in India

- **Status:** Currently, **1,428 sites** are undergoing remediation (1,048 have been fully remediated).
- **Major emissions of primary concern:**

- ⊕ **Leachate:** Polluted water that emerges at the base of dumpsite waste.
- ⊕ **Landfill Gas:** Mixture of **carbon dioxide and methane** formed because of anaerobic conditions created in dumpsites during waste decomposition.

Key Technologies for Managing Dumpsites



Biocapping

- **Meaning:** Transforming dumpsite from a wasteland to a **natural environment** like park.
- **Issues:** Generates **Leachate and Landfill gases** that needs to be managed.
 - Requires maintenance for at least 15 years.



Biomining

- **Meaning:** Uses microorganisms to **extract materials of economic interest**.
- **Benefits:** Resolves the issue of **leachate and landfill gases**.
 - No monitoring required once the complete land is reclaimed.

Also In News



Mitra Shakti Exercise

11th edition of India–Sri Lanka joint military exercise *Mitra Shakti 2025* began at Belagavi, Karnataka.

About Mitra Shakti

- It is a **bilateral annual joint military exercise** between the Indian Army and Sri Lankan Army.
- Alternatively, hosted by India and Sri Lanka.



Quality Control Orders (QCOs)

India may relax certain QCO requirements to **reduce compliance burden** on industries and facilitate smoother manufacturing and exports.

About QCOs

- Legal Framework:** Published by **Central Government** after consulting BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards) under **BIS Act, 2016**.
- Mandatory Nature:** While BIS certification is basically voluntary.
 - A number of products owing to public interest, protection of human, animal or plant health, national security, etc., are subjected to **mandatory use of Standard Mark** under a **Licence or Certificate of Conformity (CoC)** from BIS through issuance of QCOs.



Neodymium

India to scale up its **Neodymium production** to **500 tonnes** by the end of FY27, to boost self-reliance in rare earth elements.

About Neodymium

- Category:** Lanthanide Metal.
 - It is a **key component in the global rare-earth magnet industry**, vital for electric vehicles, clean energy technologies, and defence systems.
- Appearance:** Lustrous, silvery-yellow metal that tarnishes quickly in air.
- Key Applications:** Makes **Very strong permanent magnets** in an alloy with iron and boron, make lasers, use in eye and cosmetic surgery, treatment of skin cancers, etc.
- Source:** Monazite and Bastnaesite (like most Lanthanide elements).



World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization (WAICO)

Recently at **APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation)** meet in South Korea, China pushed for a global body, WAICO, to govern Artificial Intelligence (AI) norms.

About WAICO

- Aim:** Shaping global standards for world cooperation.
 - It incorporates principles from **China's 2023 Global AI Governance Initiative**, emphasizing human-centric design, data sovereignty and algorithmic transparency.
- Announced during **2025 World Artificial Intelligence Conference in Shanghai**.
- Key Purpose:** Reimagining the international architecture of AI governance, position China as an alternative to USA, exert China's soft Power, etc.



Greater Flamingo Sanctuary (GFS)

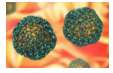
A 50-MW wind farm proposed by the National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE) can affect Greater Flamingo Sanctuary.

- The Greater Flamingo's range spans **Africa, western Asia, and southern Europe**.
 - It is usually found in shallow, saline, alkaline wetlands during the breeding season

About GFS

- Establishment:** By Tamil Nadu Government at Dhanushkodi.
- Aim:** To protect vital migratory bird habitats along the Central Asian Flyway (A major migratory bird route connecting Eurasia with the Indian subcontinent).
- Location:** Within the ecologically sensitive **Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve**.





Rift Valley Fever (RVF)

Recently, the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed an outbreak of RVF affecting Mauritania and Senegal in Western Africa.

About RVF

- **Origin:** Derives name from **Kenya's Rift Valley**, where the disease was first recognised in the early **1930s**.
- **Caused By:** **Phlebovirus** belonging to the Phenuiviridae family.
- **Spread:** It **primarily affects animals** eg. cattle, etc.
 - ⊕ **Humans** get infected through close contact with infected animals or by the bite of infected mosquitoes.
 - ⊕ It has **not** been shown to **spread from person to person**.
- **Treatment:** Currently, there is **no specific antiviral treatment**. However, animals vaccine do exist.



Climate investment fund (CIF)

Recently, Spain and Germany committed \$100 million for the **CIF's Accelerating Resilience Investments and innovations for Sustainable Economies (ARISE)** during COP 30 of UNFCCC in Brazil.

- ARISE, aims to help developing countries "turn climate risk into opportunity" and to strengthen the "adaptive capacity" of economies

About CIF

- **Established:** In 2008 by world and regional multilateral development banks.
- **About:** It is a multilateral climate fund that enables climate action in over 70 low and middle income countries
- **key feature:** Providing funding that allows developing nations to incorporate low-carbon programmes into their national development plans.
- **Currently, the CIF has 2 main funds:** Clean Technology Fund and Strategic Climate Fund.



Place in News



Vietnam (Capital: Hanoi)

The 15th edition of **India-Vietnam Defence Policy Dialogue (DPD)** was held in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Political Features

- **Location:** Eastern portion of **mainland Southeast Asia**.
- **Boundaries:** China (North), Laos and Cambodia (West).
- **Maritime Boundaries:** South China Sea (East and South), Gulf of Thailand (Southwest).

Geographical Features

- **Climate:** Tropical
- **Major rivers:** Mekong River and Red River.
 - ⊕ Both rivers form deltas while draining into **South China Sea**.
- **Major Mountain:** **Annam Cordillera**, extending from northwest to southeast in central Vietnam.



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI